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Plant Breeding

What is known as "plant breeding" is recognized as an important part of scientific agriculture. By a process of selection and elimination following judicious and careful crossings, seeds are secured which possess an extremely high degree of vitality and corresponding productiveness. In the Ontario Agricultural College experiments along this line have resulted in the obtaining of perfect samples of grain suitable for planting in this country. As an instance of the vigor and productiveness of this perfected seed it is pointed out that last year from one grain of Mandscheuri barley no less than 1,545 grains were obtained, while from one grain of Siberian oats 1,583 grains were obtained. Under the breeding process only the most vigorous plants are retained, the weak ones being discarded.

Floating Mines on the High Seas.

The destruction of the Japanese battle ship 'Hatsuse' on the high seas by floating mines supposed to have been placed by the Russians, has naturally suggested the enquiry whether such placing of mines is not contrary to the methods of civilized warfare recognized by international law. Vice-Admiral Algernon De Horsey has written in the London Times a letter in which he says that the use of mines by a belligerent to defend harbors or roadsteads is unquestionable, and the laying of mines on open coasts in territorial waters as traps for the destruction of the enemy's ships may be within a belligerent's rights. On this point, however, he will not express an opinion. But the laying of mines in the open sea beyond territorial waters, Admiral DeHorsey says, would seem to be not only inhuman but a breach of international law and practice. The mine which destroyed the battle ship 'Hatsuse' might equally have been fatal to any neutral ship of war or innocent merchant ship of any nation navigating those seas. "Is it conceivable," asks the Admiral, "that if Britain were at war, we would be justified in endangering the ships of neutral nations navigating the English Channel by placing destructive mines in that highway beyond our territorial waters? If it should prove true that the destruction of the 'Hatsuse' was effected by a mine willfully placed in the open sea ten miles from land, the act appears to me to be one of wholesale murder, and its perpetrators to be hostile humani generis. It does not appear that Japan has entered any protest against Russian action in respect to the use of mines. Both belligerents have employed this terrible weapon of warfare freely in territorial waters for the destruction of each others vessels, and it is perhaps not certain that the mine which destroyed the 'Hatsuse' and others which are said to be floating on the high seas were placed there by the Russians. It is possible that these are mines which have broken from their moorings and drifted out to sea, and there may be a doubt whether the mine which sank the 'Hatsuse' were laid by the Russians or by the Japanese.

Drowned in the Oromocto.

On Sunday, May, 22nd, there occurred on the Southwest Branch of Oromocto lake an accident in which two prominent citizens of St. John lost their lives. On Saturday a fishing party, composed of Messrs. John H. Thompson of the firm of William Thompson and Company, R. P. Foster, manager of the Royal Bank in St. John, E. P. Stavert, connected with the Bank of New Brunswick, and Messrs. G. Wetmore Merritt, A. W. Macrae and E. F. Jones, had gone up to the Southwest Branch, intending to remain over the twenty-fourth. On Sunday morning all went out on the lake, the three first named being together in one boat, and the others being in another and larger boat. About noon Messrs. Merritt, Macrae and Jones returned to the camp for dinner, the others preferring to remain out longer and fish. After noon the wind became very strong and about two o'clock as the boat in which Mr. Thompson and his companions were was sailing toward the lower end of the lake it was struck by a violent squall and capsized. All three were thrown into the water. Mr. Thompson managed to get upon the upturned boat and Mr. Foster, with the assistance of Mr. Stavert, also got hold of the boat and supported himself in this way for a time. Mr. Stavert then resolved to attempt the swim to the shore, a distance, it is said, of three-quarters of a mile. If it was half the distance it is proof of his remarkable strength and power of endurance

that through the icy and boisterous waters and encumbered with heavy clothing he succeeded in his undertaking. When the shore was reached Mr. Stavert swooned and did not revive until about night, when he was so weak that he could only crawl into the woods, where in his wet clothes he spent the night. The next day, though very weak in body and mind, he wandered through woods and swamps on the shore of the lake, and in the afternoon, when his strength seemed entirely spent, emerged into a clearing where he was seen and rescued. Mr. Stavert's condition appeared for a day or two to be precarious, but he is now recovering his strength. On Monday morning the overturned boat was found about seventy-five yards from the shore of the lake, and later the bodies of Mr. Thompson and Mr. Foster were found in the vicinity. It is believed that they had held on to the boat as she drifted shoreward until she reached shallow water when the anchor caught and held her. Then the unfortunate men had gradually succumbed to the cold, and losing their hold upon the boat, had gone down. The accident is in many respects an exceedingly sad one, and has made a deep impression upon the community. Mr. Thompson was fifty-six years of age, and one of St. John's most successful and best known business men. Mr. Foster occupied a prominent position in the Royal Bank, and both were highly respected.

New Marconi Stations.

It is reported that the Canadian Marconi company has completed arrangements with the Dominion Government for the erection of seven wireless telegraph stations. Four of these stations, it is said, will be built as follows: Fine Point, Heath Point, Point Amour and Belle Isle. The first is on the Gaspe coast, Heath Point is on Anticosti Island, Point Amour is on the Labrador coast, and the Belle Isle station will be located on Belle Isle. The stations mentioned will control of the northern passage, being all within easy distance of any vessel taking the route north of Newfoundland, either in or out of the gulf. These four stations are to be erected during June, July and August of this year, and Mr. Fishbank expects that they will all be complete and in working order by the time mentioned, if not sooner. Much of the material, he says, is already manufactured, but there are houses to erect for the operators, poles for the carrying of the currents to be placed in position, etc. The remaining three stations covered in the contract between the Government and the Marconi Company are located at Cape Race, Sable Island, and one along the Atlantic coast, probably at the Straits of Canso. As soon as the first four are in working order the construction of the latter three will begin. According to the contract with the Government, all must be in place and working satisfactorily by June 30th of next year. In each station will be located two men, one for day and one for night duty, so that there will be a continuous service without a break. By the contract the Marconi Company will erect the stations at their own expense, and after their completion the Government will take them over but at the same time the Marconi Company will control the management, the Government allowing a stipulated sum for maintenance. Government messages will be sent free, while commercial business will come under the control of the Marconi Company, the Government reserving the right however, to regulate the tolls. The Marconi Company also bind themselves to give all possible aid to vessels in distress. At the present time a few of the Allan Line steamships are fitted with the Marconi wireless, and it is expected that not only will the remainder of this company's large fleet be equipped with the same, but that all other operating in the St. Lawrence will follow their example.

Effects of the War in Russia.

A Russian correspondent of the London Times says that the war has already begun to produce a serious effect upon the economic life of Russia, and a St. Petersburg paper presents reports which go to show that commerce and industry throughout the country are passing through a severe crisis. The practical cessation of trade with Siberia caused by the monopolization of the railroad for military purposes, is felt in many provinces of European Russia particularly in Moscow, where several large houses are insolvent. But of all parts of Russia Poland probably is suffering most from the war. Directly after the outbreak of hostilities a number of foreign

banks shortened their credit to Polish firms, and the embarrassment thus caused has had an extremely depressing effect on the highly developed industry of this region. The closing of the far eastern market has also done its work and the crisis has reached such a pitch that in Lodz alone 150,000 persons are out of employment. In Odessa, to which every summer about 20,000 come from the neighboring provinces to work, the docks prefect has found it advisable to request the Governors of the provinces to warn the laborers that their services will probably not be required at the harbor this year, and a number of factories have dismissed their employes or are working half time. Gloomy reports are presented of the home industries in Nijni-Novgorod, and it is stated that on certain railway lines including the Kazan-Railway, a large proportion of the employes have been dismissed. The industrial depression prevailing in Russia before the war has been intensified to a high degree and the easy assurances of certain patriotic journals that Russia can lightly bear the strain and sacrifices imposed by the war are not justified.

Ministerial Efficiency and Church Union.

The subject of church union is discussed by the Toronto Globe in connection with the question of ministerial efficiency. This question is unquestionably one of great importance. It is shown that in the three denominations, the Methodist, the Presbyterian and the Congregationalist of Canada, there are upwards of three thousand trained and ordained ministers. By education and natural endowment, it may be assumed that they are peculiarly fitted for leadership in the communities where they serve. In a rural community there are three ministers where one would be sufficient. The three have other outlying congregations under their care, the one would have a more compact charge, a large congregation, a competent maintenance and no rivaling or competition. From the point of view of the general life of the people what would be the result? It is not apparent, as the Globe goes on to show, that the union of congregations and the substitution of one minister for three would be in all respects beneficial. "That question cannot be answered without first considering the quality and resourcefulness of the one minister who takes the place of three. Eight out of ten of the problems of the church are at bottom problems of the vitality, effectiveness, and staying power of the ministry. One truly equipped man, a master workman, well furnished, alive and aware, is better and more to be desired than three or six or a dozen incapable weaklings. The whole tone and temper of a community's life, socially, intellectually, spiritually, may be elevated and sweetened by the presence and influence of one broadly-cultured, noble minded minister in whom are combined and embodied the spirit of Christian manhood and the genius for spiritual leadership. But what if the one minister is no more effective than any one of the three whom he supercedes? Each of the three had something distinctive in thought, or experience, or personality. In the sum total of their contribution to the better life of the community each was the complement of the others. The three may have been only average men, but what if the one is only an average man? Will the community greatly profit by a union which involves the withdrawal of two-thirds of the moral leadership? This is no abstract question, nor is it of concern only to church members. The man in the street has an interest in it, for, apart from the logical and ecclesiastical matters, the minister is one of the few men in many a community who by equipment and circumstances are qualified for leadership. That he too often misses his chance, buries his talent, misuses his time, busies himself with secondary rather than with primary affairs, or is bound hand and foot with the grave-clothes of a false and sterile academic training—all that may sometimes be true, and yet it remains that the ministry has almost unequalled opportunities for leadership in what is best in the life of a community. And for this reason a change so radical, reducing the number and removing not only competition but incitement, is of interest to all thoughtful men. Is it likely that the ministry under the new order, even with the improved conditions, would prove more attractive to a higher type? Are the homes and congregations rearing a generation of the larger mould? Are the colleges being manned and equipped for the training of more, virile and resourceful candidates? At bottom the question is to no considerable degree a question of ministerial quality and power."