

The Farming World

For Farmers and Stockmen

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A Dairy Number.

THE issue of The Farming World for April 1st, will be devoted largely to the dairy interests. We hope to make this number of special value to all dairy men, both makers and patrons. Several leaders in dairy thought and practice in Canada have promised articles and we feel sure that the advice they will be able to give, at this season will be of distinct advantage to those engaged in dairying. The number will be handsomely illustrated. Parties wishing to have copies of this number sent to friends will kindly send in the names early. As an unusually large edition will be distributed and circulated, this number will be of special value as an advertising medium. Application for space should be made early.

The Farmers' Seed Supply

We have reached the time of the year when farmers should begin to think seriously in regard to preparation for the spring season. There are two dominant factors always to be considered in the preparation of the seed bed. The first factor is the character of the seed to be sown, and the second the character of the soil. It is the former of these that we desire to deal with just here.

Every farmer should make sure that the grain or any other seed he puts into the soil with the expectation of securing a crop is of the right kind and is possessed of those qualities that will enable it to produce a vigorous growth in the future plant. Two seeds may look alike and still one may be of very much more value than the other as a crop producer. Not only should seed be clean and free from weeds but it should be plump and well matured. Then there is a great deal in the ancestry of seeds. A seed may have every appearance of being good and still may have come from a coarse inferior plant that one would not like to have reproduced again. This is well illustrated in some literature recently sent out by the Department of Agriculture at Ottawa. Mr. G. H. Clark, chief of the seed division, speaking of the sources of turnip seed, says:

"For instance, an ideal turnip is one having a small neck, and top growth. Such a root when planted will produce a comparatively small growth of stalks, and consequently a small amount of seed, but the seed from such a root is apt to produce a crop like the mother root which was planted. On the other hand a small turnip having several root prongs, and an excessive growth of top coming from

two or three separate neck growths will transmit its like through the seed to the next crop. Seed can be grown from such roots much more cheaply than from selected roots, because, in the first place the mother roots are culls, and are not as valuable for feeding, and secondly, they will produce a much larger quantity of seed."

Dealing further with the question of root crop seeds, Mr. Clark states that if farmers were acquainted with the sources of supply of these seeds and the avenues through which they pass before they reach them, they would be a great deal more particular before making their purchases. Practically all the seed for our root crop is grown in foreign countries and is imported by our larger seed firms. Upon the honesty of these firms depends largely the quality of the seed brought in. If they buy from the European growers, who grow seed from selected pedigreed stock all well and good, but if they buy at a lower price seed that is grown by men whose chief aim is to produce a large quantity independent of the quality of the crop it will produce, so much the worse for the farmer in Canada who buys such seed. In the former case the seed is grown from selected plants, from roots which have an ideal size and form and are known to be true to name.

Another statement of Mr. Clark's is well worth quoting here:

"During the last ten or fifteen years the seed trade has, to a great extent, been passing from the hands of seedsmen who devote all their time to a study of seeds and the seed trade, into the hands of local dealers. Unfortunately, fair competition in the seed trade, is practically impossible, since the appearance of most commercial seeds is but a slight indication of their real value. The competition has been, and is too largely confined to prices alone. Farmers continue to patronize the local dealer who is able to quote a low price for his goods. The local dealer demands a low priced seed of the wholesale firms, and in turn there has been a growing strife among wholesale seed firms in the buying of cheap goods, with which to supply local dealers."

The protest here against the buying of seeds merely because they are cheap is well taken. The buying of cheap inferior seeds is a most costly business for the farmer. He may save a dollar or two on his purchase, but he will lose perhaps a hundred times that amount in the inferior crop raised. Nothing but seed of the very best quality should be put into the soil upon

which time and labor have been expended in getting it into condition for the seed.

But it may be asked where is the remedy? How may the farmer be certain that he is getting good seed even if he does pay a high price for it? The only remedy we know of is to purchase seeds from thoroughly reliable seed firms even if the price is higher. So far as the local country dealer is concerned he buys to a large extent in the cheapest market with little regard to quality and sells accordingly. But reliable firms who have good seeds have had little difficulty in disposing of their higher priced seeds to the intelligent farmers who understand the value of good seeds. And so a little educational work along this line may lessen the market for these cheaper seeds and compel the local dealer to keep only the best and to secure his supply from reliable houses.

Dealing further with the question of legislation governing the seed trade, Mr. Clark says:

"Appeals have been made, both by seedsmen and farmers, to place such restrictions on the seed trade, as will serve to withdraw the responsibility connected therewith, from the hands of incompetent local dealers. With root crop seeds this aim may be reached by allowing only reliable seed houses or seed importers the right to place such goods on the market; by allowing them to place goods in sealed packages, each package to be properly labelled, and to bear the name and consequently the reputation of the seed house, in the hands of local dealers to be sold on commission only. Official interference in the seed trade may have objectionable features. Perhaps the most striking example of where legislation has been applied to improve the conditions under which commercial seeds are sold, is in the State of Maine, where all seeds sold must be accompanied with a statement, showing the percentage of pure and vital seeds. They have extended to their seed trade a modification of the Act which is used in Canada to regulate the quality of commercial fertilizers, and the results have clearly demonstrated that, whatever evils may accompany an enforced guarantee system in connection with the seed trade, it is an effective way to improve the quality of commercial seeds, especially of clover and grasses, of which a great deal is sold in some districts in Canada, that contains large quantities of noxious weed seeds and is a decided injury, not only to the farmer who buys it, but to the locality where it is sown."

This whole subject of seed supplies