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EDITORIAL.

The Mighty Eastern Struggle.

A reader desires us to state the cause of the war going on between China and Japan, and its probable consequences. The cause has already been given in these pages, but for the benefit of new subscribers, and those who overlooked the statement, we repeat it in substance. It has been the implacable and unswerving determination of Russia to extend its dominions and its powers eastward in Asia, and to share in Pacific Coast development and trade. To this end the Trans-Siberian Railway was constructed to connect Russia in Europe with the Pacific Coast, over 6,500 miles long. Vladivostok, the terminal port in Siberia, faces the great sea of Japan, but is ice bound three months in the year. Through Manchuria, nominally a part of China, extends a branch of the Trans-Siberian Railway down to Port Arthur, a splendid open port. Between Manchuria and Japan lies the independent "Hermit Kingdom" of Korea, peninsular in form. Manchuria is not unlike portions of Canada and the Northern States, rich in undeveloped resources, and capable of sustaining a population of 50,000,000 people. To control this land has been the policy of Russia, and the next move Japan feared would be upon Korea. Japan is growing in influence and population, and would expand towards Korea and China in trade and influence, though she conceded by treaty the absolute independence of Korea. At the close of the war between Japan and China on April 17th, 1895 (nine years ago), Southern Manchuria, including Port Arthur, Talienhwan, and the entire Liao-Toung peninsula, was ceded by China, under the treaty of Shimonashi, to victorious Japan, but of the fruits of that war, and her rights under that treaty, she was, to put it in plain language, robbed. Russia, Germany and France formed a triple alliance, and addressed a joint note to Japan, intimating that the peace of the Orient would be endangered by retaining the territory ceded to her by China. It was the game of Russia, but France and Germany had their interests in the East to serve in assisting. French, German and Russian battleships hovered on the scene, hopelessly overmatching the Japanese navy. The Japanese people clamored for war, but her statesmen knew that, in measure exhausted by the war with China, she was not prepared for further conflict. England, alone, might have blocked the game, but she did nothing. Little Japan submitted to her fate, and in two days withdrew her claim to, and her authority over, the ceded territory, so swiftly did the triple alliance strike. Then Russia secured from China the right to extend the Trans-Siberian Railway through Manchuria, and aided China in meeting her war debt. Various other concessions were secured in Manchuria by Russia, and last of all, on March 27th, 1898, the Chinese Government leased, for twenty-five years, the ports of Port Arthur and Talienhwan to the Czar of all the Russias. From that hour, with all her power and speed, she has been fortifying her military and naval position, with the evident determination that there she proposed permanently to remain. A further step in the Russian policy was the settlement of a large colony of her people in Manchuria. Here, then, lay all the inflammable materials necessary to precipitate a war for which both Japan and Russia steadily prepared. Diplomacy went on, and negotiations, whereby Japan hoped to stay the aggressions and secure the retirement of her

powerful foe. The long season of parley resulted in no concessions that Japan regarded as satisfactory, and on February 9th Japan struck the first naval blow, administering at Port Arthur defeat to the Russian fleet. The probable result and consequences of the war are beyond human ken. It may be protracted, because, though Russian strength may be thrice that of Japan, the latter has her base of supplies right at hand. The Japs are brave, resourceful, indomitable, and fired with deep resentment against Russia. They battle for honor, and what they believe to be national existence, while Russia moves forward in implacable pursuance of faith in her foreordained mission to dominate the world. A gentleman who spent many years in Japan, and is thoroughly conversant with the character and aspirations of the people, in conversation with the "Farmer's Advocate" staff upon this subject the other day, ventured the forecast that the war might terminate in a "draw." Whatever the result, one consequence is very certain to be the further opening of the Asian empires to trade with America, which has already begun to flow across the Pacific in increasing volume.

Early Seeding.

While the conditions existing in many districts this spring may not admit of early seeding, it will be the part of wisdom to be well prepared to push seeding operations as soon as the land is in fit condition. The early sown grain, when the soil is properly workable, almost invariably makes the most rapid growth, and yields the heaviest crops, but it is just as important in the case of most soils, and especially clay land, to avoid working it till it is sufficiently dry to work without poaching, and exposing it to the danger of baking afterwards. In the case of clay soils, where parts of the fields are higher than others, and liable to become too dry and hard before the lower parts are dry enough to cultivate, good work may be done by harrowing those high places for the purpose of conserving the moisture and keeping the land friable, so that it will work up fine and mellow when the whole field is ready to cultivate.

If the theory advanced in our last issue by the valued contributor who is writing for us a series of articles dealing with problems of the soil, namely, that for best results, spring cultivation on fall-plowed land should be no deeper than the depth at which it is desirable that the seed grain should be deposited is sound, and it looks reasonable, it opens up a very important question, as its adoption would greatly reduce the necessity for heavy horse-power, and indicates that an unnecessary strain has been imposed upon horses in the matter of cultivation. The old doctrine that good farming could not be done without deep plowing has in late years been pretty thoroughly discredited by the successful results of shallow surface cultivation, and the application of manure as a top-dressing, instead of burying it in the bottom of a deep furrow. And the indications now point strongly to the wisdom of paying more attention to the conservation of moisture by frequent shallow stirring of the surface soil than to deep cultivation. Good crops would appear to be dependent upon a sufficiency of moisture more than has been generally recognized. If by keeping up a good supply of humus in the soil, by the growing and plowing down of clover, the surface application of barnyard manure, and by stirring the surface by frequent shallow cultivation, the mois-

ture-retaining power of the land may be increased, as it certainly will be, the secret of success in securing uniform farm crops, even in unduly dry seasons, would seem to have been discovered. We have seen remarkably good results from harrowing a crop of grain after it had been sown a week or two, the blades being prevented from coming up by the packing of the particles of soil by a heavy rain, followed by high winds and a hot sun, encrusting the surface and rendering it practically air-tight, and we are confident that, heroic as this treatment may seem, it might profitably be adopted more generally than it has been.

Fall-plowed land intended for corn, roots, rape, or other fodder crops, would be greatly benefited by harrowing once or oftener soon after a rain in the spring, to conserve the moisture and keep the land in a condition to be easily cultivated and brought into a fine tilth when the time for sowing arrives, besides the advantage in hastening the germination of weed seeds and their destruction. This question of conserving soil moisture is bound to claim closer consideration by the farmers of this country. In seasons of sufficient rainfall we are apt to lose sight of its importance, but we need not expect a continuation of wet seasons, and should be prepared for the opposite contingency. There were districts in which on the first of June last year, owing to drouth, the prospect was that crops would be a failure, but a few showers in that month saved the situation. Had those rains not come when they did, the result would have been disastrous. There will be times when the showers are too long delayed, and in that case the land that has been intelligently handled to make the most of the early showers by securing an earth mulch will give a fair crop where failure will be written over against that in the case of which no effort has been made to store up moisture for a dry time.

Colonial Fruit Show.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, December 13th and 14th, the Royal Horticultural Society of England will hold an exhibition of colonial fruit and vegetables, together with preserved fruits. The exhibition will be held in the society's new horticultural hall, in Vincent Square, Westminster. Special steps will, no doubt, be taken by the Dominion Department of Agriculture in order that Canadian fruits and vegetables will be properly represented on that occasion. The secretary of the Royal Horticultural Society is Rev. W. Wilks, M.A., 117 Victoria St., London, S.W., Eng.

Sugar-beet Growing.

Government tests, backed up by two years' experience on Ontario farms, demonstrate the adaptability of the soil and climate of the Province for sugar-beet cultivation. Properly grown, our beets rank very high in percentage of sugar and purity of juice. Prof. R. Harcourt, of the Ontario Agr'l College staff, has devoted a great deal of time to a thorough investigation of this subject, and the "Farmer's Advocate" is able to quote him that, with the experience gained, sugar-beet growing is going to be one of the most profitable crops on the farm, and will have a very beneficial influence upon agriculture in general.

An Eye-opener.

I am a new subscriber, and would not do without your paper for double the money, as there are lots of eye-openers for farmers in it.
Pontiac Co., Que.

P. F. M.