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The Problem of Country Life

Dean Klinck Traces Growth of Agriculture Through History

Dean Klinck, of the Department of Agriculture of the University of British Columbia, in an interview with the Victoria Times discussed the historical phase of the "Country Life Problem." History, ancient, medieval and modern records many events that have been instrumental in the establishing of our present day agricultural colleges and institutes. All the records that have marked the course of man through his development give to the intelligent student of the rural question a basis from which has arisen the necessity of founding those institutes that are aiming to give the world the best scientific and economic methods of tillage, that a maximum of results may be obtained and that waste may be eliminated.

In dealing with the subject, Dean Klinck referred back to the time of the ancient Greeks and Romans to demonstrate that the Country Life Problem is by no means a new one. Xenophon, from the wealth of Greek knowledge, dealt extensively with the subject of the care of horses, while later Virgil treated the problem under four heads: Soil and Their Management, Horticulture, the Care of Live Stock, Husbandry of Bees. Even as far back as those days the principle of rotation of crops was understood, which knowledge was gained in all probability from the earlier Greeks and the Carthaginians.

Primitive Method.

"In England," said the Dean, "the system of land tenure was adopted under the communistic system. Its effects were of course detrimental to settled and stable development. The rotation of crops was made impossible and drainage was practically unknown, added to which was the fact that it was impossible to improve the live stocks, as the herds wandered unconfined through the country side, thus making the prevention of in-breeding impossible. In our estimation such a system is considered primitive, yet it practically exists today in parts of Quebec, parts of the United States and England.

"The origin of our present day vacation took place during the fourteenth century. Up until the commencement of that period about eleven-twelfths of the English people were engaged in agricultural work, and during the summer it was the custom of the citizens to go to the fields to aid in the harvest. Such practices have developed gradually into our modern vacation system that is now being utilized in much the same manner by students, teachers and others who are aiding the farmer to garner his grain.

King Wool.

"The ravages of the Black Death sweeping through England in the seventeenth century so reduced the population that thousands of acres of land reverted to

wasted fields of grass, a condition now existing in many parts of Ontario and Quebec. Those great stretches were soon given over to the grazing of cattle and the development of the sheep industry, so that for 300 years 'King Wool' reigned in the Old Land, determining in its entirety the fiscal policy of the nation.

Tillage is Manure.

"Just as the introduction of textile machinery, steam and electricity revolutionized industry," continued the speaker, "so the improvements of tillage instruments, the introduction of new crops and the principle of specializing in live stock completely reorganized the foundation of English agriculture. The changes were the results of pressing economic conditions. The increase in manufacturing took the population of the country to the cities, and the agriculturalist found himself faced with the 'shortage of labor question.' Machines were then invented to do the work that many hands had formerly accomplished. It was at this period that Tull, the inventor of the drill, lived. His statement that tillage is manure still holds its truth to a great extent under modern conditions.

Potatoes First Used.

"About the year 1586 potatoes were first used, and then only by the rich, the peasants looking on the tuber as a useless growth of vegetation until following the wars of Napoleon necessity compelled their use universally. Today," said the dean, "the poor have no choice in the matter of using the potato, judging from the price list.

"The introduction of clover and turnips from Holland enabled stores of food to be kept for cattle during the winter, so that the necessity of killing and salting all meat in the fall was done away with. These changes attracted much attention and many of the English nobility took up agriculture, just as today the retiring business man frequently buys a farm. By their utilization of improved methods these nobles soon established the centres from which the gospel of improved farming was preached. Such men as Walpole, Townsend, Collins and Bakewell stand out supreme as developers of a great movement. The last named was the first to improve the breed of English live stock, and as a result gave to the English people two pounds of meat where before they had had but one. It was largely due to his wonderful work that during the wars of Napoleon Britain was enabled to withstand the blockade and the decrees issued against her trade. The meat industry thus established so spread to all countries of Europe and was a step in the direction of making the Mother Country more self-contained.

Prosperity and Ruin.

"Conditions in the Old Land during the

first years of the nineteenth century were in a critical state. The best Russian wheat sold on the London market at \$5.46. This started a movement on the part of England to undertake the raising of wheat. A great deal was accomplished but on the breaking of the blockade established by Napoleon, thousands of English farmers were ruined, their fields that had been excellently cultivated reverted into barren wastes of rank vegetation and a period of terrible stress came upon the land.

"As previously mentioned the landlords had formed centres of the agricultural industry and of research. Coke, whose name stands in the front rank as a founder of stability, conducted many experiments, the results of which he gave to his tenants. He granted his tenants long leases to their property and thus gave the agricultural industry a solid basis which it had never possessed prior to that time. His farmers were encouraged to improve their land, with the effect that during the reign of desolation that followed the great European war of the period Coke's lands were prosperous, having the distinction of forming the only district where there was no poor house required.

Stability of Labor.

"This question of the stability of labor is what confronts us today," says the dean. "On our prairies the farmer only requires his harvesters for a short period of the year. He provides no houses for them and the natural result follows. Labor troubles with regard to the agricultural industry will never be solved until some more satisfactory method of handling farm help can be adopted.

"One of the great changes that the present war is affecting is presented in the increased adaptability that is being shown in England. About the year 1860 the American farmer flooded the London market with his wheat, to the exclusion of the produce from Denmark. The Danes were then confronted with necessity; they were forced to change their methods of cultivation and tillage that their competition might be more successful. They were called under the stress of circumstances to adapt themselves to the conditions of their times and the same changes are being affected in Britain today due directly to a great national demand."

Referring to the agricultural development in America with special regard to the States, Dean Klinck pointed out that labor conditions in the republic have always been acute. As early as 1619 labor was scarce and negroes were brought to the land. Even this did not solve the question as it is a well-established principle that laborers can rarely be kept where there is an abundance of free land. The farmer gradually moved west, where he met with great difficulties