

FARM AND DAIRY

RURAL HOME

ALFALFA IS QUEEN—SO TESTIFY MANY DAIRY FARMERS

Some of the Things Seen and Heard by an Editor of Farm and Dairy When Judging Fields in an Alfalfa Growing Competition in Peterboro Co., Ont.—What the Growers Themselves Had to Say about this Great Crop.

ALFAFA is the Queen of all crops. It is a natural concomitant of that King of Crops, Corn.

It is a long time since corn assumed its title of "King Corn." When it comes to producing a great amount of palatable, succulent and nutritious food from a limited acreage, corn is unequalled. Its virtues are known and appreciated. Everywhere we go in Ontario we find that corn is an indispensable crop on the dairy farm. Silos are being erected as never before to store this King of American farm crops in a form in which it will be most appreciated and most valuable to farm animals. We now all know that we can grow corn, and good corn, in Ontario. But corn of itself does not constitute a balanced ration for dairy cows.

It is here that alfalfa steps in as the Queen of Crops, particularly on the dairy farm. A chemical analysis of corn shows that the dry matter contains only 4.4 per cent of protein, while it is very rich in starch, containing 55.5 per cent. of the latter substance. Alfalfa, on the other hand, is strong in just that in which corn is weak; 100 pounds of dry matter in alfalfa contains 12 pounds of protein, a material indispensable in the ration of the dairy cow. The two, alfalfa and corn, in proper proportion, constitute a balanced ration. A country, therefore, in which we can grow both corn and alfalfa is one ideally adapted to dairying.

WE CAN GROW ALFALFA

Can we grow alfalfa here in Ontario? We can. We have mountain-high demonstration as to the adaptability of our climate and soil to alfalfa. But there are still many doubting ones. Everywhere we go we find that many farmers have either not seeded alfalfa at all or have only a limited acreage under that crop. In order to induce the farmers of Peterboro Co., Ont., to grow alfalfa more extensively, and awaken our farmers to an appreciation of the merits of this crop, Farm and Dairy in the spring of 1911 announced an Alfalfa Growing Competition for the farmers of the county, offering prizes to those farmers who, the following spring, should have the best three acres of alfalfa of 1911 seeding. Several scores of farmers were induced to put in their first alfalfa. Eighteen fields of three acres each were entered in the competition. The fields were judged recently by an editor of Farm and Dairy. To almost all of the competitors the growing of alfalfa was a new experience. But not one of them failed to secure a good stand.

HAS GROWN ALFALFA FOR 25 YEARS

The first prize winner, F. Birdsall, was an exception in that he had been growing alfalfa for many years. "I seeded my first field to alfalfa 25 years ago," said Mr. Birdsall to our editor. "I saw the seed in Toronto and bought it without really knowing what it was. It came up so

delicate looking that I plowed the field; that is, all but one land. That small strip of alfalfa showed me the value of the plant, and I have been growing it ever since. Two years ago I had 30 acres, but in the winter of 1910 and 1911 it was all killed, as was also the red clover, and I am now starting over again.

"This field that I have in the competition was seeded at the rate of 20 pounds of seed to the acre. I did not inoculate the seed, as I have



No Wonder He Looks Happy

One of the best fields of alfalfa entered in a competition conducted by Farm and Dairy in Peterboro Co. recently was that of Mr. Stewart Brown. His two sons, Charlie and Allan, started the alfalfa idea on this farm. Allan may be here seen with his alfalfa. —Photo by an editor of Farm and Dairy.

been growing alfalfa so long that my land seems to be supplied with the proper bacteria. To prepare the soil for alfalfa we first have the field in turnips and then the following spring seed with barley as a nurse crop, sowing at the rate of one bushel to the acre. From this field of five acres I expect to cut 20 tons of alfalfa in three cuttings this year."

Mr. Birdsall's alfalfa was about two feet deep all over the field, and perfectly uniform. There was hardly a weed to be seen, which condition of affairs Mr. Birdsall attributed to the hoe crop that had preceded the alfalfa.

A GOOD MARKET ON THE FARM

"I feed alfalfa to everything on the place," said Mr. Birdsall. "The third cutting, which is very fine, I like to keep for the lambs in the spring. The cows like it, and the horses certainly thrive on it."

Mr. Birdsall is not afraid to pasture his alfalfa. "Why," said he, "there is no other crop that will yield so much or so valuable pasture.

I have pastured alfalfa for years, and never yet has it been killed. Of course, I do not pasture right down to the ground. I like to have at least six inches of stubble left for winter protection for the plants."

It would seem that alfalfa would grow well on soil of almost any character providing the plant food is there. A neighbor of Mr. Birdsall, Mr. Frank Elmhirst, has his alfalfa seeded on a field that is almost pure sand. And his crop was of almost as vigorous growth as was that of his neighbor, Mr. Birdsall, on much heavier land. Mr. Elmhirst, in seeding to alfalfa, regulated his drill to seed as much alfalfa as the seeder would stand and as little of oats. If future seedings to alfalfa come out as well as did this seeding, it will certainly double the value of Mr. Elmhirst's farm for the growing of food for live stock.

THE VALUE OF INOCULATION

The field of Mr. Wilbert Rosborough afforded an excellent example of the value of inoculating. Right in the centre of his field Mr. Rosborough had seeded one land without inoculation. One could tell to a foot just where the inoculation ended and the uninoculated seed was sown. The inoculated alfalfa will yield one-third more forage an acre than will the uninoculated alfalfa. The vegetation was of a much deeper, more vigorous looking green where the seeds had been supplied than where inoculation was omitted.

"Alfalfa and poultry keeping should go well together," commented Mr. Rosborough. "I did not feed my hens last fall at all, and they laid well, and when some were killed for market before winter they were as fat as one could wish. They had picked the leaves off a large section of the alfalfa field adjoining the buildings, and they thrived on it."

A WOMAN'S ENTERPRISE

One of the best fields, that of Mrs. W. Pilling, has an interesting story connected therewith that shows the part that an enterprising woman can play in introducing progressive methods on the farm. Mrs. Pilling had been reading the alfalfa articles in Farm and Dairy last spring. So had the men of the household. But while they agreed that alfalfa would be a splendid thing, they made no move to sow any.

"What's the use of reading these things in Farm and Dairy if we don't practice them?" she asked herself. She started a campaign that resulted in 12 acres being seeded to alfalfa. When the field was inspected by our editor recently, an excellent growth was ready for the mower. We guarantee that this field will this year be the most valuable on that farm. Likewise, three acres of the field secured a high standing in the competition.

Mr. H. C. Garbutt, whose likeness may be seen in an illustration in this issue of Farm and Dairy, has been growing alfalfa for five years. He appreciates the value of heavy seeding properly inoculated, and of clean land. He was justly proud of his fine field that secured second place in the competition. Increasing experience with the plant has given Mr. Garbutt a correspondingly greater appreciation of its value.