

The Farmer's Advocate AND HOME MAGAZINE.

THE LEADING AGRICULTURAL JOURNAL IN THE
DOMINION.

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A Federal Election is Still Unnecessary.

Again there are rumors in the air of an early general election in Canada. The political parties are lining up for the fray which at the present time would be a useless and unpopular political muddle. There is no issue; then, why an election? Any election without an issue sinks into the depths of political mire for controversy. "The Ottawa Citizen" in the following editorial puts the case right:

"The question has arisen, in view of the approaching legal death of the present parliament, whether an election should be held or an extension of the term of office of the administration agreed upon.

"If there are no constitutional obstacles in the way it is difficult to see why the present government should not be allowed to retain office for several sessions longer, at least. The people of Canada realize that we are at war and that for the present and for some time in the future all our concern must be the successful prosecution of the conflict. We must appreciate that we are as a nation in war session. When the great war is over the period immediately following peace will be one of reconstruction; not that intimate reconstruction which often takes years and which in the case of the Southern States after the Civil War was so productive of bitterness and misunderstanding, but of national readjustment of our domestic ideas and world relations. Here we may differ as to our home policy, and it is at this time and this only that we should ask the administration, which will have held office during the period of actual warfare, to place the issues before the voters.

"During the lifetime of the war there should be no appeal to the people. On the whole the government is handling the Canadian end of the Empire situation very ably. There have been some serious mistakes and some scandals have come to light, but obviously the administration is doing its best and has made some radical changes in the method of awarding contracts and in investigating the more serious charges, which prove its sincerity and earnestness. It is not fair to mix

up general politics with the actual conduct of the war, and it is regrettable that such attempts have been made at this time. There is nothing to show, nor is there any reason to believe that the opposition would have handled the war operations from the Canadian end any better than the present government, no matter how decided opinions may be as to the relative merits of the two parties in their general policies. And this is really the only matter that should concern us at the present time.

"The present or the immediate future is not the time for an election; such a contest would only serve to further disturb the already unsettled business conditions of the Dominion, and, no matter what the result, would not improve our military administration and aid to the common cause of Empire which should be our sole aim at this time."

The country has confidence in the men in power to do their part to prosecute the war to a successful conclusion. A new party coming in would do no better if as well. The only question in the minds of the people is the war. Since political investigations have cleared up things at Ottawa everyone believes that everything possible is being done to keep Canada capable of doing her share at the front and at home. The other side have nothing better to offer. The confidence of the people rests with the leaders. Then, unless constitutional difficulties demand it no election is necessary.

How the Farmer is Handicapped.

The recent wet spell has served in many ways to show how the farmer is sometimes handicapped in getting his work done. A few fine days followed a long season of rainy weather in wheat harvest. Those men, so situated as to be able to get sufficient day labor, succeeded in harvesting their crop before rains fell again, and so saved it. Others not being able to get extra help, were compelled to leave a considerable portion of their crop in the field to be wet time after time. The city business man or manufacturer, when needing extra help for a few days has little or no trouble in obtaining it. He simply puts an advertisement in his local paper, and, especially in a time like the present, when there are many unemployed gets numerous applications from which he selects the needed workers. The farmer has no such alternative. At the present time many unemployed are loafing around the city streets. Very few of these are willing to go to the country to help with the harvest. The farmer, living more or less remote from the city, might advertise for men as the city business man would do and get no answers. At the same time his crop may be rotting in the field. The farmer is often criticized by men in other business for not making an effort to hire and keep more men on his place that he might have them during the busy season. It does not pay to keep a man around with nothing for him to do and no one can blame the farmer for caring very little about the unemployed when these men will not show interest enough in the farmer's business and in their own welfare to go to the country to help during a rush season. The farmer is handicapped in this particular and a season such as this brings it home very vividly.

Nature's Diary.

A. B. Klugh, M.A.

An extremely interesting plant is the Milkweed, *Asclepias syriaca*. It has so many points about it which make it most attractive to study—its wonderful adaptation for insect pollination, the number and variety of insects which visit it, the sweet perfume of its flowers, the peculiar character of its juice, the beautiful arrangement of its seeds in the pod, and the exquisite quality of the silk which is attached to the seeds.

Among all our plants the most elaborate structure to ensure cross-pollination is found in the Orchids and the Milkweed. If we examine a milkweed flower carefully we see that there are five little green sepals, which when the flower is fully open, are hidden by the corolla. The corolla consists of five petals, pale mauve in color, and reflexed. Inside the corolla (See Fig. 1) is a crown of five hoods, each hood having projecting from it an incurved horn. These hoods contain the nectar. The centre of the flower consists of a large, sticky disk—the stigma. (See Fig. 2). Between each two hoods there is a slit-like pocket, wider at the top than at the bottom, and at the bottom of this pocket can be seen a black dot. Behind each hood are two anther-cells, containing pollinia or pollen-masses. Fig. 3 shows

a cross-section of a flower and it can be seen that an anther cell from each of the adjacent stamens lies against the pocket. The pollinia of these two cells are joined by little stalks to the black dot at the bottom of slit referred to above. This black dot is called the corpusculum and is hard and horny with a notch in its upper side. Fig. 4 shows the corpusculum, with its notch and the two attached pollinia.

Now when an insect, attracted to the Milkweed flowers by their odor, visits them in search of nectar its feet slip on the smooth, dome-like exterior of the hoods, and it only secures a hold when a foot gets into one of the pockets. When it has drunk up the nectar and wishes to proceed on its journey it tries to pull its foot out of the pocket, with the result that the foot slips downward until it comes in contact with the corpusculum and catches fast in the notch in its face. If the insect now forcibly draws its foot out it brings with it the corpusculum and the two

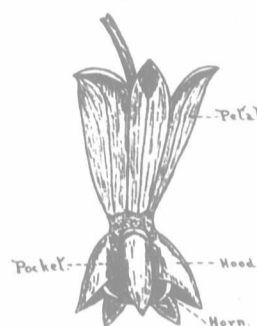


Fig. 1.—Milkweed flower. (Magnified 2 1/2 times.)

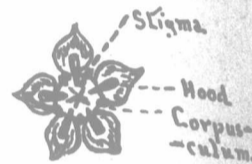


Fig. 2.—Milkweed flower. (Seen from end.)

attached pollinia. When the pollinia are first withdrawn they stand wide apart, but as their stalks dry they are brought close together, so that when the insect visits the next flower the two pollinia are introduced into the wide upper part of the slit-like pocket. As the lower part of the pocket is too narrow for the pollinia, as the insect's foot slips downward in the slit the little stalks of the pollinia break and leave them in the upper part of the pocket, where the pollen-grains germinate and their tubes enter the stigma.

As may be judged from the above it takes an insect of some strength to be able to pull its legs free from this trap-pocket, and such is the case, for we frequently find insects hanging dead with their feet in the slit.

The milky juice which exudes when the Milkweed is injured is not the sap, but it is a fluid contained in special tubes and is termed latex. These latex tubes are situated near the surface,

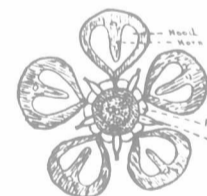


Fig. 3.—Cross section of flower of milkweed. (Magnified 5 times.)

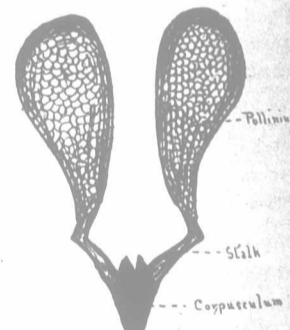


Fig. 4.—Pollinia and corpusculum of milkweed. (Magnified 20 times.)

so that a comparatively shallow wound causes the latex to flow out. This fluid is undoubtedly useful to the plant, as it is extremely acrid and thus renders the Milkweed distasteful to herbivorous animals. When dry this latex is elastic, is insoluble in soap and water but soluble in chloroform, thus having the properties of crude rubber.

The pod of the Milkweed is one of the most beautiful seed capsules to be found in nature's garden, the seeds being arranged in a most exquisite pattern on the central support, and each seed having a tuft of the finest silk. The seed of the Milkweed is wonderfully adapted for dispersal as the silken tuft serves as a balloon to carry it in the air and the margin of the seed is of cork and acts as a float if the seed falls into the water.

We recently heard of a case where two boys, the sons of two farmers having large farms and big crops to harvest, are being encouraged to enlist. It does seem that it is carrying things too far to put on a campaign for greater production and then draw away the men before the harvest is complete for military work. These boys are doing effective work at home, and, while under the voluntary system no one can say who should enlist, it does not seem that such farm boys should be taken if they can do better service at home.