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EDITORIAL.

Consumers seeking an explanation of the high cost of living will find a supplementary explanation in the extreme drouth of 1911 and the severe winter of 1911-12.

It has been a hard winter for pig-feeding, as many a swineherd can testify. But we have to take the bitter with the sweet. It is hard to see how pork prices can fail to be good this year.

This is the season when many a man wishes he had about ten feet of corn in the bottom of a twelve or fourteen-foot silo. He is likely to wish it again, too, about the time of the annual mid-summer drouth.

How would a man feel, or what appearance would he present, if he dispensed with washing or combing his hair for four months? Something very like that happens to a good many cows during the winter months.

More than one blessing besides good-health flows from the long, steady winter. Horse-owners have found it a great saving on blacksmith bills. A horseshoer told us the other day that it had been the worst winter for his business that he had experienced since he started, thirty-one years ago. Owing to the continued snow, often piled in drifts, many horses were left unshod, while shoes that were on stayed sharp an extraordinary length of time.

Few there are who make systematic seed germination tests, yet this is the only method of determining the real value of seed of any kind. Sowing or planting many kinds of seeds, without first making sure that they will grow and produce vigorous plants, is a serious matter, as there is danger of losing a part, if not the entire crop. These tests are the cheapest, surest and most profitable crop insurance, as far as the seed is concerned. Try it and be convinced.

In this issue we commence a series of four racy and rather illuminating articles by Peter McArthur, on the Canadian banking system. By means of illustrations which everyone can appreciate, Mr. McArthur, in his own limpid style, discusses some of the strong points and weaknesses of our much-lauded—perhaps overlauded—banking system, and makes out a strong case for some form of Government inspection or independent audit which will involve a periodic investigation of each bank, from the head office down. But we must not forestall. Read the articles. They will be found most entertaining, and instructive, as well. The subject is a live one—and one which the newspapers are not telling us much about.

From Dr. Snell's very clear exposition, in last week's issue, it would appear that those people are not wholly astray who smack their lips with gusto over the "genuine old maple flavor." The purer and better maple sugar is made, the nearer it approaches the pure granulated product of commerce. We have ourselves boiled a small quantity of sap in a porcelain kettle, producing a syrup almost as clear as melted cane sugar. It is not to be understood that such pure syrup lacks all the maple flavor, but it does contain a smaller percentage of ash and flavoring material than the old-fashioned, dark, tangy products produced by antiquated apparatus or careless methods. All the same, we prefer our syrup pure, and so do most consumers.

Essays on Road Making.

In the February 8th issue of "The Farmer's Advocate" there appeared an announcement that three cash prizes of \$15, \$10, and \$5, respectively, would be given for the three best essays on "Bad Roads and Their Improvement." A fairly large number of writers responded, but few there were who stuck to the outline given in the announcement. Some took nearly all the space discussing the drawbacks, others dealt with remedies alone, and many failed to discuss the three methods of improvement suggested, viz., by local effort, by municipalities, and by Governments acting conjointly with municipalities or other organizations. Few illustrations were given, no photographs were submitted, and the results of practical experience which we had hoped to draw out were not cited to the extent we had anticipated. Few of the writers brought out any really new ideas. However, the essays, had they followed the outline, would have been, on the whole, very good, and the three prizewinners published in this issue, are very well written, and contain many good hints. A large number of the letters not winning prizes were well written, but, dealing, as they did, with only one or two phases of the subject, could not be placed in the money. Writers must learn to confine themselves to the outline in hand. Read the essays carefully, and pick out the good points.

Prizewinners.—First, C. M. Macfie, Middlesex Co., Ont.; second, Hugh Bertram, Wentworth Co., Ont.; third, A. Owen Price, Annapolis Co., N. S.

Free Rural Mail Delivery Extension.

The popularity of the rural-mail-delivery system in Canada is attested by its rapid extension in response to calls for the service. When instituted by the former administration at Ottawa, as a preliminary expedient, the plan pursued was to give to petitioners purchasing the official mail boxes a free delivery along existing mail or stage routes, as they are called, the carrier receiving additional compensation. Persons living on other roads within reach of the former, if they desired the service, had to locate their boxes at the corners or points on the mail routes. It was soon realized that this would not long continue satisfactory. Farmers who comply with the regulations as to purchase of box, etc., and pay their due share to the support of the postal system which exists for all, naturally feel the injustice of being discriminated against because their homes happen to be located off the mail route, and, in consequence, have to go perhaps a mile or more to the corner, while the others have the boxes at their doors. As time goes on this dissatisfaction is certain to increase, unless an equitable system is put into operation. It will increase the outlay, no doubt, but through the well-settled portions of the country the postal authorities will see the necessity of departing from the position taken by their predecessors, and practically extending the service over all the lines where duly petitioned for. The expansion of the system will tend to increase the volume of postal business and the revenue of the department, and as the rural delivery is extended, the outlay for the country post offices will probably diminish, as there will be less for most of them to do. As a matter of fact, the original regulations have been already departed from. We have in mind a rural-delivery route, established in Western On-

tario, which traverses side-roads and concessions not previously traversed by any mail carrier or stage. Numbers of farmers in this case have boxes at their doors, while others, at no great distance, are denied the privilege. The time is opportune for a more systematic and general extension of the system, so that some farmers will not be placed at so serious a disadvantage as they now are, compared with others.

Sowing by Faith.

"While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease."—Genesis viii : 22.

What a fine rainbow of promise is revealed to the farmer in that verse! Out through the ages it gleams, renewing the faith of the faltering, reflecting fresh hope and courage from the blackest thunderclouds of despair. No matter what the past year may have brought forth, there is ever hope in the future—hope, too, that is no mere illusion, but based on the fully-implemented divine assurance of a regularly recurring season which, while not always filling the horn of plenty, never leaves man's labor wholly unrequited. Crops are better some seasons than others, but seldom, indeed, does the thrifty husbandman, who works in harmony with nature's laws, fail to reap a moderate reward for his labor, and never since the deluge has Mother Earth failed to bring forth fruits sufficient, if equitably distributed, to sustain the human race. As it has been since the flood, so do we firmly believe it shall be always—seasons as regular as the years, harvests ample to supply all the real needs of mankind.

But the brightest hues in this rainbow of faith are for the diligent.

"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven."

"A time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to pluck up that which is planted."

The time to plant is near at hand, reminding us, once more, how fundamentally the farmer's operations are based on faith. No wonder he is by nature devout. Into the bare ground of the early spring time he casts precious seed, withholding it often from his cattle and sometimes from the mouths of his children, that it may grow and multiply ten, fifty or a hundred fold. Against frost, flood, drouth, hail, grubs, spores, fowl and divers other forms of adversity he risks it, troubled, perhaps, but confident in the eventual outcome of his toil. And in the harvest he reaps his reward.

Modern science, so far from lessening the need of faith, rather increases the demands upon it. By faith we manure and fertilize, rotate our crops and cultivate—some of them, like corn, till the mature stalk waves splendidly in the summer breeze. By faith we treat our seed for spores of scab and smut. By faith we inoculate our legumes. By faith we ditch and tile the land, laying good money beneath the surface, out of sight. By faith we spray our trees. By faith we invest in valuable improved stock, buying for it, maybe, expensive feeds to supplement our home-grown rations, and secure the best results. By faith we invest in labor-saving implements and buildings to shelter them. By faith we rod our houses to protect against lightning-stroke. Indeed, by faith we invest and labor all the year.

Sometimes the faith may seem to be misplaced. Crops are blighted, stock destroyed, and Profit