



Everything Begins and Ends with the Soil

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FIELD TRIALS OF ALFALFA
Have been conducted for some time in Western Canada with varying results, but the very poorest of these demonstrate beyond all doubt that, with decent attention, this priceless legume can be raised and is being grown in the three provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta with no less satisfactory returns on the average than it is yielding in most of the states across the line. We cannot in one plateful hand out all the returns that have reached us, but in this issue a few of these will be found; we invite the most searching inquiry and will continue to publish details as space permits.

NO FAULT CAN BE FOUND
with local conditions except where (as in the most prolific alfalfa country to the South) there will occur patches which were never intended for this crop; where it might be grown, how-

ever, were the absentee soil constituents made good, but no one will care to speculate in artificial methods while the natural plant-feeding properties are to be found almost everywhere in abundance, only awaiting a common-sense application of the very modest requirements of nature.

MUCH WILL DEPEND ON THE SEED. At a recent conference in Eastern Canada a very able paper on the alfalfa crop was read by one who had experimented successfully, and who had made an exhaustive inquiry among his neighbors who had been using their land and their brains to the same end. One important conclusion was that where acclimatized or home grown seed of good quality had been employed in the experiments, there had been an all but uniform success. Disappointment had invariably followed the use of imported seed, especially from the middle and distant south, but this is only what is to be expected, not only from alfalfa, but from any experiment in which an exotic is suddenly dragged from its warm bed and dumped without ceremony or apology into any old soil.

BUT THIS IS OLD NEWS to many of our readers. For years quite a number of farmers and Canadian seedsmen have been quietly but steadily working with alfalfa, not in small experimental plots, but in bulk and with astonishing results in many cases; so much so that we venture to say that any one desiring seed upon which he may reasonably bank in producing the most gratifying results can now obtain it in fair quantity and at a reasonable figure. What he has got to do on his part is to ascertain that the land which he purposes to set aside for it is not an impossible patch of swamp or for other reasons unsuitable for alfalfa.

THERE ARE NOT MANY FARMS if there is one in Western Canada some considerable portion of which is not perfectly adapted for alfalfa. The weakness is not in the soil or even the climate. So far it has been on the part of

the farmers. Wheat, everlasting wheat, has engaged so much of their attention that they simply have not bothered, not only with alfalfa but with other things of no less import to first rate agriculture—corn to wit. With all our research in these parts there are still "unexplored remainders" in the soil content of our very back yards that hold (in solution, figuratively speaking) a wealth of productive energy representing "riches beyond the dreams of avarice."

SOMETHING NEW TURNS UP EVERY SEASON to give the assurance that the soil and climate of Western Canada imposes no limitations that are not to be expected at practically any point within the temperate zone. Quite a pleasant confirmation of this was given at the annual conference of the Horticultural Association held in Winnipeg last month, by A. P. Stevenson of Dunston, Manitoba, who is entitled to no less of the public homage of that province at all events than is the plant-wizard Burbank to that of the world at large. He has successfully grown cherries as large and as luscious as any that reach our northern markets from the South, and will continue to produce and to multiply his products till they are as common on the market as the indigenous blueberry is today in its season.

THE END IS NOT IN SIGHT and no one can set a limit to what may be done in the near future in the Canadian West. Experiments unfortunately have been conducted in many cases in such a slovenly and indifferent fashion that they practically amount to nothing. There is need for a deep-seated seriousness on the part of the individuals who consent to "assist" the efforts of the government or of any one else setting out to do the thing thoroughly, but a man who undertakes the responsibility of establishing data in alfalfa or corn or whatever it is has no right to the privilege if he has not the gift of continuance. Eternal vigilance is here if anywhere the price of success.

IT IS NOT GENERALLY KNOWN that in certain portions of northern Manitoba there exists in many sheltered spots a wealth of indigenous plant life that we are not supposed to find outside of a sub-tropical belt. This fact has been known for a long time to a few men who ride a scientific hobby, as well as the infallible indications of insect life that accompanies it. But to the people who are working on the economic end of the business, the matter has offered no more information than they find on a dead wall. They are blind to it but the knowledge is free and at first hand and we can supply it to any one who cares to make use of it. Experts can be fooled and are more often than they care to admit bamboozled in their own particular domain. But you can't fool those diminutive creatures of the forest and plain. The instinct that leads them to their food-plant rarely mis-carries, and they point the moral

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