

The Farmer's Advocate AND HOME MAGAZINE.

THE LEADING AGRICULTURAL JOURNAL IN THE
DOMINION.

Published weekly by
THE WILLIAM WELD COMPANY (Limited).

JOHN WELD, Manager.
Agents for "The Farmer's Advocate and Home Journal,"
Winnipeg, Man.

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cities, which are apparently working satisfactorily; at any rate all these questions deserve unbiased consideration, for in the end the conduct of our rural schools will depend on the attitude of the taxpayer and the support he will give to any alterations looking to the improvement of the system.

Method in Farming.

"Method is of more importance than is size of farm. A man may have a large farm, but conduct his business at a loss by employing poor methods of farming, but the man who employs good methods will always have some profit, even though his acreage is small."

The above statement is included in the report of the Department of Farm Management of the Ontario Agricultural College, when commenting on a business survey made of 385 farms in Middlesex County, Ontario. It is furthermore brought out that large crop yields are necessary in order to close the year with a respectable labor income, and that the quality of the live stock maintained is another important determining factor. These points have been emphasized many times, but never yet have we had in this country such conclusive proof of the soundness of this doctrine as is presented in the report of this farm survey, which appears elsewhere in this issue.

The Proper View of Farm Life.

BY ALI AN MCDIARMID.

I was looking through an American farm paper recently and came across this item: "A man has a farm and equipment valued at \$18,000. His expenses for the year are \$2,900. His receipts are \$4,000. He figures that he made \$1,100 during the year and thinks it isn't so bad. But he hasn't taken into account the capital invested. If he invested that \$18,000 elsewhere he would get at least four per cent. interest. If he had to borrow it he would very likely have to pay six per cent. So we take the average and say that his capital invested earns five per cent. Five per cent. of \$18,000 is \$900. So his capital earned \$900 of that \$1,100, and the grower himself, working hard all year, earned only \$200. In other words, \$200 was his 'labor income.' He would have made more money if his money had been invested in Liberty Bonds and he had worked out by the day. All the planning and thought he put into his

farming operations didn't bring him in a cent. Remember too, that he should receive something also for the work his family has done."

There are two or three things that I would like to say about this article, and similar ones, that are continually appearing in some of the agricultural journals.

In the first place they misrepresent the case. Take the three greatest items of expense that the average man, living in the city, is subject to. They are food, fuel and rent. At present-day prices many men in town find their salary pretty well "shot to pieces," as they say, when the bills for these things are paid. A great many farmers have their own fuel, very few have to buy all the food they use and no man, who is a farm owner, has rent to pay. In all fairness these things might be balanced against that "interest on investment" item, I think.

Ask any man, who sold his farm and went into town to live, how the cost of living compares in the two places. We all know what he will say, for we've all heard it often enough. Retired farmers have always had a reputation for closeness, not to say meanness, and the reason simply is that they are trying to bring their living expenses down to what they were in the country.

Apart from the "cost of living" bugbear, altogether, it is safe to say that eight out of ten men, that have left their farms for a home in the city, are discontented. Which raises the question: what is a contented mind worth? Pretty hard to put it in dollars and cents, but it should be a further help towards balancing that "interest on investment."

The opportunities and privileges of country life are worth good money if anything is, and these things should be taken into account whenever city and country life are compared. Farmers are considered one of the best possible risks by all life insurance companies, which is pretty good proof that, so far as doctor bills are concerned, the country has the best of it. Working with old Mother Nature as a partner has a good deal to recommend it from any standpoint we like to view it. Even the poets will back us up in this, for very few of them ever claimed to get much of their inspiration from the brick walls and stone pavements of the city.

Money is of value only as we exchange it for something else, and no one gets more things of real value from what might be called the "by-products" of his profession than does the farmer. And yet we have those that tell us that we should not forget to include interest on our investment when figuring up our profits, while, at the same time, they themselves forget to include a dozen things, every one of which has a real value in dollars and cents.

And now there is one thing more in connection with the article that I quoted above. Can anyone say why some farm papers print stuff like that? What can be gained by it? The whole tendency of the ideas expressed is to make the reader discontented if he happens to be a farmer. The figures appear reasonable at first sight and unless the question is fairly thought out and both sides considered, a man might easily be induced to come to the conclusion that the wisest course for him was to sell out and follow the crowd to town.

The true mission of the agricultural journal is to give the optimistic view of farm life, as long as this can be truthfully done, and not go to conjuring up pictures of loss and ruin where these things do not, necessarily, exist.

Rural conditions are fairly good. The right kind of men are making a comfortable living, and a little money, on the farm. And all the other things we have mentioned are theirs. Why is it necessary that the farm paper should act the part of the labor agitator and help to aggravate a state of affairs that is none too good as it is? Too many of our country people have been induced, by some means or other, to change their home and occupation.

There is such a thing as a healthy discontent, but when the advantages of country over city life is so apparent, as it is just at present, I think we are justified in suppressing anything that may arouse discontent and, at the same time, doing what we can to impress every farmer in the land with the duties, privileges and opportunities by which he is surrounded.

Canadian agriculture needs a few "home missionaries." There isn't much use going to the city and urging the people there to return to the land. A farmer lost to the city generally stays lost. He can hardly get back if he wants to. But by bringing those who remain on the farm to a realization of the truth of the whole matter we can, perhaps, check the flow of the stream that is carrying away with it so much of the best of Canadian farm life.

When a horse-buyer visits a district for the purpose of buying horses, he likes to get enough to fill a car. Moreover, he likes to get horses that are uniform in type and size. If he finds a district where he can pick up a carload of uniform horses, he usually visits that district again. This is a fact that should be seriously considered by stallion clubs. When a club secures a stallion that leaves colts of the right kind, they should keep that stallion in their district for a number of years. His colts will be uniform, and in a very short time the district will have a large number of horses in it that are uniform in type. Horses that are uniform in type are: easily paired off into well-matched teams, and every horse-buyer will pay a premium for horses that are easily matched, for the horse-dealer never has much trouble in selling a well-matched pair of draft, clean-cut horses. A district which imports a new comes famous.

Nature's Diary.

BY A. BROOKER KLUGH, M.A.
BIRD-LIFE ON THE FARM—1.

The benefit to be derived from having many birds on the farm, and particularly about the house and garden, is becoming more and more appreciated. Both from the economic and aesthetic standpoints it is now recognized as a sound policy, since the birds are not only very efficient in controlling many insect pests, but because of their melodious songs and interesting ways they constitute a very charming factor of rural life. Because of the realization of this many people are anxious to learn how to attract birds about their homes, and how to preserve and care for them.

In order to be in a position to help the birds we must first have a true appreciation of the dangers by which they are beset, and then see which of these dangers we can eliminate, or at least lessen.

The elements constitute one of the chief dangers to which birds are exposed. Storms often kill thousands of birds in a few hours, while the small migratory birds, which cross large bodies of water on their migrations are frequently killed in immense numbers when overtaken during their passage by a storm. Sometimes after a severe storm the shores of large lakes are lined for miles with wind-rows of dead birds which have perished in this way. Such was the case a few years ago on parts of the shore of Lake Huron. Late snowstorms coming after many of the insectivorous birds have arrived, often play sad havoc, as with their source of food cut off the birds soon perish. At such times I have seen even those species which depend to a large extent upon seeds for their subsistence, such as the Song Sparrows, Juncos, White-throated Sparrows, etc., very hard put to it to find a living. In this case we can help the seed-eating birds by feeding them, but unfortunately there is very little we can do for the insectivorous species. Heavy storms during the nesting season are sometimes very disastrous, the wind breaking down branches or dislodging the nests and the cold rain soaking and killing the nestlings in spite of every effort of the parents to shelter them. In the case of species which nest on the ground, floods sometimes drown the nestlings over a considerable area. Deep snow, accompanied by severe weather, often results in the death of many birds, for with their supply of food cut off they soon perish from the cold. With the hardy northern birds even the severest weather is not a menace as long as they have a good food-supply, and can aid these birds by feeding them in times of deep snow-fall.

The next source of danger to birds is from natural enemies, of which every species has a large number. Among the chief natural enemies of our smaller birds are foxes, raccoons, weasels, mink, skunks, crows, bronzed grackles, jays, certain hawks and owls, and some snakes. These natural enemies are not by any means equally destructive, partly by reason of their relative abundance or scarcity in a given locality, partly because some subsist mainly on small birds while with others these birds make up only a small part of their food. With the exception of the Cooper's Hawk, Sharp-shinned Hawk and the weasel no general war of extermination should we waged against them, for they are, many of them, very efficient destroyers of noxious rodents and hence useful, but all should be eliminated from a place we wish to render particularly attractive to birds.

Bad as are some of these natural enemies, man is responsible for the introduction of two species which do more to decrease the bird population about our homes than all the natural enemies put together—the cat and the House Sparrow.

The cat is a huge fraud, it does nothing in the way of destroying mice and rats which cannot be accomplished more expeditiously and just as cheaply by means of traps and poison, while on the other hand it is the cruellest and most destructive of all the enemies of our small birds. Defenders of the cat will tell you that properly trained cats will not kill birds, and even granting that certain well-bred, well-fed, and very carefully-trained cats will not do so—how many such cats are there in any community? To say that a well-fed cat will not catch birds is an absolute falsehood, as anyone who has taken any interest in bird-life can testify. It seems so easy to feed a cat well enough to prevent it from catching mice, but not to put a stop to its bird-hunting.

A very conservative estimate, based on the testimony of hundreds of witnesses, is that the average cat kills about twenty birds per year. Allowing that there are 1,200,000 cats in Canada, which again is a conservative estimate, seeing that on many farms there are two or three cats, this means that 24,000,000 birds are killed in the Dominion by cats every year. In view of the dire menace to bird-life which they constitute it is high time that we had a tax on cats. Such a tax would permit those who love cats to keep their pets, and would result in a tremendous reduction in our cat population, since all untaxed cats could be shot at sight. The money derived from this tax should be paid into a fund for bird protection, which work would include the destruction of untaxed cats. Such a tax would not only make for the welfare of our birds but also of the cats, as those cats which were left would be well cared for, and the unfortunate, half-starved, prowling felines eliminated.

For the present the best we can do in the cat question is to keep none ourselves and to see that none are allowed to poach on our bird-preserve.

(To be continued.)