

AGRICULTURE ON GOVERNMENT FARMS—I.

THE BROCKVILLE ASYLUM FARM.

It is a vast stride from poor agriculture to the most advanced form of farm management. It is no small task to take over a run-down farm and put it in a condition to be rated as one of the most modern farms in the country with regard to each and every phase of farm operations right down to cash returns and net profits. Yet this has been accomplished by many private individuals as well as by companies and by various government institutions.

One of the latest institutions under the Ontario Provincial Government to undertake practical agriculture on an extensive scale is the Hospital for the Insane, Brockville, Ontario. The head of the institution is Dr. J. C. Mitchell, a man who, while primarily interested in his profession, is also deeply concerned in things agricultural, the more so since a real farm has come under his surveillance. His farm foreman is D. McCrimmon, a practical man of much experience, and the intricate problems which are ever present in soil tillage for profit have had the effect of arousing interest in "the farm" to such an extent that every officer connected with the institution, including the Bursar, Mr. Daly, has become an agriculturist in spirit and more or less in practical reality.

Situated just outside the beautiful town of Brockville, in Leeds Co., on rising ground overlooking the waters of the St. Lawrence as they roll on towards the mighty Atlantic, bearing all kinds of craft only known to those who are privileged to live near such waters, this institution has no equal for location in this Province. Nestling under the hill among much wooded growth on the opposite side of the river is Morristown, N. Y. The view from the front is all that could be desired, while at the back, stretching for

miles, is an area of farming land perhaps not the best in Ontario, but good soil underlied with rock at various depths and well suited to mixed farming, dairying and fruit growing. The Brockville section has long been noted as a dairy country and many a good dairy cow first looked upon the light of day on the grass pastures or in the stables of the Brockville district. It is on such land just back of the asylum grounds that Dr. Mitchell and his able staff are commencing agriculture, not on an extensive scale, but to such proportions as conditions warrant. The main part of the farm proper consists of some 343 acres, all told. Of this 242 acres were operated last year, and the remainder added this spring late in the season, too late, in fact, for most satisfactory results. A great portion of the land is low-lying and nearly all needs underdraining, so a wet season like the present has been is not well suited to highest production on such land. The entire farm when purchased was only ordinary in nature and equipment. Barns and stables were only average. The land was not in a high state of cultivation, had not been farmed under special crop rotations, was largely overrun with weeds, such as wild mustard, twitch grass and others; fences were not in the best of repair and the six acres of apple orchard had been in sod for years, receiving no special attention, while nearly all the land was in need of underdraining. It was then no "bonanza" farm that came under Dr. Mitchell's and his assistants' management last spring.

Some idea of the success attained last year, when 242 acres of the land now owned was operated, may be gleaned from the following figures: Value of crops, \$4,200; value of milk from 38 milk cows, at four cents per quart, \$4,065; maximum yearly production of one cow, 11,558

pounds of milk; number of pigs kept, 200, and of poultry, 150. This is a very good showing, everything considered.

The system which it is proposed to follow in placing this farm in a condition to insure maximum production is one that should interest many who, under similar circumstances, are endeavoring to improve conditions on their own farms.

DRAINAGE THE FIRST CONSIDERATION.

All things will come in time, but the first to receive consideration is underdrainage. Much of the soil is low-lying and through it runs a small creek following a very tortuous course. A man from the Physics Department of the Ontario Agricultural College, Guelph, has just completed a thorough survey of the entire farm and he finds that it is possible to straighten the creek, run it down one side of the farm and empty it at the same place as it now empties as a large open ditch, and to run a large tile through the portion now drained by the creek, such tile and ditch to be the mains for a complete system of underdrainage to be put in by a steam ditcher. Every effort will be put forth to complete this work as soon as possible, and by it all of the farm will be thoroughly drained and placed in a condition to produce highest yields, some of it being practically reclaimed as it has never produced anything but grass owing to its wet nature. True, the work will prove expensive, but underdrainage has proved profitable on other farms and the management thoroughly believe in its future on this farm.

CROPS AND ROTATIONS.

As before stated, the acreage under crop will not be materially increased until after the farm is thoroughly underdrained. This year 115 acres



The weary sun hath made a golden set,
And by the bright track of his fiery car
Gives token of a goodly day to-morrow.
—Shakespeare.