

The Farmer's Advocate

and Home Magazine

"Persevere and Succeed."

Established
1868

Vol. XLV.

LONDON, ONTARIO, MAY 12, 1910

No. 920

EDITORIAL

We heard the other day of an alfalfa mill in Kansas which has received 50 carloads of alfalfa hay in one day, to be ground up into alfalfa meal.

"It is the details which do not cost much that make all the difference in successful calf-rearing," remarks a recent correspondent. Hear! hear! One of the truest things ever written.

"If ever degrees are conferred on those who study in Nature's University," says Walter Simpson, truly, "we will expect the skillful dairyman to get the most letters after his name."

More steam and gasoline tractors are being purchased this season than ever before for use on the farms of Western Canada. Manufacturers have difficulty in supplying the unexpected demand.

"It will be a fine day for the country," writes a British Columbia man, "when farmers come to a full realization of what alfalfa, this queen of forage plants, will do for them. Ten years ago, my gross income on this place (110 acres) was about \$1,000. Alfalfa has raised it to \$4,000."

Thirty different kinds of weed seeds were found in 13 samples of alfalfa seed examined by the Branch Seed Laboratory of Purdue Experiment Station, Indiana. One sample of seed, if sown at the low rate of 16 pounds per acre, would distribute over a hundred and seventy-five thousand weed seeds per acre! Examine the seed you sow!

"In no season," says Mr. Caesar, "should there be fewer than three sprayings for potatoes, and in most seasons there should be from six to eight." Such spraying is designed to protect not merely from bugs, but flea beetles and blight besides. Blight, and the rot resulting from the late blight, works far more disaster than many of us realize.

The cost and, in some measure, the consequences of militarism were tersely expressed by Sir Richard Cartwright recently. "I recoil with horror," said he, "from the reflection that four of the cruelest nations on earth spend two-thirds of their net revenues in warlike preparations, while many of their subjects do not know from one day to another where they will get their bread."

In one of the fruit sections of California, where all the rain that falls comes in winter, and where even alfalfa is irrigated, it is possible so to conserve moisture by surface cultivation in the orchards and vineyards that a full crop of fruit is produced. The soil in some sections is what is called adobe ground, which, if not worked up at once after being plowed, becomes so hard that an iron stake can scarcely be driven into it. Yet, by prompt and repeated cultivation, a fine dust mulch is maintained on even this ground. It ought to be said that irrigation of orchards and vineyards is practiced to some extent, but unless rainfall in winter has been deficient, it is yet a question with many fruit-growers whether the extra returns are sufficient to justify the expense. Certainly, in Canada, irrigation by cultivation is the sound policy in orchard management.

Ontario East and West.

That Eastern Ontario is less progressive than the Western part of the Province, is the conclusion reluctantly arrived at by J. Lockie Wilson, Superintendent of Agricultural and Horticultural Societies, who himself hails from the East. For instance, out of 65 spring horse shows in the Province this year, only five were held in the large territory east of Toronto. Of the 64 horticultural societies, all but twelve are established in the West; while, again, in the field-crop competitions, the numbers stand 22 east of Toronto, and 56 west.

Will some reflective genius arise to explain? That Western Ontario is settled with superior stock, we would not for a moment suggest. Is it that the more moderate climate of the Western district, favoring, as it does, a somewhat wider range of crop production, results in a broader and more all-round development of her farmers through the educational scope afforded by reasonable diversity of interests? Is the attention and interest of the farmers in Eastern Ontario tied too exclusively to the tail (or udder) of the dairy cow? Or is it that the East has been denied, in some measure, the privilege of close personal touch with the Ontario Agricultural College, and the influences that radiate from it? We suspect there are lessons of considerable importance to be drawn from a comparison such as indicated by Mr. Wilson's figures. In this connection, however, the fact should not be overlooked that in certain districts of the Eastern counties unmistakable evidences of progress are to be seen, just as in the West many sections may be found to which Enterprise seems a complete stranger. We must be careful, therefore, in drawing inferences, not to take the exceptional as typical of the average. Bearing this point in mind, let us hear from some of our Eastern Ontario readers, as well as from others.

The Best Field-crop Competition.

The grand alfalfa contest planned in Saskatchewan, whereby the growing of this magnificently valuable crop is to be encouraged by an offer of cash prizes aggregating thousands of dollars, suggests the feasibility of exploiting this queen of fodder crops through the Agricultural Societies in Eastern Canada. The fact that well-cured alfalfa hay contains nine-tenths as much digestible protein as bran, and that a ton of it is worth, at a conservative estimate, three quarters as much as a ton of bran for balancing up rations of carbonaceous feed, like corn silage, straw, and timothy hay, preaches eloquently the wisdom of growing some on every farm where patience can make it succeed. Add the further facts that

(a) It is a perennial, producing many crops from one seeding.

(b) It commonly produces three cuttings a year, aggregating, from a good stand, five tons per acre per annum, with little expense, but the labor of harvesting.

(c) It is a beginner, drawing from the atmosphere probably from one to two hundred pounds per acre of nitrogen, which, if purchased in the form of commercial fertilizer, would cost anywhere from \$18 to \$35.

(d) It has a tremendously deep root system, commonly ranging eight to twelve feet deep in hard clay, and often much more than that, braving up near the surface phosphates and potash beyond the reach of annual crops.

(e) When fed to animals it enriches the manure, which, if spread, is worth as much as would the crop of an equal amount of wheat bran.

(f) It is well adapted to hard clay hillsides, which cannot be advantageously employed for rotation of crops.

(g) It is about the best subsoiler we have.

(h) After a stand of alfalfa the land is filled with nitrogeous humus, and capable of growing better crops of corn, potatoes or grain than it probably ever grew since it was new.

(i) A limited acreage of alfalfa grown, and fed judiciously to good stock, as a substitute for bran, can be easily made to yield a clear annual profit per acre over and above harvesting and land rental of forty dollars per acre. With an increased acreage, the return would be proportionately less, but should not, usually, from a good stand, run below a clear profit of twenty or twenty-five dollars per year for a reasonable area, say 15 acres, on a hundred-acre farm. Much depends, however, upon the acreage sown and the use made of the product.

Consider these facts, and ask yourselves whether the farmers of Canada are not missing a golden opportunity by failing to make more general use of alfalfa. J. Lockie Wilson, Superintendent of Agricultural Societies for Ontario, is taking hold of the subject, and intends to push it hard. He has suggested that it should be adopted by some societies in the standing field-crop competition. The idea is a good one. Indeed, the Government would make no mistake in setting aside a liberal appropriation for the special purpose of encouraging alfalfa growing all over the Province, and some of the other Provinces might well follow suit. Alfalfa is a splendid thing. Take hold.

Winter Cattle-feeding in Alberta.

A net profit of over \$14 per head on steers fattened for three and a half months on Alberta hay and grain, is reported as the result of a very interesting experiment in cattle feeding which has been carried on during the past winter at the Lacombe Experimental Farm, Alberta. The object of the experiment was to throw light upon the possibilities of profitable winter fattening of stock upon the fodder and grains obtainable in that district. Heretofore, the winter in Alberta has been merely a period of carrying over cattle, the weight becoming less, rather than greater, as the season wore on, reliance being placed upon the summer pasturage alone for putting on fat, and getting them into condition for sale. The results of this experiment are so favorable as to make Alberta farmers stop and think, and possibly embark in the business of holding their grass cattle, instead of selling them in the fall, when beef is cheap, and of fitting them for sale in spring, when prices are high, and beef scarce. This would be a radical change from the ranching style, but would be a great thing for Alberta farmers. The dread of soil exhaustion would be removed, employment in winter would be furnished, and another avenue of income opened for Albertans who are already favored in that respect.

The cattle in the experiment numbered eighteen, and were ordinary grade steers, bought by G. H. Hutton, Superintendent of the farm, at an average price of \$3.66 per hundred. The average weight when bought was 1,130 pounds. They were fed on an open corral on timothy and prairie hay and a mixture of frozen wheat, barley and oats, ground together, costing two thirds of a cent per pound. The feeding period lasted 109 days, and the average gain was 188 pounds per head, a daily average gain of 1.72 per cent. The cattle, when sold, March 30th, were in fine form, averaging 1,318 pounds each, and did not do well. A price of from 1 to 1 cent higher than that usually paid for the best beef was received, the cattle being