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FARM AND DAIRY

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RURAL HOME

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A GREAT FORAGE CROP THAT IS MAKING MANY FARMERS WEALTHY*

Geo. Marsh, Peterboro Co., Ont.

Dairy Farmers and all Live Stock Farmers will find Alfalfa to be a Money-making Crop—What it has done for Agriculture in the United States—Our Land in Ontario is well Adapted to its Growth.

CAN one afford to farm, in any line, without growing that wonderful plant, alfalfa? He can't! Vast areas of land in Ontario, and especially the farming land of Peterboro county, is well adapted for growing heavy yielding crops of this great forage plant. Peterboro, like many other counties, is essentially a dairy county; most everywhere in Ontario there is a growing inclination to turn towards dairying, and in all sections live stock is an important industry. All live stock, dairy cattle first of all, call for a protein feed. Our re-



Geo. Marsh

quirements in this respect heretofore have largely been met with bran. Now there is a great need for a cheap protein feed to take the place of the high-priced bran or the oil-meal, cotton-seed meal, or gluten foods, which latter many dairy farmers of late have been using. This cheap, easily obtained feed is provided by the alfalfa plant.

Bran sells for from \$20 to \$25 a ton. A ton of alfalfa hay is practically of equal feeding value to bran; some good feeders say that it is superior to bran as a milk producer. Much land in Ontario will produce from four to five tons of alfalfa an acre, which means that the money value per acre for this crop is from \$80 to \$125 according to the price of bran.

The alfalfa, once it is established, requires no seeding, planting or other care for years. Is it not worthy of our consideration? Is it not time that we farmers awakened up to the possibilities wrapped up in this wonderful plant? It is all very well to talk about reciprocity, single tax, the oppression of the trusts and other things that should be remedied, but in the meantime if we farmers cannot reduce the cost of production of milk and butter we will have gone to the wall long before those remedies are applied.

Alfalfa has been known since the earliest dawn of history. It has been esteemed for its high food value from the time that Ne-luchadnezzar was driven out from men to eat grass, (or alfalfa as it was even then known) like an ox, until the more modern experiments in the American west where a class of young college men were fed nothing but alfalfa hay ground into meal and baked into bread, pies, cakes, etc., for several weeks and not only did their regular work on it but gained in weight.

*This article is the first of a series that are being especially prepared for Farm and Dairy by Mr. Marsh, an expert on alfalfa culture, who has had a wide experience with this great crop in various States and also in Ontario. Later articles in this series will give specific cultural directions for growing alfalfa. Your neighbor would like to inform himself on this crop. Let him have this copy of Farm and Dairy and let him see the alfalfa articles in this issue of Farm and Dairy as well as get the benefit of the great wealth of practical information published from week to week in Farm and Dairy.

At the Illinois experiment station they have for the past three years kept 12 cows on 20 acres of land, buying no feed and feeding only what has been produced on the 20 acres. They have been enabled to do this by the growing of corn for ensilage and by growing alfalfa. Good milk yields are there produced, as one of the cows the past year produced 9,000 lbs. of milk.

If every farmer in Ontario kept 12 cows on every 20 acres there would be a vast increase in the production of milk and dairy products. It would mean that the man on 100 acres would keep 60 cows and do it without buying any feed. Alfalfa will assist every farmer in attaining to such an ideal. The objection may be made that such increased production would glut the market. If there was any danger of this happening, a farmer could keep the same number of cows on less land and grow more grain or fruit for sale, rent the idle land or give it away. What is the use of working over 100 acres, paying taxes and rent or interest on money so invested, if 20 acres can be made to produce the same results?

CHANGE OF FORTUNE IN KANSAS

Out in Kansas, a few years ago, farmers became so poor that all who could left the State. Land there was almost worthless. Since they commen-

menced to grow alfalfa this has all been changed and the Kansas farmers now have more money than they knew what to do with and are building banks to place it in for safe keeping.

If alfalfa would not do quite so much for Ontario it would at least double the price of land. Mr. Severhill, a real estate agent in Newark, N.Y., told me that 10 years ago the clay hills of Onondaga county could have been bought for \$100 an acre,—to-day they can not be bought for \$100 an acre,—all due to the increase in alfalfa growing. Mr. W. N. Giles, the Secretary of the New York State Grange, who lives at Skanateles, on the edge of the alfalfa belt, says that when the Western men go through looking for land all the farmers have to do is to convince them that they have alfalfa land and they can ask any price they choose, and get it.

RAILROADS ARE INTERESTED

Hogs and alfalfa have made the money in the west; they will do the same here in Ontario if the farmers will only sow alfalfa. Across the line the railroads are waking up to the value of alfalfa as a freight producer. I have for the past year spent the most of my time aiding the farmers of Pennsylvania and New York along the line of the P.R.R. to grow alfalfa. The Lehigh Valley has a man who spends a large amount of his time doing the same. The N.Y.C. and the B.R. & P. are at the same work, while I understand that the Erie and Lackawana are also considering the move. Now, if the railroads are spending money to increase alfalfa growing simply for the additional freight they will get indirectly surely it will pay us farmers to grow it for our own good!

There is probably not a county in Ontario that even now has not good stands of alfalfa on a great variety of soils, which proves that Ontario soils are favorable to the growth of this plant.

Alfalfa will grow anywhere on any soil on which ordinary crops will grow if the two necessities are provided, lime and alfalfa bacteria (inoculation). I have made the statement at probably 200 Grange meetings in New York State that I had never known a farmer, who applied per acre one ton of lime and two bags of soil from an old alfalfa field, to fail in getting a catch on any soil dry enough to grow good oats, or corn, no matter how he sowed the seed, what kind of soil his was, or how he prepared it or when he sowed the seed, be it any time from May to September.

In Ontario only a small part of the land needs lime; most of it needs inoculation. You might as well throw alfalfa seed into the river as to sow it on land without first putting therein the suitable kind of bacteria.

WILL GROW ON ANY SOIL

At Newark I saw alfalfa roots 30 feet long growing down in a gravel hill where the gravel was being drawn away for building purposes. At Horseheads where a clay tank was being cut out by a steam shovel for brick making the alfalfa went down the full depth of the cut, 10 feet, and no one knew how much further. At Rock Stream last year, an exceptionally dry year, I saw four crops taken off a piece of ground where there was not soil enough to hold a crowbar upright; the alfalfa roots went down about two inches and



A Five-Year-Old Alfalfa Plant

†The long roots of the alfalfa plant will subvert your land most effectively and will prove drought resisting. Be sure to read the alfalfa articles in this issue of Farm and Dairy. I. D. May, of Granville Centre, N. Y., one of thousands of American farmers who would not farm without alfalfa, is he that appears in the illustration.