

From a Dozen Tractors to Hundreds of Them

Such is the Story of the Tractor Development in Ontario in the Past Four Years—Is the Day Coming When Each 100 Acre Farm Will Have Its Tractor?—By F. E. Ellis, B.S.A.

MY first tractor observations in Ontario? I remember the occasion well. Four years ago last spring I was driving along a country road in one of the best agricultural counties that fronts on Lake Ontario. Ahead of me in a field next the roadside I saw a crowd of men sufficiently large to have attracted a Farmers' Institute speaker, or let us say, have formed a stables farmers' club. I had had some experience with tractors in Western Canada, and from the sounds coming from the midst of that outdoor assembly, I knew that I was about to see my first tractor at work in Ontario. No wonder the whole community had turned out to witness its starting! Not one of the men present, I ascertained, had ever seen a demonstration of power plowing, and the operator of the machine had had just a few hours' instruction from a representative of the company, from whom he had purchased. That season, this particular machine was one of 12 farm tractors operating in Ontario.

That was just four years ago. This summer I have found tractors wherever I go, if conditions are at all suitable to tractors. They are not yet so common but that they attract more than passing interest from farmers in general but it is seldom that I see a crowd gathered around a tractor in operation. The tractor has proven its merit and is more or less taken for granted. Farmers may yet debate the wisdom of purchasing a tractor for use on a farm of moderate size or a farm that is rough or heavy; but they are no longer sceptical of the ability of the tractor to go and keep on going at all kinds of field work. They have shown their faith in the tractor to such an extent that the tractor population of Ontario now numbers well over 700 machines. Probably there will be over 800 in operation before the fall season is over.

The tractor was due to take its place in Eastern Canada in any case, but the war is undoubtedly responsible for the rapid adoption of power farming methods, and in hastening its introduction the provincial governments have played a large part. Early in the war the Ontario Department of Agriculture, as a part of its program for increased production, purchased a number of tractors and rented them out to farmers on an acreage basis, the fees charged being nominal. So successful were the first experiments in this line that the number of government tractors was increased just about as fast as deliveries could be made and last spring the Ontario Government had a fleet of well over 100 tractors plowing and preparing land for crops in almost every county of old Ontario. A couple of other provincial governments followed a similar policy, although not on anything like the same scale as in Ontario. The Quebec Government, for instance, is still purchasing tractors for use in that province, and there are government tractors at work in Nova Scotia. Perhaps the greatest result of this experiment of government ownership of tractors, is that farmers everywhere were given an opportunity of studying tractors in operation and as a result, they themselves have now purchased tractors in great numbers, and probably it was the work of the government tractors which made it possible for the Dominion Government to dispose of all of the Fordson tractors contracted for in the early part of this year. All that remains now is for the Eastern farmer to select his size and determine on the type of tractor that he prefers.

The Size of Tractor. In determining on the size of tractor which will prove most profitable, the Ontario farmer can benefit by the experience of farmers in other provinces and states where tractors came into common use some years ago. In Western Canada, for instance, the very large tractors, operated either on steam or gasoline, were first introduced. A



A Tractor Demonstration in Quebec.

This is one of several tractors recently purchased by the Quebec Department of Agriculture for the use of the farmers of that province. The tractor seen in the illustration is operating at Rimouski.

few proved successful and are still in operation. I believe it is safe to say, however, that the majority of these big tractors are not now in use. And they were not abandoned because worn out. When in Western Canada several years ago, I saw many of these tractors standing in barnyards and four corners, while the plowing and other field work was being done with horses. Even under the ideal tractor conditions of the West, the heavy tractor did not prove universally commendable. At present, however, the West is getting into tractors at an astonishing rate, but they are of the small and medium sized types, such as we see at Ontario tractor demonstrations.

In Ontario also the first tractors were big ones. Mr. Tretheway of Toronto had one of the first tractors in Ontario, a large sized machine, and from the fact that he never said much about the tractor, we are probably safe in assuming that it did not prove satisfactory. Mr. R. J. Fleming, on whose farm was held the tractor demonstration was held two years ago, also attempted following the lead of the West in introducing a big tractor to his Ontario farm. Writing in a recent issue of Farmers' Magazine, R. Russell Fleming, who is managing the Pickering farm, tells of his experience with this tractor as follows:

"It is just three years now since we invested in our first tractor, a 15-30 of one of the most common types seen in the West. Here, of course, with a large proposition on our hands it was but natural

that we should try to imitate Western conditions. As we do our own shreshing and silo filling, it was essential that we have a large machine to do the work; and having a large engine it was natural that we should use with it a large gang plow. We were not entirely blind to some of the disadvantages of introducing on to an Eastern farm a large plow unit; but thought that any difficulty might be overcome by taking down fences and making larger fields. There was, however, a limit to this owing to the rolling nature of the land and the presence of many ditches. Moreover, the many grades in the fields which, with horses, never bothered us, became a serious proposition when our engine, crowded to its capacity on the level, refused to take them until one or two of the plows were removed. What was a difficulty in dry weather was more than accentuated in wet weather. So that finally, we abandoned the idea of using this machine for ploughing, and now use it only for belt power."

Tractors at Walkerside Farm.

A tractor of the same make and size as that used by Mr. Fleming is also in use on the Walkerside Farm in Essex county. On this farm conditions are ideal for the large tractor. There are 2,500 acres of land that is almost absolutely level. When I visited the farm early this spring, the foreman, Mr. Cramer, showed me the plowing they had been doing with the big tractor in sod, and was A. W. Here the big tractor seems to be holding its own. Perhaps it is significant, however, that of the six tractors now operating on this farm, five of them are machines of moderate size and Mr. Biggar, the manager, as a result of their experience, would be the first to recommend that on the average good-sized farm in Ontario, a medium-sized tractor be tried. On the Fleming farm two small tractors are now in use and they are giving first class satisfaction.

The other extreme in tractors is also to be avoided. Four years ago there was a general opinion among farmers that the smallest tractor made was destined to be the most popular. All who were in attendance at the first tractor demonstration at Guelph will remember the sensation caused by the appearance of a small 5-10 tractor—that is, one with five horse power at the drawbar and 10 horse power on the belt. This tractor at Guelph handled two plows and ended up with a big stiff-tooth cultivator. It always had a crowd around it. At Cobourg a couple of weeks ago, the same company exhibited a tractor of the same capacity, but much improved. It received no more than its share of attention, and larger machines of the same make were evidently more popular.

Three factors will influence Ontario farmers in selecting tractors of medium-size—the heavy character of much of our land, its contour and the necessity of using tractors for belt power. The average soil in Ontario and in much of Quebec is heavy, and the prairie soils of Western Canada, or the Western States. It was found, for instance, that the 14-inch plows which were commonly used in the Western States, could not handle Ontario soils at all satisfactorily. The experience of Mr. A. M. Zoulier of New Hamburg is typical of the experience of many other of the early tractor users in Ontario. Mr. Zoulier started with 14-inch plows. He found they were not satisfactory and purchased a gang with 13-inch bottoms. He is now inclined to believe that 10-inch bottoms would be even more satisfactory. It requires more power to turn over Ontario land than Western land, and this, in most sections, is enough of itself to make the smallest sized tractors impracticable.

Tractors all have difficulty in working on a (Continued on page 24.)



Any Kind of Field Work May be Expeditiously Carried Through with Tractor Power.

On many farms in Ontario last spring as much of the work on the land, with the exception of drilling in the seed, was done with tractor power. The binders were operated by the tractor, the fall wheat ground was prepared by the tractor, and the new silos are now being built by the tractor. The range of usefulness of the farm tractor is constantly extending, and as new uses are found for it, the investment becomes correspondingly more profitable.