



# FARM AND DAIRY



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## & RURAL HOME

The Recognized Exponent of Dairying in Canada

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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## An Experience of 20 Years in Growing Alfalfa

Six Years of Failure and 14 Years of Success. A Story With Many Lessons for the Canadian Farmer—By Melvin Ryder

**A**LFALFA is the greatest stuff in the world," says John P. Nelson, of Allentown, New Jersey, "and farmers in the East who want to raise it can do so profitably." Mr. Nelson is the man who brought alfalfa to New Jersey. He has been raising it ever since 1896, and has now 105 acres of his 122 acre farm devoted to this "Queen of Crops."

To farmers who are in doubt regarding the practical nature of the crop, Mr Nelson has a message. It is this: "Come over and see my alfalfa any time from the 25th of May to the 1st of June and you will go home determined to grow it." Hundreds of farmers have taken advantage of the invitation during the past 14 years. And during that time Mr. Nelson has never had a failure. During the first six years, however, from 1895 until 1901, the crop failed in whole or in part each year. That was before he learned to grow it.

Mr. Nelson recently told me of his experiences with alfalfa since 1895. I found him in the office in his home near Allentown, New Jersey, studying over a dozen different samples of seed, to determine which he should buy for use this year. On his desk and in his files were letters and more letters, most of them regarding alfalfa, from men who sought information, from men who told of advice given by Mr. Nelson and the success that had followed, and from fellow growers of alfalfa, who seem to be all linked together into a fraternity, bound by the mutual appreciation of the crop that Mr. Nelson says is "the greatest stuff in the world."

### Mr. Nelson's Story.

The following is the story that Mr. Nelson told me,—practically in his own words throughout:

"Previous to 1895 I had never worked on a farm or had any desire to own one. In the fall of that year I bought 92 acres here in Monmouth County, New Jersey, and very soon realized that I had a white elephant on my hands, as I had a business in New York that required my attention, and therefore had no time to give to either learning how to farm or to the practical side of farming. Just a short while after I bought the farm, however, a friend of mine who had travelled extensively in the West, and who owned 1,000 acres in Kansas, told me of alfalfa and what a wonderful plant it was going to become, and advised me to try it. I started in right then

and wrote for some seed, began to try to find out about the crop and its cultural needs. I had the ground prepared just as I would for clover and sowed three acres in the spring of 1896. It came up all right and looked fine, but the crab grass outgrew it, and by September 1, there was no alfalfa to be seen.

"That first year didn't discourage me, and I tried again the following year with one acre on another part of the farm. It came up all right, I didn't have any trouble with the weeds, and I thought I had succeeded, but when the plants reached six inches in height, they stopped growing. I waited a while, but they remained stationary the rest of the season, and so I decided that there wasn't any plantfood, and that I ought to put on manure. That winter I had twenty loads of fine manure spread over the acre, and the next spring there was no alfalfa left.

### And Still Another Failure.

"Then I took three acres on still another part of the farm and sowed that with the same result as the last. It simply would not grow. I called in my Kansas friend and took him out to the field about the middle of July and showed it to him. He advised me to be patient and leave it alone, as he understood it seldom did much good the first year, but I had a lot of stock and not

much feed, so I plowed the field under and drilled it in fodder corn.

"I began to think I was licked, but by the next spring I had cooled off somewhat and was absolutely determined that I was going to grow alfalfa. This time I took 12 acres. I felt that I simply must get it—by luck or accident—but again the crop was a failure. My farm has public roads on three sides and everyone passing could see what was being done and began to say I was crazy. I had bought the farm at the sheriff's sale in the first place, and my neighbors began to think there was going to be another job for the sheriff.

"I felt that I would win sometime, but there was something about this thing that I did not understand. I knew no one to ask, and everyone continued to tell me that it couldn't be grown in New Jersey. You see, up until this time I hadn't known a thing about lime or inoculation. I had been trying to raise alfalfa on sour soil that hadn't been inoculated and I couldn't understand why it wouldn't grow. Just when I was plowing the 12 acres under, and about ready to give up, I read somewhere that alfalfa liked lime. So I decided to make another attempt and used a half-acre of my garden, spreading air-slaked lime over it and sowing the seed about the middle of July. Before that time, I had been sowing it in the spring—

another fatal mistake. This half acre came up and looked fine, went through the winter all right and the next season I cut it three times, getting 72 inches from the three cuttings. That made me think my failures were caused by sowing in the spring and not using lime, so in August of that year I selected two acres from which a crop of rye had been removed, plowed it deep, spread some lime, sowed the seed, and the result was a fair stand. The next season I got three light cuttings. The second season it started off in great shape and I had the hay weighed before putting it in the barn and there was a little over 14 tons on the two acres from three cuttings. Naturally, I felt pretty good over the result.

### A Start With Inoculation.

"The following August I had two acres of rye stubble plowed and the ground being put in shape for alfalfa when I found somewhere an advertisement offering soil for sale from an alfalfa field to inoculate



Wanted! More Help, Less Advice.

—From the N. Y. Evening Mail.