

ALFALFA—A Prosperous Yankee Settler

By J. E. GUSTUS, Calgary, Alberta

So ancient is the wonderful alfalfa plant, that it probably grew luxuriantly in the Garden of Eden. Abel, as likely as not, grazed his flocks upon it, and it may have been grown for years by Noah, without irrigation. However this may be, its earliest home of which we have record, was in Western Asia, 450 B.C. It was next carried to Greece, Italy and Spain, and then across vast waters to Chili. From South America it migrated to Mexico and California, thence into the irrigated valleys of Kansas, Texas and Nebraska, and finally finds a home in the agricultural rotation of most of the other states. This has been a march triumphant, hand in hand with the most advanced methods of diversified agriculture.

In Kansas, a quarter of a century ago, the writer saw two successive crops of grain scorched brown by the hot winds that blew from the Gulf States. He also saw countless millions of grasshoppers there, devouring everything they could "lay hands on." The story goes, that the appetites of these grasshoppers were at times so ravenous, that, after having consumed everything else in sight, they would actually begin to eat farm implements, such as wagons, etc., leaving only the indigestible tires. This was "Bleeding Kansas," where wheat had been king, and corn was struggling for existence. At this time the western half of the state was dominated by prairie dogs and buffalo grass, and formed a part of the "Great American Desert." From Colorado, where today it produces more wealth than her rich mines, alfalfa was brought into Kansas. Here it found the conditions above stated, and many discouraged and starv-

ing farmers leaving the state. It soon set to work clearing out the grasshoppers and repelling the hot winds, neither of which have since returned. In due time it began to pour wealth into the farmers' pockets, loosing their shackles of mortgage, and opening fat bank accounts for them. And now Kansas farmers who, years ago came out in "prairie schooners," enjoy the luxury of paid-for automobiles, and many other modern conveniences. Little wonder, then, that Kansas now grows a million acres of alfalfa, the forage and seed of which are annually worth more than \$25,000,000.

Invasion of Canada

But we are in Western Canada now, the pearl of all the King's domains. Even here Kansas has exerted a mighty influence upon agriculture. It was but a dozen years ago that a farmer from Kansas brought with him to Southern Alberta, a few bags of Turkey Red Winter wheat. This he planted, and ever since Alberta has produced millions of bushels of the finest winter wheat grown on this continent.

With the advent of the "American Invasion," about ten years ago, came farmers who had previously grown alfalfa successfully. They began to plant it on small areas, as did our experimental stations also. Those who procured seed from hardy varieties such as the well known Grimm's, or Turkestan, grown in the Northwestern States, are today owners of thrifty fields of the plant. Our experimental farms at Indian Head, Sask.; Lacombe and Lethbridge, Alta., after several years of successful tests, state that alfalfa

can be profitably grown as far north as Prince Albert and Edmonton. Mr. Hutton, of the Lacombe station, states that last year 800 farmers, living between Calgary and Edmonton, grew alfalfa, and that out of this number, but one reported that he could not "make it go."

Mr. Fairfield, of the Lethbridge station, is growing on his own farm, as fine a half section of alfalfa as can be seen anywhere, and he is also demonstrating it successfully at the experimental station. Mr. Fairfield is responsible for the statement that last year in Southern Alberta 6,000 acres were growing luxuriant crops of alfalfa, and that such farms are in demand at \$85.00 per acre. Ten years ago, what today are the vast grain belts of Alberta and Saskatchewan were in undisputed possession of the ranchers. Ten years hence, the writer predicts, alfalfa will be as common on these areas as it is today on the prosperous farms of Kansas, Colorado and California.

Governments Court Alfalfa

Even governors and statesmen proclaim the value of this plant, and earnestly seek its favors. Just now the Province of Saskatchewan is offering its farmers liberal cash prizes for the best ten-acre fields of alfalfa they can show by 1914. The announcement of the prize offerings is as follows: "Why should \$6,300 in prizes be paid for alfalfa fields in Saskatchewan? This seems a large amount for such a purpose, and it is. Less than this amount is paid in prizes for the whole year for wheat or for oats, or any other single crop grown in Saskatchewan.

Why, then, this generous offer of four \$500 prizes, four more of \$400 each, the same number at \$300, as many more at \$200, and another four at \$100, and still four more at \$75 each? It is because some men in Saskatchewan know that alfalfa can be grown successfully here, and believe that the value to the farmers of this province from growing this wonderful forage crop, abundantly warrants the expenditure of every cent which has been pledged to carry this competition along."

With respect to the chances for success of alfalfa in the province, and the character of soils upon which it is grown, the bulletin announcing the prizes offered, states as follows: "There is great variation in the climatic conditions in this province, and there is just as great variation in the nature of the soils which have produced alfalfa successfully. The heavy clay of Regina is producing it, and nearly every kind of soil upon which grain crops grow support alfalfa. "Sandy loam," "heavy clay loam," "black mould," "chocolate clay," "loam with sandy clay sub-soil," are some of the descriptions furnished by alfalfa growers, of the soils which produce their crop.

It is now definitely learned that Alberta is not to be outdone by Saskatchewan in the inducements offered to its farmers to engage in alfalfa culture. At this writing, Hon. Duncan Marshall, Minister of Agriculture, is engaged in working out a plan by means of which liberal encouragement may be offered to farmers of Alberta, who will cultivate the valuable legume.

Not only will Saskatchewan and

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OPEN AIR SERVICE AT GANANOQUE, ONT.—A SUMMER SCENE IN THE LAKE OF THE THOUSAND ISLANDS