

Farmer's Advocate

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EDITORIAL

Knowing How and Doing It.

There is many an industrial institution that goes down because it is not able to get enough capital to just pull it through a crisis. The man who is always just a little behind with his work is quite familiar to us and we have all of us wondered that if we turned in and helped him to catch up, how long he would be apace with his work. It is a safe guess that the next day even if it were Sunday would find him in the same hurry. All of us at times are rushed a little beyond our pace, but the average man usually manages to keep his work in line. These remarks are anent the point raised by our correspondent from whose letter we quote.

EDITOR FARMER'S ADVOCATE:

"I see an article in your issue of August 14th headed 'The Eternal Bugbear.' Now I am afraid you have not quite grasped the situation. The trouble is not so much that farmers do not understand the necessity of getting rid of weeds, as it is owing to the small profits in farming. We often have fields of grain we know should be plowed up but we have payments to meet and we must get what we can out of the crop to meet them, although we know it is not good farming.

"The so-called business men of this country and Eastern Canada seem to think the farmers of the West are making large profits, a great mistake, which I know from twenty-six years' experience.

"The cost of humble farm implements and all other manufactured goods and labor have got to such an enormous price that farmers have a hard time to make a living except on new land, so you will find thousands of farms in good localities for sale because the owners know they cannot clear them and make a living. I have been discussing this weed question with quite a number of our best farmers and they seem to think the same."

We think we understand that there are a lot of men who do not believe that "whatever is worth doing is worth doing well," but we disagree with them. At the same time we understand that it is an easy matter in these days of high priced labor to do a thing so well that the extra time spent upon it makes away with the profit that should result from the work. These days are testing men's ability to farm and those who know just when enough work has been spent upon a certain job, or a given piece of land to make it yield the maximum profit overwork performed at the present cost of work, are the men who will be and are marked as the "successful" farmers. In fact, it is in their ability to tell how much is enough and what too little work upon their land that the secret of their success lies. There is in the management of every farm a certain imaginary limit of expenditure of time and labor below which if a man stops the returns for his crop will not pay for the little work he has already done, and above which up to another certain point the extra work done represents varying degrees of clear profit. Nor does this success depend solely upon the bulk of work done. The doing of work just at the right time, and that by the way is generally just before the average man does it, often effects more good than considerably more work done at another time.

Luckily this is not simply theory. We have the "successful" farmer in every community. His farm is the most free from weeds, his crops the largest, his stock are generally just a little above the average, his fences in repair, his buildings neat and trim and everything about the place reflects the presence of a directing mind.

If we were to be asked why there are not more of the "successful" type of farmers in the country, we would say that the habit of compromise becomes too prevalent and the art of good farming has not yet become an imperative necessity. Men are too ready to say "good

enough" because of the extreme generosity of the soil in the past, and of the tendency upon the buyers of stock to discriminate against the man who raises the best, but this policy is responsible for the unfarmlike condition of many of our farms. There may be a deal of truth in what our correspondent says, that farmers are not lacking in knowledge of what should be done, but we are certain that there is not an over supply of natural knack for farm management.

Making a Choice.

The enquiry of one of our readers, in another column, as to the nature of the course at the Manitoba Agricultural College, is no doubt identical with that being asked by many other young men. The complexity of the problems of life always impress a man as he gets on in years and comes in contact with them. Few men there are who have not wished that they had a larger theoretical knowledge of their work and the man who has not expressed such a wish is nursing in his system a most colossal self-satisfaction that is not of any use to himself and an annoyance to his friends.

There are many young men who have asked themselves the question: will it pay me to take a course at an agricultural college? Will I be better off financially and socially if I spend two winters and probably three hundred dollars at the college than if I stayed at home and work and save money? The writer well remembers when some twelve years ago, he analysed the situation with relation to his own prospects and decided then that for the man who had a living to make with his hands that a better use could be made of his strength if his brain were able to lend more help. The conclusion has proved to be sound from the standpoint of a hired man, from that of an actual owner and manager of a farm it is doubly true.

For the average bright, level-headed Canadian farmer's son, equipped with a fair public-school education—all the better if he has spent a year or two in High School as well—we believe the questions asked may be answered without hesitation in the affirmative. However, no worthy ex-student would think of gauging the benefit merely by the extra money his college education enables him to make. The courses are and should be practical, for only a practical curriculum can sufficiently attract and effectually uplift the farm boys of the country. The worth and dignity of practical knowledge is very properly exalted, but the greatest benefit from a useful education is not the dollars and cents there may be in it, but the mental and manual discipline developed in the student, the intelligent interest aroused in his life-work, and the opening of his eyes to the vast field of knowledge about him—a field which his course, so far from exhausting, merely qualifies him to enter and explore in after life. It gives him a key to unlock the mysteries of agricultural science, which rivals astronomy in its fascinating interest, and is fraught with far more real, substantial benefits to mankind. We once heard a farm boy say that if he were going to be a farmer he would want to take a course in astronomy or theology, so that he might have an interesting hobby to enliven his life-work. If that lad would take a course in an agricultural college, he would change his mind on that score. He would make a hobby of his occupation. His problem would be how to master the intricacies of soil chemistry, manures, fertilizers, the life-histories and means of combating weeds, insects and fungous pests, plant breeding, selecting seed, farm forestry, and a thousand and one other lines of practical research, now so generally neglected. It would tend to keep him out of ruts of practice, make him a progressive, thinking farmer, and stimulate a joy and interest in his work. Work would become a pleasure; and when work is a pleasure, life is a pleasure.

But why multiply arguments? Surely most of the farm boys of Canada who expect to engage in the noblest and one of the most difficult of all callings have seen enough and heard enough to convince them of the wisdom of taking a two-years' course in a good agricultural college. Two or three hundred dollars will defray the necessary expenses, and seven months for each of two winters is a short time to spend, considering the advantages to be gained. In the American Republic the attendance at these courses is increasing by leaps and bounds. Will Canada lag behind? Where hundreds now attend these institutions, we should have thousands. Sit down, young man, and think it over, and then send in your application early and secure admission. You will never regret it. The college course and college life will enlighten, inform and broaden you out. It will make you a better farmer, a better husband and father, and a better citizen of the neighborhood and of the nation at large. It will lift you out of the neighborhood groove and introduce you to the larger agricultural outlook of the world at large. Will it pay? Ask those who have been there.

Meat Inspection.

On the first of this month the Dominion Meat Inspection Act came into force by the provisions of which expert meat inspectors are placed by the Dominion Government in every abattoir throughout the country. The Meat Inspection Act was framed to prevent in Canada a repetition of the abuses that were charged against the Chicago packers, and the arrangement is welcomed alike by public and packers. The latter can now put their product out with the enhanced value and prestige that "government inspection" gives to it and the public feel more secure from danger of contamination through diseased meats.

The Season's Compensations.

The dampness of the season is not without its compensations. In Alberta where often crops are short and grass dry for need of rain they are reaping a large harvest and cattle were never seen to do better. Further east one of the chief causes of fear is that the grain will ripen too fast for the want of a few showers. This year moisture has not been lacking. In Manitoba the rains of late July and August saved most of the crop on the southern side of the province from a total failure, and put in the fields a promise of from ten to fifteen bushels to the acre. On the ranches the cattle needed just such a season as we have been having. There was a lot of depleted vitality to be regained and the rains kept the grass green and abundant, long after it usually has become brown, yet not so soft that stock would not ripen up. The range cattle have made up more than could have been expected of the weight, numbers and vitality that they lost last winter, and the dairy farmers of foothill province have benefited by the persistent springing of new grass. This condition prevails all over the stock raising country north and south and already the cattle trade is beginning to feel an easy tone. People are heard to remark that there will be cheap beef to make up for dear wheat and while the numbers of cattle that will come off our Canadian ranges is fully fifty per cent. short of what it was in 1906, still the ranges and feed belts to the south are turning off large consignments.

But while the season illustrates the law of compensations it also emphasizes the wisdom of diversity in farming. The man who has been less worried about the drouth first, the rain next, and the frost last, ruining his crops, is the man who is not a specialist in any one line. Lard that is given a chance to do several of the things it is capable of doing, and also permitted to do these things in turn will give a better account of itself than if it is kept doing one thing under all conditions of climate, and this not forgetting the greater amount of work involved in so handling land.