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EDITORIAL.

The Soil and Crops.

From observation and enquiry, we are convinced that the farm lands of Canada contain as large a proportion of strong, lasting and naturally fertile soil as any other country of considerable size in the world, and we are persuaded that the fertility of the land in this country may be maintained at less cost than in most other countries. There may be, and doubtless are, European countries in which, by the use of artificial manures and much labor expended in tillage, heavier yields of crops are obtained, but it is certainly at much greater cost, and if the crops were sold for cash in each case at the market prices obtaining in the respective countries, the showing for profit would probably be clearly in favor of Canada. That our farm lands are not, as a rule, producing nearly equal to their capacity, if uniformly well farmed, is a fact which must be admitted. This lack, we are persuaded, is capable of being easily improved upon, and the yield of crops greatly increased at less expenditure of money in Canada than in most other countries. The conditions that are necessary to this end may in a general way be summed up in three features of farm management well conducted and carried out, namely, a judicious rotation of crops, the growing of clover, and the making of manure by feeding to stock the crops grown on the farm. There is another condition, which, in the case of many farms, and to some extent on most farms is necessary, and which is somewhat expensive, but which in most cases would pay for itself in increased yields of crops in a very few years, and that is underdraining. While the best results cannot in many instances be obtained without underdraining, it is the one feature of the four mentioned which can best be deferred to a future time by those who have not the means to undertake the work at the present time. The others are within the reach and ability of the average farmer, and he cannot afford to neglect to adopt them. It is a shortsighted policy to depend upon the sale of grain and hay as a means of profit from the farm, for the simple reason that at best it is selling the fertility of the land and giving nothing back to make up for what is taken away, and the result must be the impoverishment of the soil. The crops depend so much upon the rainfall of the season that even with the best of farming they are to some extent uncertain, but the land that is well supplied with vegetable matter and is in good heart will best resist the effects of drought, and even if the crops be a partial failure, there is generally enough to carry the stock through, and they grow into money or produce it from the sale of meat or milk, and at the same time help to keep up the fertility of the farm.

A writer in an English contemporary points out that fewer horses were imported from Canada during May than during a corresponding month for the past six years, but they were of first-class quality and brought higher prices. The diminution in numbers is perhaps due to the large numbers gone from Canada this year direct to South Africa for use in the war. In this connection we notice that one of the Toronto *Globe's* correspondents calls attention to the excellent service rendered by the Canadian horses at the front, where their stamina and intelligence have enabled them to sustain to a very marked degree the unusual strain put upon them, their powers of endurance being notably superior to many others under similar circumstances.

Manitoba Crop Conditions.

The excessive drought which prevailed throughout the wheat sections during the growing months was broken by general rains the last few days of June and the early part of July. The conditions on the average farm, however, are entirely exceptional, and it were the veriest guesswork to prophesy on the results of the harvest at this date. With the soil heated above ordinary temperature, and in fine mellow condition, the abundant moisture and July warmth will cause a marvelously rapid growth, and in cases where the rains came before the grain was headed out, the results will certainly be far better than could have been hoped for. Unfortunately, however, much of the wheat was headed out at 5 or 6 inches in height before the rains came, and consequently one could find immediately after the rains, in many fields wheat headed out and other plants just starting from seed sown at the same time. Much of the straw will of course be short, too short to make sheaves, but if even six or eight bushels of fairly good wheat can be secured per acre it may yield as much profit as an ordinary 20-bushel crop. The cost of harvesting, threshing, twine, etc., will be little, and the price per bushel in all likelihood will be near the dollar mark. In '88, which was an extremely dry season, the writer harvested a crop of wheat which only yielded 6 bushels per acre and was so short that it was necessary to fasten willow brush to the binder reel in order to sweep the grain on to the platform. The binder attachment was taken off the binder and an arrangement like a box put in its place, provided with a door hinged at the top and manipulated with an iron rod in the same way as the "butter" on some binders is regulated. By this means as soon as the box is filled with heads it can be dumped out in windrows.

The rains have in many districts greatly helped the hay crop and have improved pastures everywhere so that the live-stock and dairy industries are greatly benefited and stock will doubtless be in better condition this fall than usual. The conditions during the early part of the season in the ranching districts of Alberta were particularly favorable, the stock wintered well and export shipments commenced early in July, with cattle fatter than last fall. Throughout Eastern Alberta and Saskatchewan there was plenty of moisture throughout the growing season, and crops in these districts are fully up to the average.

The Grain Harvesting.

The hay crops in most parts of Ontario and the Eastern Provinces has been a fair average one, though in some districts, where the drought of last summer was prolonged and severe, the young clover plants were burnt out, and the yield of the older meadows has been light, while in Manitoba, owing to the lack of rain during the spring months, the hay crop will return a low yield. It is therefore probably correct to describe the crop on the whole as a light one, and the deficiency in this class of fodder for stock feeding emphasizes the importance of harvesting the grain crops, which in all the provinces except Manitoba, we are glad to know, are fairly good, at such time and in such manner as to secure, if possible, a good quality of both straw and grain. Straw that is cut before the grain is fully ripe, and saved with little exposure to rains, may be profitably utilized for feeding purposes, especially when chaffed and mixed with ensilage or pulped roots; and when the supply of hay is short there is the greater need to make use of straw in this way. Of course, weather conditions

and probabilities have to be taken into account in harvesting operations. A wet season makes it difficult and sometimes impossible to manage the cutting and curing satisfactorily, but in average harvest weather as we get it in Canada, it is, we believe, the settled opinion of most successful farmers that it is true economy to cut all classes of grain before they become fully ripe. The grain, if cut while in the dough state and while there is some sap in the straw, will continue to draw nourishment from that supply, and will ripen in the shade of the stook with less shrinkage than if allowed to stand till dead ripe, and will take on a fresher color, while it can also be handled with less loss from shelling, and the straw will be much more valuable for feeding purposes on account of having been cut and cured with a good percentage of the sap in it. If from want of drainage or other causes parts of a field are later in ripening than others, of course judgment must be exercised in harvesting, and it may be necessary to allow the more forward portions to get fully ripe before the backward parts can be safely cut, but in favorable weather a safe average may be struck, and if a considerable part is on the green side it will be wisdom to set the binder to make smaller sheaves or to bind them less tightly than in a more uniformly ripe crop; but to avoid the danger of its musting in the mow, care should be observed to have the straw well dried before it is stored, as musty straw is of even less value for fodder than overripe straw, and the color of the grain is apt to be injured by the heating in the mow or stack.

The importance of early harvesting in the Northwest, or the cutting of the grain as soon as it is reasonably fit, is emphasized by the liability to damage from early frosts in those provinces, and the lesson has been pretty thoroughly learned there from experience. In the provinces in which fall wheat is grown and it is desired to follow a crop of barley or peas with wheat, it is important to get the first crop off the ground as early as possible in order to have the land plowed and worked down to a fine tilth before sowing, taking advantage to cultivate and harrow after every rain to conserve the moisture and prepare a favorable seed-bed. As it not infrequently happens that the last of the harvest runs into unfavorable weather, the wise farmer will push the work whenever the crop is fit and get it safely stored as soon as possible. There is a sweet sense of satisfaction in having the crops safe in barn or stack even if the weather continues fine, but that feeling is happily intensified when a rainy season follows, and the farmer reflects on what might have been had he taken things easy and failed to make the best use of the time. On the other hand, long weeks of weary work and a wasted crop may be the price paid for indifference, if the golden days in which they might have been secured are allowed to pass without being improved as they might have been. Canadian harvest weather is, as a rule, less fickle than that of most countries, but the weather is an uncertain quantity even in Eldorado, and cannot long be safely trusted, and the injunction, "Do with your might what your hands find to do," is never more timely than during the harvest days.

It is officially estimated that the wheat crop of India is 184,000,000 bushels, against 238,000,000 bushels last season, and 227,000,000 bushels, the average of five years past.

Unofficial reports from the Paris Exposition state that many first and other prizes have been captured by Canadian fruit, as well as the Grand Prize for the forestry, fish, game, mineral and agricultural exhibits.