



Vol. XLVI.

LONDON, ONTARIO, JUNE 8, 1911

No. 976

EDITORIAL.

Let Canada heed the warning of France, and preserve her faith in the land.

One office of the ground is to hold the plant in place while we feed the roots.

One great secret of winning in the long-drawn battle with weeds is never to let them go to seed.

The unfolding of a flower remains as great a mystery to-day as when science first began to peer and compare and discover.

Dr. Jas. W. Robertson gives us about the best definition we have come across of a farm boy: God's partner in making a new earth.

We can master the secret of the construction of the Parliament Buildings or the Cantilever Bridge, but the aster and the sweet pea hold their secret inviolate.

A great gulf is fixed between the thing that grows and the thing that is made. Building a cathedral or a barn may be marvellous, but growth is a miracle.

The passing dry spell makes one conclude that everything turns on the water supply, for plants, as well as animals. Man begins to feel helpless as he turns his eager eyes morning after morning to the sources of rain.

The plant wizards have some marked achievements to their credit, but it does us no harm to reflect that the wizard Nature, without either implements or artificial fertilizers, reared in beauty the giant Canada maple that preserves its identity amid a hundred forest rivals for existence.

Here is an idea which looks good. Following the example of Missouri, the State of Iowa has decided to allow farm names to be copyrighted. The man who first files a certain farm name with the county recorder will secure the exclusive use of that name in his county. Every farm should be named, and this system will avoid much confusion liable to result from the duplication of names.

One of the most pleasing and instructive experiences of the Canadian Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical Education, now on a tour of inquiry in Great Britain and in Europe, was their visit to the great city of Manchester, a splendid customer for Canadian farm products. The enterprise and foresight of Manchester in building the ship canal in the interests of its commerce has been manifested in the development of modern educational agencies such as the Municipal School of Technology, the School of Commerce, and the evening schools, all intelligently related to the general educational scheme of the city. In this pre-eminent home of commerce, industry and education, the Commission received a truly royal British welcome and a valued fund of information.

Rural Exodus in France.

Reference was lately made in "The Farmer's Advocate" to the statement of a Paris correspondent that all was not well with rural France, notwithstanding the boasted claims of their scientifically adjusted tariff to preserve the balance between agriculture and manufacture. Like the United States, and to a less degree, Canada and other countries, France is suffering acutely because of the drift from country to town. Legislators, social reformers and practical farmers are all wrestling with the problem how to stay the rural exodus, and an eminent novelist has written a powerful appeal on behalf of "the dying land." An article in the current Journal of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland, dealing with this subject, points out that this drift of population is doubly harmful: it cripples agricultural production upon which the nation's food depends, and it creates an unnatural situation in the industrial labor market, often resulting in unemployment and general misery. A former French Minister of Agriculture shows that the rural exodus is responsible for at least an aggravation of the threefold scourge of France—alcoholism, tuberculosis, and general depopulation.

In France, the movement began over fifty years ago, with the railway development, and has since continued. In forty years urban population gained five and a quarter millions, while the country districts showed a loss of two millions. The direct cause of this townward drift is said to be the growing distaste for country life and a preference for the more showy attractions and supposed advantages of the town. Indirect causes are many. One is an evil outgrowth of militarism, alike in France and Germany. Compulsory military service annually withdraws thousands of fine young men from the country to spend two or three years in a garrison town, with the result that large numbers never return to the land at all.

Canada will do well to heed this warning. The statesmen who have the courage to resist in every legitimate way the development of militarism deserve the gratitude and resolute support of the masses of the people. The military systems of Europe have laid intolerable burdens upon the people, and wrought incalculable mischief. If permitted, similar evils would grow up in Canada. Let not the masses—most of all, those in rural Canada—be deceived by any specious pleas of so-called patriotism by those who, for their own ends, would fasten militarism upon this young nation at a time, too, when all the enlightened Christian tendencies of the earth are looking peaceward.

Among other quoted sources of discontent with country life have been the intermittent character of farm work, low wages, cases being cited of farm laborers receiving but 20 cents per day; absentee landlords, technical incompetence of farm-tenants, the craving for cheap pleasures, the weakening of religious faith, and the general loosening of the bond that formerly attached the peasant to the land.

It is typical of the French character to act with vigor and with spirit when some desirable end is to be gained, and the French Government end is to be gained, and the French Government have passed an important measure which it is hoped will materially stem the tide of townward migration. The act is designed to prevent the uprooting of the small-land-holding class, by rendering their holdings inalienable under the law. It is optional in its action, and based upon the

principle that the homestead shall be "constituted" for the benefit of the family as a whole, and not for that of any one individual. This may be done for any family, rural or urban, rich or poor, the sole requisite being that the family shall be French or, at any rate, domiciled in France, and but one homestead can be constituted for each family. Once the act of constitution is legally complete, neither the homestead nor its produce can be distrained, even in the event of bankruptcy or compulsory liquidation. It is not, however, privileged in this respect as regards special mortgages, penal fines, taxes, fire insurance premiums, and debts contracted for food. To sell or renounce, the owner must have the consent of wife and children. In the event of the death of the constituting party, the homestead remains inalienable for the benefit of the surviving husband or wife and children. Finally, the law provides for the creation, under the Minister of Agriculture, of a Small Rural Holdings Board which will examine and deal with all matters relating to small rural ownership.

One would need to be tolerably familiar with French character and rural conditions in France to judge as to the probable efficacy of such a measure as the foregoing, which could hardly be regarded as a likely remedy for rural exodus on this continent. To the Canadian, it would not seem to be getting at the real roots of the trouble. Where so many causes have so long been at work in bringing about the situation complained of, the restoration of a more wholesome condition is not to be accomplished by any quick cure-all, but will be the result of a gradual and earnest co-operation of many forces, moral, educational, economic and administrative.

Shall We Use the Traction Ditcher?

It is unnecessary at this date to argue the benefit of tile drainage with any well-informed farmer, save perhaps a few in the extra-hard clay sections where it is held that underdrains will not work. The benefits of tiling low land have been too often and too conspicuously demonstrated for anyone to doubt the value of an effective subsurface channel. Not a few observant farmers are coming to the conclusion that it will pay to tile even the high land not formerly supposed to need underdrainage at all. We believe this view is correct, and expect in time to tile every acre of "The Farmer's Advocate" farm, except the wood-lot.

The question with many is how to get the work done. Expert ditchers willing to do this kind of work are becoming scarce, and even ordinary unskilled labor is none too plentiful. To solve the problem, we have the traction ditcher, which has been improved to the point of undeniable success, a better job and truer grade being possible with it than with hand digging. The ditching machine, however, cannot be profitably operated at so low a rate per acre as might be considered desirable, thirty-five cents a rod for digging a three-foot ditch and laying the tile, being about the minimum, while some contractors ask forty cents, unless guaranteed a considerable amount of work in the locality. Those who have been accustomed to get the same work done by hand for twenty or twenty-five cents a rod, naturally look askance at thirty-five. However, the situation in many cases resolves itself into a case of draining with the ditcher or not at all. In other cases the comparison lies between draining