



FARM AND DAIRY



It Welcomes Practical Progressive Ideas

& RURAL HOME

The Recognized Exponent of Dairying in Canada

Trade increases the wealth and glory of a country; but its real strength and stamina are to be looked for among the cultivators of the land.—Lord Chatham

VOL. XXXV

PETERBORO, ONT., AUGUST 24, 1916

No. 33

Dry Farming, East and West

The Conservation of Moisture is the Main Object of Cultivation. Dry Farming is Simply Good Farming

WHEN Campbell invented his system of dry farming, and added several million acres to the agricultural lands of the United States, there was quite a fuss made about it, for Americans are not noted for doing good by stealth and blushing to find it fame. So well advertised were his methods of cheating the weather man and making two bushels of wheat grow where only one cactus plant grew before, that they were soon heard of in western Canada. Great were the things expected of the much heralded system. There was lots of vacant land where the rainfall was fairly adequate for grain production, but what was left after the railway companies, the land companies and the individual speculators had made their reservations, had been pretty well taken up. Settlers were beginning to crowd down to the south and west corner of the Canadian prairies where the Great American Desert, as they used to call it in the geographies, and which is now known as the dry belt, pushes a couple of hundred miles north of the 49th parallel. Climate is hopelessly contemptuous of imaginary lines and 25 plus 7½ per cent. trade barriers. With the rainfall around 12 inches a year, the prospects for the wheat growing in the dry belt were not of the brightest. One steer to a dozen acres was the best that the ranchers could do with it. There was a world of promise in the term "dry farming." Visions of waving wheat fields, flourishing in cheerful independence of passing showers, filled the minds of the settlers. Campbell's dry farming system was going to add another tract of land the size of two or three European countries to Canadian agriculture.

A Prophet Honored.

But when the best farmers began to analyze this much-talked-of system it was found that dry farming methods, similar to those advocated by Campbell, and quite as well suited to the needs of the dry belt in western Canada, had been quietly practiced and taught there for years. Angus McKay, superintendent of the Experimental Farm at Indian Head, Sask., had tackled the problem of moisture conservation 20 years before, for Indian Head was only a hundred miles or so from the edge of the dry belt, and the rainfall was not so plentiful that they could neglect its conservation. Mr. McKay had worked out a system of cultivation, based on the principle of utilizing three years' precipitation for two years' crop, which, with due attention to the finer points of the same, had proved to be suitable to the conditions as found on the Experimental Farm and on the farm throughout the larger portion of the West. He had recognized the value of his system, not only in those parts where the amount that could be said about the rainfall was that it was usually limited, but also in those parts where

By R. D. COLQUETTE, B.S.A.

the best that could be said of it was that occasionally it was sufficient. For years he had advocated the adoption of this system, not with the blare of trumpets, but consistently and persistently. The good farmers of the West were practicing it. When the dry farming methods that had worked such wonders in Idaho and other



The Farmer's Complex Life

WE used to think that life on the farm was simple, and that life in the city was complex. But now we know that just the contrary is true. We might better say that urban life is complex for the mass, but simple for the individual; while rural life, simple enough if taken as a whole, is highly complicated for the individual.

The city man, whether he drives a team, or runs a machine, or balances a ledger, or solicits advertisements, is a specialist. He has one line to learn, one thing to do. He has been frequently called a cog in the vast social machine.

The farmer, on the other hand, is almost the whole machine. He does not have a host of co-laborers, each one performing some separate task in the operations of the farm. He must be both buyer and seller. He must produce raw materials, manufacture and distribute. He must plan and carry out plans. He must finance his own plant, earning the funds and directing the expenditure. The farm is a little world—a unit of civilization in which of necessity a complexity of duties and interests fall upon a single family. The tasks may not be separated and allotted, detail by detail, to different individuals. Every labor is a part of a sequence, stretching back into the past, bringing its reward in the future.—C. A. Taylor.

semi-arid States were first introduced, it was taken for granted by many that they were far in advance of the methods advocated by Mr. McKay. Careful comparison, however, revealed that the two systems were not dissimilar, but that each was best suited to the country in which it was practiced. For the hotter, dryer climate of the semi-arid States the more scientifically detailed Campbell system was necessary. For the cooler climate of the Western Provinces, with greater precipitation and less evaporation, the system that had been practiced by good farmers for years, was sufficient and more economical. At the Dry Farming Congresses, representatives from the Western Provinces now talk of the McKay system of dry farming. The grand old man of Western agriculture has lived long enough to learn that a prophet may sometimes be honored in his own country—if he advocates a good thing and keeps at it long enough.

Dry Farming East and West.

But no system of dry farming has upset any of the scientific laws governing moisture conservation as understood by agricultural authorities everywhere. It is simply a case of adapting methods to suit local conditions. Where Jupiter Pluvius is practically sluggish and Old Sol is right on the job 300 days in the year, so that it takes two years' precipitation to grow one year's crop, a man needs two farms which he crops alternately, in the meantime looking carefully after the dust blanket and the keeping of the sub-surface soil well packed. When the rain and snow fall is a little more liberal and the sunshine strikes the surface a more glancing blow, a farm and a half, with one-third of the land under fallow, is enough. Where the precipitation is normal, one farm growing a crop every year is sufficient, but even there moisture conservation must not be neglected, and where cultivation for the conservation of moisture is practiced, dry farming is practiced. The laws governing the movement of water in the soil are the same in each case. The system of dry farming followed to the best advantage is simply the one best suited to climatic conditions. Hence it is that dry farming is simply good farming, and that good farmers are dry farmers, whether the rainfall in the particular region where they wrestle with soil problems, is 10 inches or 30 inches a year.

In the wettest districts of eastern Canada more damage is done to crops by drouth than by excessive precipitation. The yield of crops is there, as elsewhere, almost directly proportional to the rainfall. The two months' downpour of last spring may make this year an exceptional one, but that is because it came at an inopportune time and interfered with seeding operations. Wet we-