

The Farmer's Advocate AND HOME MAGAZINE.

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DOMINION.

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Clean Seed Essential.

Farmers are just about unanimous that good crops cannot be produced from poor seed; this much is axiomatic, but the rush of seeding often induces a great many up-to-date farmers to neglect treating their seed for smut, scab and other fungous diseases that exact a heavy toll. We know of individual cases where farmers have become black listed at threshing time because their grain was so dirty that neighbors would not go to their threshing. Such cases are the exception, of course, but there is too much neglect in the spring of the year because farmers have not been prepared, when they had time, for the busy week or two that is sure to come in April or, in a late spring, early in May. The stage should be all prepared, the grain cleaned, treating material purchased and methods decided upon. When a man is determined on a certain line of action and has it well mapped out, the execution of the plan is not such an exacting operation as when nothing is ready. There is little chance of the labor situation improving, and farmers will be obliged to resort to good planning and systematizing their work, in order to win out in these arduous times.

What Farmers Say in U. S. A.

By ALLAN McDIARMID.

A short time ago a good many of our newspapers printed an item coming from the United States, giving the results of a questionnaire sent out to the farmers by the Post Office Department at Washington.

It said that the replies received indicated a good deal of unrest and that it looked as though production on the farms would become less in the future, instead of being increased, as has been hoped for.

About two hundred thousand letters were sent out and over forty thousand replies were received. The item in our papers only gave an extract from one of these but I have been lucky enough to get hold of an America daily that has given considerable space to the subject and has printed a large number of these farmer's letters. The high cost of living, its cause and cure, are viewed from a good many standpoints and as many remedies prescribed. Some of them are worth repeating. And all of them show in what direction the wind is blowing in the rural districts. General dissatisfaction is indicated. In fact, one of the members of the Senate Committee, to whose attention these matters were brought, said it looked as though the letters came "from a bunch of Bolsheviks."

"The time is very near," writes a farmer from New York State, "when we will have to curtail production and raise only what we need for our own use and let

the other fellows look out for themselves. Labor unions are more to blame for the high prices than anyone else. People are trying to get pay for what they don't earn."

Writing from Montana another farmer said: "I almost fear a famine. Farm help is everywhere flocking to the city, lured by short hours, high wages and the promise of a good time. Some one is going to suffer if this condition is not remedied shortly."

A Missouri producer says the blame all rests with the middleman and advocates the establishment of municipal markets to be served by parcel post direct. "I sell butter to the dealer for 45 cents a pound," his letter said, "and the same butter sells to the consumer for 80 cents. In the distribution we lose nearly half. Such conditions are causing men to leave their farms by the thousands. We have reached a crisis. You may ask what we would do with the middleman. I will suggest that it be arranged for him to go on the farm and help produce something. I understand that they might not relish working fourteen hours a day but if we get by the near future there will have to be some useful work done by every one."

Another Montana farmer caps the climax by saying that he works a 240-acre farm without help and that he knows of many others that are doing the same thing. Then he says, "the way to start to lower the cost of living is to cut the wages in the city, which have called our farm help there. We need them on the farm to help increase production and then we can cut the cost of living."

A Western man gives his word that his income last year from the farm netted him just one dollar a day for his work. And he goes on to say that he soon hopes to see the farmer and the consumer getting closer together. "If not, then I am quitting, for one. Work fourteen hours a day for one dollar? Not me."

A farmer from one of the Middle Western States puts it this way: "I attribute the high cost of living to the good times in the cities. The young men can go to the city and get big pay for eight hours work while farmers have to work from fourteen to sixteen hours a day at hard manual labor. All of the young men in this vicinity of any account go to the city and there are only a few old men left to farm."

"The time is coming, if not already here," another letter declared, "when the consumer and the farmer will absolutely have to deal direct with one another. The middlemen want a larger profit than we are getting, while at the same time the farmer does the hard work."

"The price of everything the farmer has to buy is still going up and the quantity we can raise and put on the market is steadily going down," writes a second Missouri farmer. "I am a small farmer and don't know much else. We are all loyal citizens but there is an awful uneasiness."

And finally comes one for the profiteer. "If you would reduce the cost of living curtail the possibilities that are now afforded capital to hoard and profiteer under fake legislation—then efforts will produce results."

The above, as a fair sample of the forty thousand replies received, is looked upon by the U. S. authorities as being an indication of a grave danger that threatens the country. They're getting afraid that their whole economic structure is going to be upset. Perhaps it is and perhaps it isn't. It's just as well to give them a fright, anyway. It may make them put forth some sort of an effort to improve the situation as it exists to-day. For there's no denying that it can be improved.

The one suggestion the Government makes along this line is the extension of the Parcels' Post system. In a circular they are sending out they say, "Production could be greatly increased and the shortage of labor complained of, partially remedied, if farmers would ship their produce by parcel post and not devote their own valuable time and the service of their teams and vehicles to hauling food-stuffs to market."

To my way of thinking very little relief will be found in this expedient. The only produce that it would be profitable to ship to the city by this means would be butter and eggs, and it's a question of even these articles are not handled to better advantage by the old system.

It's a case, I think, of trying to dodge the real remedy. The man in the town will look all over for a cure for the high cost of living before he will admit that it would help matters if he, himself, were to get back on the land and become a producer. But there is certainly where the relief is to come from, if it comes at all. The balance between town and country, between the consumers and the producers, has been upset. A few years ago the great majority of our people lived on the farm. It isn't the case to-day.

And it's pretty hard to say what should be done to restore this balance. Conscription of any kind is supposed to be workable only in war-time. But what else will drag a man out of the city and back on to the farm? Or keep him from leaving the farm once the idea of life in town has taken root in his mind?

No doubt old Mother Nature has something up her sleeve that will do the trick and straighten things out before they have gone too far. She always has in the past, even if it meant throwing a nation into the scrap-heap and building up another in its place.

But for those of us who are still on the old farm and who are willing and anxious to stay there as long as it may be possible, there is a word of encouragement that can be said. When our soldiers were in France they coined the expression, "carry on." It helped to win the war. Perhaps it won the war. Anyway, those of us who seem to have "been born to till the soil" can't take anything in the way of a watchword, at the present time, that will be surer to guide us in the right direction than just those two words. To "carry on" is to do the

best we can under any and all circumstances, and no man who has done this has ever been counted a failure.

Everything can't be coming our way all the time and what are we going through life for if it's not to take the downs with the ups. We may not be able to work our farms to their full capacity but half a bushel is better than no wheat, they say. In fact, at present prices, it's a whole lot better.

Nature's Diary.

BY A. BROOKER KLUGH, M.A.

THE ORIGIN OF CULTIVATED PLANTS, V.

The Winter Squash, *Cucurbita maxima*, is in all probability a native of Africa, since it has been found wild by Barter on the banks of the Niger. The Pumpkin, *Cucurbita pepo*, is a native of Mexico, and before the coming of Europeans to America was grown among the corn, much as we grow it to-day, by the aboriginal tribes.

The Musk Melon, *Cucumis melo*, is a native of an extensive region stretching from the west coast of Africa to India. It has given rise to a large number of varieties. It was introduced into Europe in the first century of our era, and into China in the eighth century.

The Cucumber, *Cucumis sativus*, grows wild in northern India, and has been cultivated there for at least three thousand years. The ancient Greeks cultivated it under the name *sikuos*, the Romans under the name *cucumis*, while it was introduced into China in 200 B.C.

The Water-melon, *Citrullus vulgaris*, is a native of tropical Africa and the wild fruit is eaten by the natives. It was cultivated by the ancient Egyptians, and it was introduced into Europe about the beginning of our era.

Flax has been cultivated since very ancient times, but the history of flax as a cultivated plant is complicated by the fact that there are several varieties which occur in the wild state. Two of these varieties, the Annual Flax and one of the perennial varieties (*angustifolium*) are the most important. The Annual Flax has been cultivated for at least five thousand years in Mesopotamia, Assyria and Egypt, and is still found wild in the districts between the Persian Gulf, the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea. It was introduced into the more westerly parts of Europe by the Phoenicians about 2,000 B.C. This is the form from which the ancient Egyptians wove the linen in which they wrapped their mummies, the casements of which have often been erroneously described as being of cotton. The variety *angustifolium*, which is found wild from the Canary Islands to Palestine and the Caucasus, was cultivated at an even earlier date, as it was used by the ancient lake-dwellers of Switzerland and northern Italy, who antedated the Aryan migration into Europe. Our name, flax, is derived from the old Teutonic word "*flaks*," while our term linen comes from the ancient Aryan word "*lin*," from which is also derived the Latin word "*linum*," which is used as the scientific name of the genus.

Tobacco, *Nicotiana tabacum*, is a native of Ecuador, Central America, and Mexico. It was cultivated and used for smoking by the Aztecs of Mexico and other aboriginal tribes, long before the discovery of America by the Europeans, as is shown by the large numbers of pipes of beautiful workmanship which have been found in the tombs of the Aztecs and the "mounds" of the United States. The Europeans were quick to take up this particular phase of New World civilization, and the cultivation of this plant spread rapidly to various countries.

Tea, *Thea sinensis*, is a native of the mountainous region which separates the plains of China from those of India. It has been cultivated by the Chinese since at least 2700 B.C. There are now several varieties recognized, but the different kinds of tea, as found on the market, depend on the age of the leaves, their position on the plant, and their subsequent treatment rather than on the variety. Young leaves dried quickly produce the green teas, while the older leaves dried slowly yield the black teas.

The Coffee shrub is a native of Abyssinia, the Soudan and Mozambique, and the berry has been used since very ancient times by the Abyssinians. It was first introduced into America by the Dutch in Surinam in 1718.

Theobroma cacao, from which cocoa is obtained, is a small tree of the Amazon and Orinoco basins. It was cultivated by the tribes of Central America and Mexico prior to the discovery of America by Europeans.

The Sugar-cane, which is cultivated to-day in all the warm regions of the world, is a species of southern Asia. The Sanskrit name for the product of this plant is "*sakkara*," and it is from this that our word "sugar" is derived. Sugar was not known to the ancient Greeks, and the plant was first introduced into Europe by the Arabs in the middle ages, where it was cultivated in Spain and Sicily until the abundant supply from the colonies caused its culture to be abandoned in Europe. It was introduced into Brazil about the beginning of the sixteenth century, and into San Domingo in 1520.

Hevea guianensis, and other species of this genus, from which India-rubber is derived, are natives of South America, and it is only in very recent times that they have been cultivated in other parts of the world.

From this brief review of the origin of cultivated plants we can see how closely these plants are connected with the progress of civilization, and such a survey is likely to make us more contented with our lot and less prone to pine for "the good old days," considering that in those days potatoes, corn, sugar, tea, cocoa, coffee, tobacco and our finest cultivated fruits were unknown to European nations.