

Dry Land Potatoes

Two Hundred Bushels of Potatoes to the Acre on two inches of rain, by Seager Wheeler at Rosthern, Sask.

In his article the "Soil and the Seed" which recently appeared in The Guide, Seager Wheeler in reviewing the 1914 dry season mentioned amongst other things that potatoes gave the heaviest crop of large uniform tubers he had ever grown. Many hills weighed ten pounds each, single tubers weighing three pounds and three pounds ten ounces each. In a two hundred bushel crop there was not one whole bag of small potatoes. The reasons for success, he says, were not due to any one year's preparation. The good results are due to systematic planning and working along definite lines in order to put the land in the proper condition to produce crops.

Thinking that details of the methods which Mr. Wheeler followed would be very helpful to readers of The Guide, he was asked to give an outline of the work he does in order to grow a good potato crop. Following is his reply:

Potatoes like a loose, mellow, deep soil. They cannot develop fully in a shallow, hard soil.

Many growers plow a four inch furrow and drop the seed on the bottom of the furrow and turn another furrow over on top of the seed. It cannot be expected that fine shaped tubers of normal size and yield may be had by this method, especially in as dry a season as 1914. Without appearing pessimistic, I believe that it would be well to guard against a similar season to the last. To obtain best results I would make the following suggestion along the line I adopt each season.

The Seed

I use whenever possible whole tubers for seed, averaging about two inches in diameter. If the seed is a little longer, cut lengthwise, splitting the seed end in cutting. If very large, cut lengthwise then crosswise into four pieces, aiming

to have a large set with at least two eyes.

If possible plant on good summer-fallow. If stubble land must be used it is advisable to disc it early in the spring and harrow down until ready to plow at the time of planting. Summerfallow or prepared soil is better. Plow deep. If possible plow at least eight inches, but at any rate not less than six inches. Instead of dropping the seed at the bottom of the furrow push the seed in

also protects the seed from tramping by the team and crushing the seed.

Another important detail is to allow the plant room for development. Don't crowd the seed; allow at least eighteen inches in the row for each seed and have the rows four feet apart. I often wonder why some growers plant too thickly when they have so much land to spare. I never plant less than four feet apart between the rows, and during the growing season



Seager Wheeler's potato patch, 1914. Two hundred bushels to the acre in a year of drought.

the side of the furrow. This can be done as quickly and easily as dropping. The seed should be placed half way down the furrow slice. If plowing is eight inches the seed will be four inches from the bottom of the furrow and four inches from the top. This there will be four inches of loose moist soil below the seed and four inches above the seed.

This method allows the tubers to swell naturally to a good size and shape. This

the whole space is covered with a healthy growth.

Subsequent Cultivation

After planting I would not advise packing the soil unless it is new light land. Packing, while it is advisable for small grains, is not advisable for potatoes as it compacts the soil and does not allow the tubers to swell as it does in loose mellow soil. If any grower plows eight inches deep it may be deeper than

he has previously plowed and may turn a few inches of raw soil on top. This will not affect the crop as the seed is below and the cultivation given will improve the raw soil and will help to make a proper mulch.

After planting I would advise the use of the plank drag. This will level the surface, pulverize the lumps of raw soil and will pack sufficiently to prevent evaporation of moisture. If one has a cultivator it would be well to run it over once. Then finish by giving a good harrowing. As the plants will not show above ground for about four weeks it is advisable to harrow once a week. Once lengthwise, then crosswise. If this is done often it will save a whole lot of after cultivation. Harrow again after the plants are showing. When the rows are showing nicely a horse hoe should be used between the rows at least three times thruout the growing season.

Do Not Hill Up

I would not advise hilling. Level cultivation should be given at all times, but when the tubers are nearly ripe a slight hilling should be given to prevent sunburn and damage from frost.

Success depends largely on the planting and cultivation. The harrowing given at the time of planting and until the plants are well above ground, and the after cultivation between the rows, will ensure a good crop. There is nothing more disappointing than a crop of tall weeds in the potato plot.

A horse hoe that will cover four feet and is adjustable to work from two to four feet is a very economical tool and will save a lot of back aching work with the hand hoe. The main thing is to keep the harrow going from time of planting until the plants are well above ground. There will then be no need for the hoe.

Parliamentary Session Ended

(By The Guide Special Correspondent)

The curtain has at last been drawn down and the end has come to one of the most remarkable sessions the Canadian Parliament ever held. The scene has been staged and the chief actors are gone. The verdict of the people who have been compelled to follow the shifting scenes is that the performance was one that they would not care to see again. It was not melodrama or comedy, neither was it tragedy, but a mixture of all with the more dramatic scenes reserved for the end of the "play."

The predominant impression the six weeks session has left on the mind of one who has been honestly endeavoring to read its meaning as applied to our public life and the people, is that the chief actors would have been better pleased if the play had not been staged, but had been "censored." It will probably be recalled that when the house met the so-called "party truce" was still in fairly good working order. The session was to be largely a "war" session. In the opening days many smooth words were spoken and some of the "fighting" members, who love the turmoil of political strife, expressed the view that they were going to have a pretty slow time of it. The writer well remembers meeting F. B. Carvell, who figured so prominently in the Public Accounts committee, in the corridor one day and he laughingly remarked: "This is no place for a man like me; I think I shall go home." And he did—for a while.

The Truce Abandoned

The first rift in the lute appeared when the opposition evidenced a determination to investigate the boots supplied to the Canadian soldiers in regard to, which there had been so much discussion in the press, and to criticize the government in regard to other matters. At a comparatively early stage of the session Sir Robert Borden, who apparently assumed that the dove of peace was to remain perched

over Parliament thruout the session, candidly told the opposition that if they wanted to fight the government they would get all they wanted of it. The war, he said, would be carried into their own territory. The Premier repeated this declaration on another occasion. Soon all semblance of a political truce disappeared, the boots investigation was commenced and still later in the session the Public Accounts committee was convened and then commenced that astonishing series of revelations relating to the purchase of horses, boots, binoculars, drug supplies—revelations which established that in some cases goods had been sold to the government at a profit of several hundred per cent. and implicating two Conservative members of Parliament, W. F. Garland, of Carleton, and A. DeWitt Foster, of Kings-County, N.S.

Full Investigation Permitted

In connection with this inquiry the government must be given credit for throwing open the door wider than is usually the practice in the Public Accounts committee. A witness who mentioned that he had certain private correspondence relative to the purchase of motor trucks was compelled to produce it. In view of the fact that the matters under investigation were war contracts, and that the lives of the soldiers might depend upon the honesty of the contractors and the officials, it is doubtful if the people would have stood for anything less open.

Boot Manufacturers Whitewashed

Meanwhile the boots inquiry was progressing. Some weeks ago, on the eve of the opening of this inquiry, I made the prediction that, in view of the fact that the doubtful character of the boots was admitted, a unanimous report was likely to be reached. General Hughes had stated at Calgary that the makers of

poor boots should be shot, piles of unsatisfactory footwear were accumulating at the various regimental headquarters and the public generally believed that our soldiers were not properly shod. But the inquiry had not proceeded far when it was apparent that the government members were bent upon clearing the skirts of the manufacturers, as well as the department. Evidence was introduced to prove that the Canadian service boots were heavier than those worn by the United States army and that the sample made was practically the same as at the time of the South African war. General Hughes when examined pushed aside the opinion of General Alderson, the commander of the Canadian overseas division, and asserted that the Canadian boots were superior to the footwear which is being worn by Kitchener's army of one million men.

On the other hand, a score or more of reports of regimental boards of inquiry declared the boots to be unsatisfactory in many respects, while many soldiers condemned them as being unfit for active service conditions.

In the end the majority of the committee produced a gorgeous coat of whitewash for the manufacturers and everybody concerned with the making of the boots, while the Liberal minority report was more in line with the general criticism heard thruout the land for months, but was more inclined to condemn General Hughes and his officials than the makers of the boots.

The reports were debated in the house and in the end, as is always the case, the whitewash on the boots and the political fence remains. The boots are, by authority of the government majority in the house, the best ever made by any country for its soldiers, despite anything the men who wear them think to the contrary.

So far, despite this coat of whitewash on the boots, things had been going rather badly for the government and the opposition were quite elated. But the government had something in store for just such an emergency; some thing which in the event of an election would counterbalance the bad effects of the disclosures which had been made. The "come back" was shot at the opposition on the eve of the adjournment of the house in the form of a report by T. R. Ferguson, K.C., of Winnipeg, on the administration of Western lands under the late government—plus a couple of charges made by Hon. W. J. Roche, minister of interior, against his Liberal predecessor in office, Hon. Frank Oliver. Owing to the late date on which they were tabled, altho some of the reports must have been ready weeks ago, it is impossible to say how much more is contained in the Ferguson reports than was brought out by the inquiries held when the late government was in power—but undoubtedly there is considerably more, including a finding to the effect that the G.T.P. was interested in Mr. Oliver's newspaper, the Edmonton Bulletin, to the extent of \$15,000 when he was a minister of the crown. The most serious accusations against the late minister, however, were the two made verbally by Dr. Roche. In one case it was shown that Mr. Oliver had taken royalties on coal mined from a homestead which he owned, knowing the same mineral rights to be vested in the crown. In the other case it was charged that Mr. Oliver in an irregular way has become the possessor of twenty-three sections of land of the Michel Indian Reserve, west of Edmonton, the same having been secured by his son-in-law, J. J. Anderson, when he was minister and that they have since been transferred to Mr. Oliver.

The ex-minister in a statement issued

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