

The Farmer's Advocate and Home Magazine

"Persevere and
Succeed."

Established
1866.

Vol. XLII.

LONDON, ONTARIO, SEPTEMBER 5, 1907.

No. 780.

EDITORIAL.

SEED CORN SELECTION.

The corn acreage in Canada steadily increases. With the increase of acreage, comes a greater demand for acclimated seed corn of strong quality. At present much of the corn we plant comes from the United States, and while some of it is fairly good, much is poor, and so long as the present indifferent system of selection is practiced in the corn belt, we cannot reasonably hope to secure a better supply from that accustomed source. It is encouraging, therefore, to find that, with proper care in growing, selecting, harvesting and storing, Canada may well raise her own seed corn, and that, particularly in some of the southern counties of Ontario, a large and profitable trade in home-grown seed corn may be built up. The possibilities of such a trade are indicated by the repeated success of several enterprising farmers who have specialized on this branch of husbandry. Some of these not only make splendid exhibits at the winter fair and various seed shows, but use our advertising columns to excellent advantage each spring, in offering the products of their thrift and pains to fellow farmers in less-favored sections. The Canadian Seed-growers' Association is doing some valuable work in this line, and Prof. L. S. Klinck, Agronomist at the Macdonald College, Ste. Anne de Bellevue, Que., is also making special efforts to arouse an interest in the increase and improvement of the Canadian supply of home-grown seed corn. His addresses on seed-corn selection at the Ontario Winter Fair and elsewhere have been very instructive, and it will pay our readers to peruse carefully at this season the extracts we reproduce elsewhere from an address he delivered before the Canadian Seed-growers' Association in 1906, on "Methods of Storing Seed Corn." The article on the same subject by G. I. Christie, whose contributions last spring on corn-growing aroused so much interest, is likewise worth careful reading. Their contributions bring out several points: First, allow the seed corn to mature as fully as possible. If the main crop is for ensilage, perhaps an acre or two of the best portion of the field may be left standing to husk or to use for the second filling of the silo, in order that selections for seed may be made from this part. The proper place to select corn is in the field, before it is cut. Select large, well-matured ears, of typical shape and character, from the kind of stalks it is desired to propagate. Where well-developed twin ears can be found, we strongly advise the selection of these, in order to establish and perpetuate the habit of prolificacy. In addition, Mr. Christie contends that it is desirable to select from stalks that bear the ears at a medium height, attached by a shank of medium length that will allow the ear to turn over and hang down. It is a question in our mind whether too much weight should be attached to this consideration. Size of ear, depth of kernel, type and prolificacy occur to us as the most important factors. Afterwards, the minor points may receive attention. Many dollars are lost yearly by the average farmer through indifferent selection of seed corn.

In storing, the important points are to hang or deposit the corn in a cool, dry place, where a free circulation of air may take place around and through it, and where it will be safe from rats and mice. There are many ways of storing, but one of the simplest and most convenient, where only a small quantity is to be kept, is to braid the attached husks into strings four to six feet long, which may be hung over a pole or suspended from a hook. Another good plan is to tie the ears together in pairs by the husks, and then hang

these over a wire stretched between two points. Corn so hung is protected from rats. Other methods are discussed in our farm department. Both Mr. Christie and Prof. Klinck emphasize the importance of preventing the corn from freezing until it is quite dry, else the vitality of the kernels will be seriously reduced. These points are all easy to observe, and will repay manifold the little trouble they cost. There are big profits to be made in this work of seed-corn selection. Get the boys interested. Begin this year.

THE REAL SOLUTION OF THE FARM - LABOR PROBLEM.

In previous issues we have discussed the labor problem in its national aspects, and, analyzing the causes, pointed out that our academic school curricula were largely responsible for having prejudiced the youth of our country against manual labor, having tended to overcrowd the professions with the brightest and best sons, while failing to train either sufficient practical, enterprising men of affairs or enough efficient laborers to serve in the ranks of the agricultural and industrial army.

In the constant drain from farm and workshop, the farm suffered most, because the whole bent of our school systems has been to discount the advantages of farm life, and to develop an unbalanced social instinct that led most of the clever boys and girls to prefer town to country. In fact, the tendency has been to make teachers, lawyers and doctors of all who could be drawn to these professions, and tradesmen, mechanics and city laborers of as many as possible of the remainder, leaving on the land only the slower boys, with, fortunately, a few others whose instinctive love for the farm and voluntary appreciation of its advantages prevailed in spite of the irrational schooling to which they were subjected. It is not exaggerating very much to say that about all that an ill-conceived school system could do to depopulate the rural districts has been done by ours in the older Provinces of Canada. Hence, notwithstanding many helpful, corrective influences, such as a steadfast agricultural press, Departments of Agriculture, Farmers' Institutes, Agricultural Colleges, and all the rest—notwithstanding all these influences, the practice of agriculture has not made anywhere near the advancement it might reasonably have been expected to make. One result has been a class of overly conservative farmers, who have, as a general thing, been slow to adopt the improvements in methods that would increase the productiveness of the labor they employ, and thereby enable them to compete in the labor market on more even terms with city employers. And the same school systems which have tended to depress the average of enterprise among farmers, have had an equally marked effect in prejudicing the ordinary working man against farm labor. So, our school systems have been, like a double-edged sword, operating both ways to bring about an acute farm-labor problem.

What is to be done about it? With many people, the first thought was immigration, and only disappointing experience in this direction has impelled them to look any farther. The view is now taking shape that, as pointed out in the article, "Immigration and the Labor Problem," while a reasonable number of thrifty, self-reliant immigrants are always welcome in Canada, any systematic drawing on this source of supply is inadvisable from the standpoints of efficiency and citizenship. Any nation which cannot supply the people to man her own occupations has something radically wrong in her internal economy, and her

first business should be to attend to this. In Canada, the chief trouble has been in our educational systems. The situation that has developed and is developing should be regarded as an imperative call to every Province to remodel her whole school system in the light of her needs. Meantime, the individual farmer who is awake to the situation can do much to help himself by studying his business anew, so as to economize labor, eliminating unprofitable work, and seeking more expeditious, more economical and more profitable ways of accomplishing all farm operations. Hand labor must be superseded by horse-power wherever possible, and the two-horse team by the four-abreast. The farmer must study the labor problem from the laborer's standpoint, as well as from his own. In making these changes, he will be likewise increasing the productiveness of his own labor, increasing the wages he can earn himself on his own farm. When we have a larger class of capable, progressive farmers, trained in the scientific principles of their own business, alert to the signs of the times, and eager for improvements in methods, advancement in agriculture will proceed apace. It is just such a class of farmers and just such an improved agriculture that we may expect to develop under a more rational system of public education. There is no reason, however, why we should stand and wait for that change in educational policy. Let us take hold at once and bend our mental energies to the task of increasing the earning power of every day's labor applied to the land. That is the only satisfactory solution of the farm-labor problem, but it promises much.

A YEAR TO READ.

From present appearances, the coming winter will be a good one in which to read agricultural papers. Crops, on the whole, seem likely to be light. Indeed, oats and hay have already proven so. In financial circles, "tight" money is the general complaint, and it will be a matter for congratulation if the winter of 1907-08 does not usher in an era of something like close times. At any rate, light granaries and not overlaid feed lofts will test the feeder's skill in wintering the stock economically, yet well. And next year good management will be required in the fields and about the farm generally, in order that the flush of prosperity which has been with us these several years back may not pale and vanish. Anyone can farm in good years when all runs smoothly, when there is abundance of crops and good prices for most kinds of field and animal produce. But the hard years tell. They bring out strong the contrast between good methods and bad, between economy and waste, between intelligent, clear-headed farmers and the shiftless, indifferent class. In crop rotation, cultivation and drainage; in breeding, selection and feeding; in marketing and general management, knowledge counts. Little savings make big profits. The man who does things a little better than his neighbors gets ahead when they fail. He adds to his bank account in the lean years when they borrow money, or, what is worse, run bills. It pays to be alert for improvements, for the things that go to make business success, and especially important is this in the leaner years. Wherefore we beseech our brother farmers to make use of their opportunities, and to begin by subscribing for a first-class agricultural journal, so as to get in touch with the latest and best agricultural progress, to learn what others are doing, and to receive the thought stimulus that comes to every man who reads from week to week articles dealing in a practical way with the problems in his every-day calling. He