

THE FARMERS ADVOCATE AND HOME MAGAZINE

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IN THE DOMINION.

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Across the Plains of North Middlesex.

That the Province of Ontario possesses a plains country essentially similar in some respects to that of the great Prairie West, will come as a surprise to most readers, but a trip north from London on the Huron & Bruce branch of the Grand Trunk, or west from Stratford along the Port Huron line, will bring the fact home with depressing clearness. There are many wide, level stretches of country in the Banner Province, but they are in most cases still dotted plentifully with small groves of woodland, and parcelled into homesteads averaging in the neighborhood of a hundred acres or thereabouts. So, also, was the region of which we write, but a change of conditions set in some years ago, by which it has well-nigh been converted into cattle ranches. Cleared of nearly all its woodland, the landscape presents long vistas of level land, reaching away, with unobstructed view, mile upon mile from the railway. Except where the process of depopulation has progressed farthest, fine, comfortable, two-story, white-brick houses, with ample barns, dot the face of the land, though these are by no means so numerous nor so universally occupied as in the prosperous south-eastern corner of the county, where dairying holds sway. Farm after farm has been sold by its well-to-do owners, who have retired to the villages and towns, or in some cases have moved away to the West. The land is by no means forsaken, however, but is bought up by those who remain, and thrown together into holdings of three, four, six and up to fifteen hundred acres. What proportion of this can be tilled by the owner, with the help, maybe, of a son or two, or, perhaps, in rare cases, of a hired man, is cropped, while steers graze the rest in veritable ranches, often with none but an outside boundary fence. With this system of utilization, only small acre returns are realized, but the labor is at a minimum, and the owners seem content with these moderate returns. The land is by no means going at sacrifice value, farms bringing around eighty and ninety dollars per acre. Intrinsically, the soil is worth it, for a finer, fatter, better-watered, nicer-lying and nicer-working clay-loam soil probably does not lie out of doors. At least, we have never seen more equally good land in one uninterrupted stretch.

What has brought about this state of affairs? Why has so much of this fine land reverted to steer pasture—its least productive use—while many

less-favored sections are still quite thickly settled and carefully tilled? This question we propounded to the well-known stock-breeder, A. W. Smith, ex-M. P., with whom we enjoyed a pleasant drive, in company with the new District Representative of the Department of Agriculture, Mr. Whale, and whose delightful home at Maple Lodge we were presently to visit. Lack of labor was the keynote of his answer. But why did it affect this section so particularly? "Well," he replied, "the people here were fairly well-to-do, and when help became so scarce, and they found that, to work their farms as they had been accustomed, it would be necessary almost to make slaves of themselves, they preferred to sell out and quit. Some went West, but many retired to village or town life. You see, they had sufficient means to do this, if they chose." Taking North Middlesex, conditions have reached their worst pass in the Township of East Williams, where long lines of forsaken buildings may be seen falling into ruin, with only a resident here and there. There are many cases, however, in McGillivray and Biddulph where three or four farms have been thrown into one.

It seems a shame to see the process, for not only is the country superb for general agriculture, but it was settled by a fine stock of people. The township of McGillivray and part of Biddulph, was largely settled by migrants from Markham and Scarboro, in York County, lured west by the age-long quest for land. East Williams was largely settled by Scotch, while London Township was occupied by immigrants from "the Border."

It must not be inferred that North Middlesex is peculiar in this condition; considerable areas of Huron, Bruce and parts of Lambton are the same. One wonders where it will end. At present, the tendency towards concentration of areas seems unabated. That more might be made out of the land is indisputable, but the great cry is for help. Not only is it scarce, but, worse still, so uncertain. You've got it, and you haven't got it. A farmer lays his plans to crop a certain acreage, and gets the seed sown, perhaps; then maybe his man leaves, he doesn't know where to look for another, and has to do two men's work himself. Next year he is likely to attempt only what he can do easily with his own hands. Mr. Smith, for instance, had only two men, instead of the three he would like to have, and, partly as a precaution against contingencies, makes it a point to seed down every acre of grain crop each year, so that he may be in a position to quit whenever occasion demands. Of course, this plan has the additional merit of being good for the land. Mr. Smith's rotation, by the way, is a seven-year one of peas, wheat, hoed crop, barley, wheat seeded down and left two years in meadow. In addition to the rotated area is some permanent pasture.

Conspicuous for productiveness, as well as cleanness, even in the fertile township of McGillivray, is the 230-acre farm of Maple Lodge, where our camera was brought effectively into play among the Shorthorns and Leicesters for the future edification of our readers. So also of the broad, clean, well-ordered acres owned by John T. Gibson, of Denfield, whose seventy-one years do not prevent him doing a hustling day's work in the field, and whose uniformly typey and thrifty Shorthorns and Lincolns would delight the eye of any live-stock artist. Mr. Gibson and his son were turning by hand a very good first crop of alfalfa, while across the fence a conspicuous patch of tall, broad-leaved, dark-green oats, standing out in a large field of good grain, marked the place where an alfalfa meadow had been plowed up last year for corn.

These two farms, with their thrifty stock, lush pastures and luxuriant crops, stood out the features of a day's trip, and would convince the most skeptical of the ultimate economy of a system of farming which involves the keeping of good stock and feeding practically all the produce on the land.

HORSES.

Toronto's Open Air Horse Show.

What could be finer and more appreciated by the thousands of lovers of the horse than the great horse show held in Queen's Park, Toronto, annually, on Dominion Day? What could accomplish more in the interests of the horse than this show? It is largely a work-horse exhibition, although the fancy horses are there, as well, and, to inspire love for their charges, nothing could be conceived which would accomplish the trick of giving each driver a chance to fit and show his horse in competition with others. It is a rare treat to the city work horse. It gives the people a chance to see them on dress parade, and does much to maintain the position of the horse in the esteem of the citizens.

The 1912 parade exceeded all others in point

of numbers and quality. There were 615 entries, and the grand parade after the prizes were awarded was some three miles in length. Think of it, three miles of horses, mostly work horses in the finest of mounted harness, and hitched to the cleanest and best-kept wagons, carts and lorries. Is it not worth while to hold such a show?

The prize-list included fifty classes, and by far the greatest turn-out was in the heavy-horse sections. In one class for delivery horse and outfit there were thirty-six entries, and it was found necessary to divide the class into three divisions, heavy, medium and light. One of the finest displays made by the heavy-drafters was the twenty-eight entries of the Dominion Transport Co. It is encouraging to horsemen to note that, in spite of the auto-truck, the heavy horse is growing in popularity, and his numbers are increasing at shows like this. Such conditions do not point very distinctly to a horseless age.

The horses assembled at eight o'clock in the morning, and at 10.15, immediately after the judging was completed, the parade, headed by a troop of the 9th Mississauga Horse, mounted on forty fine gray chargers belonging to the Robt. Simpson Co., and accompanied by plenty of music, began its course through the thronged city streets and park drives.

This was the tenth of these parades and exhibitions held in Queen's Park. The expenses of the show, amounting to \$2,600, are paid by popular subscription. There is always plenty of money to promote the horse and his welfare. Let the good work continue to grow. Every city could well afford to honor their equine beauties, thus, and, for an object lesson, let some of the people of the country and other cities make it a point to attend Toronto's next open-air horse show.

Breeding a Heavy Mare.

I saw lately in your valuable paper the question asked, "Should a heavy mare be bred?" As I have had some experience, I think I will give your readers the benefit of it. Some years ago I read in "The Farmer's Advocate" a splendid article on "Choosing the Brood Mare." I would have liked to have followed the advice given, but I was too poor, so I bought a mare with the heaves. She was a short-legged, well-built beast, with a kind, quiet disposition, and too slow for funeral purposes.

Now, I had a lot of neighbors who were possessed with a fund of scientific knowledge on horses; knew it all, in fact, or thought they did. They had not, it is true, studied in a veterinary college, but they knew all that their grandmother had read out of the almanac. They said the mare could not be got in foal; it was impossible for a heavy mare to breed; if she did breed, she was sure to abort; if she did not abort, the foal was sure to be dead, and if it was not dead, it was sure to have the heaves, too. She had been bred five times, unsuccessfully, already. They had huge merriment over my foolish attempt to breed her.

I was taking "The Farmer's Advocate," and according to this valuable paper, these wise acres were all wrong. I tried, anyway, and the result was I got a splendid mare colt—a perfect beauty, perfectly sound in wind and limb, and in every other way. She is now six years old, and no heaves yet. I bred my old mare again, and was again successful. Got another beautiful colt. He is perfectly sound, too. I know of another beautiful Clydesdale mare, a ten-year-old, still sound, whose mother had the heaves very badly.

Now, I do not advise a man to breed a heavy mare if he can get a better one. Breed the best mare you can get hold of. But if a man is poor, and has nothing else, and the mare is sound and well built in every other way, I say breed her late in the season, or just after the season is over, so the mare will have a few weeks on the grass before she foals. This will help her a lot. Read all the excellent articles on the subject published in "The Farmer's Advocate." Follow the advice given, and the chances of success are fairly good.

ALFRED G. SMITH.

Parry Sound, Ont.

[Note.—Heaves is a disease which has a very marked tendency towards being a hereditary unsoundness. It is very often the case that the offspring of a mare which has a well developed case of heaves show in their later life the same disease. Heaves do not usually develop until the horse is mature, six, seven, and often up to ten or twelve years of age. There is always the danger that the offspring will some time in life be afflicted with the disease, and, as breeding such mares generation after generation is simply perpetuating the trouble, where other mares are available it is not advisable to breed them; but,