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EDITORIAL

The Flax Crop

Professor Bolley in a letter to the flax growers of North Dakota discusses the gradually decreasing acreage being sown to flax in the northwestern states and cautions them against following a system of farming by which eventually this crop will cease to be grown in North Dakota, as it has ceased to be grown, except in a small way, in what were formerly important flax-producing sections of the northwestern country. His remarks are worth pondering by flax growers in this country.

Recent investigations indicate that the notion that flax is destructive of soil fertility is unfounded. Rotating the crops, treating the seed for the prevention of root disease and the selection of pure varieties will enable flax to be grown on the same farm year after year without seriously impairing the supply of fertility, or rendering the soil "flax sick." The flax crop is too profitable to be lost by careless cultural methods, especially in a country where the number of grain or seed crops that may be grown is as limited as in the West.

Figure the Cost of Production

Every farmer should have a definite idea of what it is costing him to produce crops. What does it cost to produce an acre or a bushel of wheat? Less than one per cent. of the men working land can give even a fairly approximate answer. It is known in a general way that when crops are good and prices pretty well up, profits correspond, and that when drought or frost or some other devastating agent hits the country and cuts down yields, profits are reduced, or a loss even may be registered. But to know this much is not enough. This is merely instinct. As an old Scotchman once remarked, sheep sometimes are as wise as men. When the grass between their teeth

is sweet and plentiful they chew on it and are satisfied; when it is sour or scarce they bleat and butt. And that is as far as their concern goes — sometimes, too, as far as man's.

It entails a little figuring, but it is well worth while to keep account of the labor cost of growing each field of crop, to charge against the field a reasonable rent and a proportion of the upkeep and depreciation of machinery required to till it. These facts known, production cost may be calculated. The information is valuable as a basis for comparing returns from different crops, and gives a definite idea of profits. Start now with the fall preparation of the land and know next harvest what has been netted over the cost of the farmer's own labor, the work of the men and teams, cost of seed, depreciation in machinery and interest in the capital invested.

The experiment station of Minnesota found, when the returns of farmers in that state were investigated, that the average was 4 per cent. on the investment. Some were making money, others losing, and few knew exactly how they stood. Each should know for himself what he is doing, and if losing stop the leak.

Faith vs. Works

It is an ill wind that blows nobody any good, and probably in the end a little adversity and hard luck does more good than harm, to a man or to a nation of men. The present year struck sections of this country harder than the boosting element cares to admit, but in the end it will be for the country's welfare. Prosperity that is too easily attained makes men careless. A jolt or two once in a while does good.

This year Western Canada is reaping a wheat crop, estimates of which run from 85 million to 120 million bushels. Normally, we should have had 160 million bushels, or better. Because the clouds did not precipitate in season we are out forty or fifty million dollars on our wheat crop, and nobody has yet estimated what in oats, barley, flax, hay and other farm products.

Humanity has not succeeded yet in getting control of rain-making. The people of Puget Sound thought they had, but the government wouldn't loan them artillery to bombard the clouds to make the moisture come. Some day perhaps some genius will come along with a scheme for controlling the elements, but not likely in this generation. We have to skimp along best we can. Fortunately, in the matter of getting, or rather holding, moisture for crop growth we have made some progress. All that is needed is to act generally on what is known. This year has taught forcibly the lesson that dry farming advocates have been pounding into us for the past decade.

Some have been struck hard because their tickling of the earth's surface did not yield forth abundance. Some who did heed the warnings have not reaped much of anything. But, on the whole, this country would have garnered quite a large part of the fifty or sixty millions she is short in wheat if there had been less faith and more work. Faith is all right in its place, but the soil packer has it beaten to a standstill when it comes to growing wheat in a dry year on the prairie.

The Forthcoming Sheep Sales

Inquiries indicate that more interest than was expected is being taken in the auction sales of sheep which the Sheep Breeders' Association of Manitoba propose holding at three points in the province some time in October. The interest is warranted. More sheep are required on Manitoba farms. Unless it is horses, no class of live-stock give better direct returns and none are more indirectly valuable. "Sheep," says a prominent authority on Western farming, "are the solution of our weed problem. We may legislate as much as we wish, but we cannot legislate weeds out of existence. A few sheep on every farm, and the adoption of a system of farming which keeping sheep entails, would increase our annual grain production and do more to get rid of weeds than all the statutes now on our law books, or all the efforts that can be put forth under a purely grain-growing farming system." He is pretty emphatic, but in general correct. More sheep are needed, and the forthcoming sales are an opportunity to get them that should not be overlooked.

Raise More Horses

When Geo. B. Hulme, the noted horse judge, was in Winnipeg recently placing the ribbons on choice animals in many of the horse classes, he took advantage of an opportunity at the stock luncheon to tell farmers of the Canadian West that they should go in extensively for raising horses of all kinds, including army remounts. "In Western Canada," he said, "you have the best climate in the world, and an abundance of food and water that the horse wants."

This is just what many others who are in a position to speak with authority have said. Feed can be produced in abundance at low cost; for the most part the water is satisfactory; the climate is such that with reasonable care horse flesh is developed to perfection. In spite of these facts, it is remarkable how few farmers really try to raise enough horses to increase their annual cash returns. Some will not be bothered with colts around the place; others consider that there is a chance that after they have paid the stallion service fee