



# FARM AND DAIRY & RURAL HOME



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Trade increases the wealth and glory of a country; but its real strength and stamina are to be looked for among the cultivators of the land.—Lord Chatham

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## My View of the Small Farm Proposition

Under Average Conditions a Good Acreage is Desirable—By Thomas Heatherington, B.S.A.

"TWENTY acres and liberty" is the slogan of many back-to-the-land movements. The small farm "well tilled" is the cry of experts and specialists who have become enthusiasts on the subject, due to their own success. On the other hand, hard headed farmers, men who have learned their lesson from stern experience, declare in favor of the large acreage. Which is right? The back-to-the-land crowd, the enthusiast, or the farmer? The answer to this problem depends on the interpretation placed upon the question. In any case it must be general and not specific. It must apply to average conditions, not to isolated districts. It must apply to the general diversified farmer and not to the specialist. The point at issue is, can you or I, men of average knowledge, average ability and with average means, do better by locating on a small farm of 50 or 75 acres, or are we more liable to make good on a 200-acre farm. To the already located farmer, it asks the question, "Shall I buy more land, or shall I dispose of a part of my holdings?"

The pros and cons of this problem have been threshed and re-threshed in almost every farm paper in America and still the subject remains a debated one, largely, I think, because writers have failed to make certain necessary distinctions before giving a final decision. Conditions are changing yearly. There has been a complete revolution during the last two or three years. The changes in our farm practice have been more sweeping than in all the periods covered since the American Civil War. Let us analyze conditions as they exist to-day and then attempt to make a decision.

### Labor and Machinery.

The general trend of agriculture in America is governed and directed by labor. Labor is the highest priced commodity the average farmer has to meet. It is the big item in the expense account and deserves first attention. How am I to make the most of labor? Is a practical farm management question. Can I secure more profit per man by following an intensive or extensive practice? The European farmer is pointed to by some as an answer to this question. The farmer of Holland differs from the farmer of America. There land is a big item; labor is cheap; hence an intensive practice is in order. In America it is the opposite. Everything in America points to the limitation of labor. The tractor, large and small, is enjoying a popularity that it has had since the opening of the Western wheat lands. The two-horse team is being displaced by the four or six-horse outfit. Are these points not significant and do they not help to make a decision easier?

The four-horse outfit and the farm tractor de-

mand larger fields and larger machinery. Hence we must have larger farms. The investment is too great for a small farm. Small farm owners often comfort themselves with the thought that their machinery is going to outlast the machinery on the large farm. This is very true, but it will be discarded just as quickly, for the simple reason that new styles are constantly being invented, which displace the old ones, and hence it is impossible to secure the repairs. The small farmer cannot stand the pace. He maintains that he can use the four-horse outfit and large machinery, too. So he can, but not to good advantage. The time lost in turning, the waste at the head land, the loss in all the other operations mounts up and places him at a disadvantage compared with the big acreage man.

One of the great drains on the average farm is that of idle horses. Few realize the daily or yearly loss from this source. How many hours on an average do your horses work in a day? You don't know. Stop and consider this. Our horse labor is expensive. One man aptly puts it, "A farmer should look upon an idle team in the stable exactly the same way as he looks upon the hired man asleep in the hay mow." One way of overcoming this drain is to use the larger outfits advocated to-day. Put more horses after

one man. The loss on the small farm from idle horses is a rule greater than on a large farm. Bigger outfits for the small farms will not decrease the loss, because there is only a certain amount of work to do. On the large farm there is always work.

### The Investment.

Money invested in a business that does not pay a dividend and that at the same time is depreciating in value is a poor proposition. Both the large and small farmer is up against this. The house and barn belong in this category, likewise the furniture, the stable equipment, the bath tub, the water system and a thousand other things. The small farm owner has just as big a family as the large farm owner, and therefore, his house will cost just as much. The barn investment will be greater in proportion to the amount of stock he has. In a word, much more of the small farm owner's capital is invested in unproductive ways. The time spent in doing chores is larger in proportion. The small farm to be well tilled must have all the tools and modern implements. This amounts to a big outlay per acre, far more than in the case of the large farm.

### Production and Profit.

How often the small farm of 75 acres is held up to us as the ideal! Instances are quoted by the score of such farms returning a very high labor income. One that just comes to my mind is a case of \$10,000 from 98 acres. This man was a breeder of pure bred cattle and shipped cream to a city market. The land was all used in producing crops. The calves and young stock were developed in the stable on high priced concentrates. I thought to myself, Why doesn't this man get more land and develop his young stock on grass pasture. It would cut down the labor bill, the feed bill and result in just as good stock. Fortunately breeders are awakening to the fact that they must develop their young stuff in some cheaper way. The instance cited, one of a score I could mention, the \$10,000 labor income could have been \$16,000 with more land. The cattle were all heavy producers and the calves consumed it all. The calves on pasture would have consumed less milk and a bunch of pigs would have helped boost his labor income.

Another phase that must be mentioned, and that is the buying and selling opportunities of a large farm. The small general farm produces a little of everything and a not much of anything; some cream, poultry, a few vegetables, a little fruit, an acre or so of strawberries, etc., is about the usual order of things. There is not enough of any one thing to market in any quantity. A horse and man take a small load to town daily or weekly as the case may be and bring back a bag of food, perhaps half a ton. The point is

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### The Harvest

UNLESS something altogether unforeseen occurs, Ontario will reap this month the largest crop in its history. Fall wheat has steadily improved and spring grains never looked so well at this season of the year. But promise of splendid crops in itself is no guarantee of freedom from food scarcity. The crops must first be safely harvested. Country people—men, women, and children—will do their share and more in garnering the rich harvest that Nature promises. But outside help will be needed as well. The call is to the city. The farmer now asks for the aid that was so freely promised him earlier in the season when he questioned the wisdom of seeding larger areas than he could handle with his own labor. Harvest losses, through lack of labor, must not be tolerated. Waste of foodstuffs, in the present world crisis, would be little less than a crime. Any action to supply man power for the farms must be taken immediately. Two weeks from now would be too late. The call is for immediate, vigorous action.