

The Farmer's Advocate

and Home Magazine

"Persevere and Succeed."

Established 1866.

VOL. XLI.

REGISTERED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE COPYRIGHT ACT OF 1875.

LONDON, ONTARIO, APRIL 5, 1906.

No. 706

EDITORIAL.

The Rural View of Rural Free Delivery.

Since the inception of the idea of free rural mail delivery, and the first faltering efforts to put it into practice in various parts of the U. S., "The Farmer's Advocate," and Canadian farmers generally, have looked on with keenest interest, and, when it appeared that the plan was not only desirable, but feasible, it has received ungrudging support. As in the case of all other innovations, it was only to be expected that opposition would be encountered, and it is scarcely necessary to remark that, as yet, the opposition in Canada has been sufficient to have effectually laid a wet blanket upon every effort to push the matter. It was however, to us, as to many others, perhaps, something of a surprise to find that, by some insidious objector, the plan for rural mail delivery was being laid at the door of some political hatching machine, and that this idea in regard to it was gaining ground.

In a recent article by Mr. E. T. Bush, in the North American Review, this insinuation is most fully met. Mr. Bush dwells upon the fact that it was the rural population itself which first made the appeal for the system. His account of the origin of the movement is interesting. "In 1891," he says, "Mr. Mortimer Whitehead, a prominent Granger, of N. J., introduced the subject into the National Grange. In the winter of 1891-2, as a farmer, and in behalf of farmers, he made the first argument for Rural Free Delivery before a Committee of Congress, and succeeded in getting a small appropriation for experimental work. Here, then, was the beginning of 'this new creation in the interests of partisan power.' And it is safe to say that, unless the anatomy of the body politic has all along been wholly misunderstood, 'the womb of practical politics' is not located in the region of the Grange."

In the United States, on July 1st, 1905, there were 32,055 rural routes in operation, and 21,788 city carriers in the service. The cost of the two branches was about the same, each a trifle under \$21,000,000. The rural routes served 12,213,000 patrons, no application for a rural route being allowed to count any children under sixteen years of age. The cities covered by Free Delivery service aggregate, according to the last census, almost 28,000,000, counting all ages and conditions. The rural service counts nobody within half a mile of the post office, all within that distance being "too handy by" to be considered.

If those in a half-mile radius of any city post office were excluded, there would be almost 900 square miles of solid city, whose millions of people must, in all fairness, be excluded from this comparison. Mr. Bush points out, also, that the discontinuance of "star" mail routes, and the greater revenue derived by throwing cancellations to the larger offices, will greatly reduce the apparent cost of rural delivery to the extent of probably \$16,000,000. After all fair eliminations are made, he concludes that the country service will be shown to be very little more expensive, million for million, of actual patrons, than the city service.

In Canada, as in the United States, there will always be "kickers" against rural delivery, and the fact that the experiment would be an expensive one cannot be gainsaid. Nevertheless, the observant eye will not, perhaps, be slow to recognize that the kicks are likely to come from one of three sources: (1) From those who live near a post office; (2) from individuals or villagers whose trade is likely to be hindered or deflected by reason of mail routes; (3) from unprogressive individuals who read nothing, and to

whom the importance of the regular mail is a cipher.

"The farmer of to-day," says Mr. Bush, "is not the illiterate, non-reading, non-writing lout that some delight to paint him, and others would like to have him." To the farmer, the mail, to a great extent, makes up for lectures, entertainments, libraries, intercourse with the world; and it does seem a pity—not that the townsman who has all of these advantages should also enjoy that of having his mail delivered at his door three times daily, but that the countryman, who helps to pay for this privilege of the city, should not be himself in some sort similarly served. Free city delivery was born of progress, and grew by its own merits; rural mail delivery is a child of modern development, and is also bound to grow. It may be hindered, but it cannot be stopped.

Clover-growing in the Maritime Provinces.

Others beside Maritime Province readers should profit by the letter of R. J. Messenger, Annapolis Co., N. S., in the Farm Department of this issue. The writer tells of his difficulties, and how he overcame them; and one point that cannot be too strongly emphasized is that he was not discouraged by initial failure. Much excellent advice is discredited by men who, disappointed in their first attempts to apply it, condemn the doctrine, instead of setting themselves to learn the causes of failure in their particular cases. Success in agriculture requires men who, when they fall short of their reasonable expectations, will not rest until they know the reason why.

Mr. Messenger's difficulties have been experienced by many. Visiting Farmers' Institute lecturers, unacquainted with Maritime Province conditions, have in many cases quite failed to appreciate the poverty, or, more properly speaking, the exhaustion of some of their light upland soils. While clover is not a particularly exacting crop, still it is a fact that, to get a successful stand, the land must be capable of holding moisture, and must contain a fair supply in available form of the mineral elements of plant food, such as lime, potassium and phosphorus. The two former of these are very susceptible to leaching, and in Atlantic Canada, with its comparatively heavy annual precipitation, and not very retentive soil, the available portion of the various salts which contain these mineral elements is, without doubt, often deficient. In such cases, the specific remedy is manuring with lime, wood ashes, and occasionally, perhaps, bone meal, or else with a chemical fertilizer composed chiefly of the required mineral constituents. This fertilization is, par excellence, the most economical means of soil enrichment, for it aids in getting catches of clover, which not only traps valuable nitrogen from the air, but, by subsequent decay of its sward, adds humus to bind the soil together and make it more retentive of plant food and moisture. Gradually, also, it is thought, the nitrogen-gathering bacteria multiply in the soil. Thus, the growing of clover not only improves the land for other crops, but goes far to increase the chances of success with a subsequent clover seeding. From this is readily apparent the immense importance of sowing clover persistently. Mr. Messenger has found excellent results in applying barnyard manure to land intended to be seeded to clover. This was quite to be expected. The manure supplies more or less humus, some potash, and phosphoric acid, as well as nitrogen, though this latter is supposed to be of rather doubtful advantage to the clover, inasmuch as it is capable, once it gets a start, of securing its nitrogen from the atmosphere. However, the nitrogen

is valuable to the nurse crop, and possibly of some advantage to the young clover plants; and since manure is a home product, and since any fertility invested in securing a catch of clover is returned many fold, Mr. Messenger was wise in manuring these light, worn-out uplands before seeding down, though, if one had to buy fertilizer for clover, he might find one containing the mineral elements, but no nitrogen, more economical.

Regarding the application of manure, while we cannot speak as Mr. Messenger does, from practical experience in his particular locality, and while the practice of manuring in August may be the best he can do under his circumstances, still we cannot refrain from pointing out the great waste that must occur from keeping manure all through the summer, and applying it in time to get the full benefit of another fall and spring leaching. Rather would we try to work out a system that would permit the application of fresh manure on plowed or unplowed clover sod in winter, this to be devoted to roots, potatoes, corn, etc., and the grain crop to follow it. However, rotation is a problem that every man has to work out for himself.

The important fact has been demonstrated by a conclusive number of cases, that clover culture can be made a practical success on the light upland soil of the Maritime Provinces. What would seem to be required is a close study of local conditions, short rotation, persistent, frequent and liberal seeding (8 to 12 pounds of first-class seed per acre at least once every four years), good cultivation prior to the clover seeding, and occasionally, perhaps, moderate dressings of the purely mineral fertilizers. We should be pleased to hear from others on this subject.

Appointment of Judges at Fairs.

Following up the editorial in our last issue on the encouragement in Canada of the breeding of the most desirable classes of horses to meet the assured demand, the question arises, whether, in the event of Government aid being given to Fair Associations, enabling them to offer attractive prizes as an incentive to the importation and breeding of the best class of stock, some more satisfactory system of selecting judges may not be devised, in order that exhibitors may have confidence in the integrity and competence of the judiciary. The value of live-stock exhibitions is affected greatly by and depends very much upon this consideration, and we have reason to believe that a good deal of dissatisfaction exists in regard to the method or the means by which, in many cases, judges are selected and appointed. This is especially true in the horse department of some of our leading exhibitions, and applies in more or less degree to nearly all sections of our shows. This doubtless accounts, in many instances, for the limited competition for the prizes in important classes of stock. What would appear to be needed is a plan that will render the most good men available as judges, without depriving the agricultural or breed societies of the right of selection. The system of appointing so-called expert judges for a circuit by a Government official (known as Superintendent of Fairs), introduced under the Ontario Department of Agriculture, while appearing, in theory, an improvement on the old methods, cannot truly be said to be generally satisfactory, or to fully meet the needs of the situation. While admitting that most of the men sent out under this system have been men of undoubted integrity, and many of them capable, it is well known that others have been employed who have not had sufficient experience in breeding or handling high-class stock of the classes they are appointed to judge, having no reputation as competent judges even in the district in