

# Farmer's Advocate

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### EDITORIAL

#### Farming as a Business.

The tenor of the general remarks of professors of agriculture, whether in or out of college work, regarding farming is, that it is the noblest of all professions, and therefore the best sphere for men of brains and capital to engage in, more especially those who desire to get close to nature and smell the Mother Earth. The horny handed sons of toil when these sentiments were first dropped from the professor's lips, either said—"Buncombe," aloud, or looked of that opinion; although we must admit that there is a marked change in the farmers' attitude towards agricultural college education of late years. The investigation into the cost of producing farm products referred to in another column demonstrates beyond cavil that, in addition to being a profession, *farming is a business!* Once that opinion is generally accepted and held by farmers, advancement in agriculture will be far more general and rapid than now, and many questions such as transportation and marketing of the products of the farm will be rendered easier to settle satisfactorily. The summary of results then should be studied carefully—never before has such valuable data been available, collected as it is, on the ground, and under actual farm conditions. Investigations of this kind will tend to develop the faculty of *farm management*, a quality in which many are lacking, and for which under the ordinary wheat farming methods there was little call. Many farm enterprises are carried on at a loss, despite the fact that men work hard, in fact some are driven like the galley slaves of yesteryear. It is also a fact that the apparent prosperous financial condition of many farmers is due, not to the products of the farm and from their work, but actually and virtually from the rise in land values. They have in many cases capitalized the unearned increment, by selling the land at big advances on the original purchase price. Such a pleasant state of affairs cannot be expected to continue for ever, in fact is sure not to, as weeds increase and land prices fall to legitimate (based on the returns that may be obtained from such, on the invested capital) values.

#### Our Expensive Experiments.

The director of the central Dominion Experimental Farms, Dr. Saunders, has shown commendable enterprise in publishing bulletin No. 55, which contains the results of the trial plots of crops at the different branch farms. As a reference the bulletin is valuable. It should be, as within its thirty-five pages, four of them prelude, is contained practically all the new agricultural information that the superintendents of the five Dominion farms will be able to contribute to the general fund of such knowledge.

In presenting this bulletin Dr. Saunders says: "During the past twelve years experiments have been conducted on uniform trial plots at each of the Dominion Experimental Farms, for the purpose of gaining information as to the most productive and earliest ripening varieties of grain, fodder corn, field roots and potatoes. In arranging for these plots the same varieties have been sown at each of the farms, the seed being supplied at the outset from a common stock. In each case the seed has been sown early, and, as a rule, all the different sorts of the same crop have been sown on the same day, or at most within two or three days so as to give to all an even start. The land chosen each year for these plots has been as

nearly uniform in character as could be found before sowing has been brought into a good condition of tilth."

This paragraph sets down the policy of the Director, a policy not endorsed by most practical farmers, and we believed not by the superintendents of the different farms, as being too essentially general and academic in its aims. It adds no considerable amount to the fund of practical knowledge to know that a certain variety of grain yielded so much at Ottawa, something different in Nova Scotia, a slight variation at Brandon, more or less under Mr. McKay's masterly hand, at Indian Head, and a certain quantity in British Columbia. But Dr. Saunders seems to be possessed of the idea that these comparative tests between the experimental farms in the different Provinces fulfils the objects for which the farms were established and for which they are maintained at a large expense. This is not accusing the experimental farms of being no good, but to emphasize the fact that they are not being used as extensively as they might be, to solve the problems which arise in the particular province in which they are located.

Dr. Saunders perhaps is reading provincial authorities a lesson; namely, that if they are in need of an experimental farm to work out provincial problems—and every province has problems peculiarly its own—it should establish a farm or farms for the purpose. We submit that the governments of the western provinces obtain definite information upon the question, lest they be found leaning upon a broken reed by depending upon the Dominion Experimental farms to work out their agricultural salvation.

#### The Problems of High Priced Lands.

A strange paradox exists in some parts of the nation; land is of such a high value that it is valueless to those who would utilize it. In other words the land is worth so much that tenants cannot pay a demand to capital and secure a remuneration for their labor. These lands have attained to their present valuation from the fact that they contain the elements of potential wealth through being fertile and located convenient to good markets. To the owners they fail to give a fair dividend upon their estimated value, because tenants cannot be obtained who are capable of making these farms pay. Men are even scarce whose knowledge of farming is bounded by the operations of seeding and threshing, while the men who can make a profit off these high priced lands must have an all round technical knowledge of farm practises and possess more than the average amount of executive ability. Such farms offer to those who work them the undisputed social advantages of a town life in the country, the conveniences of modern utilities; such as phones, electric cars, delivery of mail, etc., and a constant market for all kinds and any quantity of farm products. In return the farmer must be able to utilize all these advantages, so that they will yield a profit. He must have his own original plans built upon a sound scientific basis. It is a case where more depends upon the animate fertility of the farmer's brain than upon the inanimate fertility of the soil.

These are the reasons why the people to the east and south of us are scurrying back to school. Their winter fairs have been crowded with men engaged in the task of getting a remuneration for labor expended upon land, that first requires a large part of its product in the form of a dividend to satisfy the demand of capital. Agricultural college halls are bursting with young and middle-aged men intent upon studying out problems of crop improvement, animal economy, soil fertility, and other questions upon which they have had little more illumination than the light of practical experience, which, though very concentrated in its rays, is

necessarily not as wide spread as might be desired. These are the men who are now and will in the future make farming a profitable and pleasurable occupation upon high priced lands, and the moral is, when the internal conditions which exist about a farm are improved, a greater amount of intelligence must be put into its management. The conditions upon our farms are constantly improving.

#### The Odd Numbered Section to be Available for Preemptions.

A welcome change in the administration of Canada's public farm lands is forecasted by D. W. Bole, M.P., who announces that a bill will be introduced this session which will provide legislation so that those settlers who have not yet had a second homestead or preemption, will be enabled to do so, on payment of a small fee and the performance of certain settlement duties. Such a move is one distinctly in advance of any made recently by the Department of the Interior, and is a statesmanlike move. This move will be beneficial to the whole country as it will tend to diminish speculation in land. The proposed law should also be drawn up so that a homesteader on an even-numbered section might in case of there being a vacant quarter on the same section or on an adjacent even-numbered section, be enabled to get his preemption there, and thus have his land handy and convenient to work. When it is considered that out of one hundred and seventy-million acres (170,000,000) of habitable lands, forty million have been given to homesteaders and thirty two million to railways, twenty-five million being reserved for schools and Hudson's Bay lands, the intended move is a right and proper one for the government of the day to make, and the right way to dispose of the seventy-three millions of acres remaining, more or less fit for settlement. We believe that the government when drafting the bill will be well advised to set aside of the seventy-three million acres, some ten millions for educational purposes, namely for primary and technical schools, agricultural colleges and universities. With the rapid increase of population there will soon be need for the extra provision suggested, and if such lands were handled as now, sold by public auction, we should have a splendid endowment for education for years and years to come.

#### The Grain Exchange and its Relation to the Marketing of Wheat.

It has been asseverated time and time again by farmers that the Grain Exchange fixed the price of wheat on the western markets, and as often denied by those claiming to have inside knowledge, that the corporation mentioned had anything whatever to do with the matter; in fact the opinion has often been expressed that the Grain Exchange is nothing more than a club for men in the various branches of the grain trade, which elicited the retort of one of the members of the agricultural profession; to wit, that the organization mentioned is "a club to use upon the farmers." If it is a club, we can then understand how it is that several government officials, the chief grain Inspector, and the Warehouse Commissioner, are found as members; if not, and the organization is a grain trade concern, it would look better, if the said persons were not members of the Grain Exchange, seeing that *they are expected to be strictly neutral*. We have always contended that the work of the chief grain Inspector was as good as could be had, but we question the wisdom of a government employee holding a membership in the Grain Exchange. The same objection applies to the Warehouse Commissioner.

Whether the Exchange has anything to do with fixing prices ought to be settled in the

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