

# The Farmer's Advocate

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### EDITORIAL.

#### THE WOOD - LOT FROM A BUSINESS POINT OF VIEW.

Human inconsistency yields few stronger illustrations than the arguments with which some farmers defend their short-sightedness in destroying farm wood-lots. On the one hand, they join the universal clamor that high wages have made farming unprofitable. But, if you speak to them about the wisdom of preserving a part of their farm in bush, they will turn around and tell you that, by clearing the land, they can purchase all the fuel they want from the produce of two or three acres in grain. As if it cost nothing to produce that grain! Surely this argument shows curious lack of business reasoning.

Agriculture is not rendered unprofitable by high prices of labor. In proof of this, reflect that, in spite of labor scarcity, farm land is advancing in value, and farmers were never so well off as they are now. By economy of labor, we may prevent this item from bulking more largely in the cost of production than it used to at half the rate per day. Nevertheless, labor is and always has been the greatest factor in the cost of crop production, and should, by rights, be valued equally, whether it is the proprietor's own labor or an employee's. Calculating on a business basis, it is safe to say that not very many farmers make from their holdings more than \$5.00 an acre per annum over and above the cost of their labor and all other running expenses. If, therefore, by leaving some land in bush, they can derive an annual return of \$5.00 per acre, they would be, from a purely commercial point of view, better off than by cultivating this extra acreage. Talking one day this winter with a man who has a good farm near London, which he has been renting for some years, we put it in this way: It is conservatively estimated that an acre of good unpastured hardwood will produce a yearly growth equal to a cord per acre. That cord, standing in your bush, is worth \$4 for firewood, to say nothing of a possible extra value for timber purposes. You are now receiving for the place, buildings and all, a rent of \$2.50 per acre, which may be taken as the returns of the cleared land per acre, over and above expenses of production. Which would you rather have as interest on your money, \$2.50 per acre or \$4.00? He had never thought of it in that light before, but readily admitted the soundness of the basis of calculation. It is true rented farms seldom yield the returns that are obtained by thrifty owners; but, on the other hand, it is certain that, by looking after the wood-lot intelligently, one might insure the production of timber worth several times as much as the valuation allowed for a cord of standing wood. About the only objection to leaving some of the land in woods is the danger of destruction by storms. Cases have been reported where farm woodland worth thousands of dollars has been wrecked in a night, and sold later for a few hundreds. Such instances, however, are quite exceptional, and there are few investments, anyway, that do not involve a risk of some kind. In the case of the woodland, the amount of risk may be minimized by culling often, using surplus young stuff for fuel, and selling some of the larger and straighter sticks for timber. Incidentally, a larger area of woodland would tend to reduce the violence of storms, lessen the force of drying winds, and render the country more productive, more healthful, and an infinitely pleasanter one in which to live, besides the returns, in some cases, from maple syrup and nuts.

It is only a few years since we heard of a man

down along the Detroit River fishing out black walnut and oak logs that had been dumped there twenty years before to get rid of them. Little did the man who thus disposed of them think choice black walnut would command a hundred dollars a thousand twenty-five years thence! There are thousands of people to-day making the same kind of a mistake. Manufacturers tell us that hardwood is already difficult to get and very valuable. In fact, they are forced to find substitutes, and are making larger use of steel. But steel, too, will ultimately rise in price, while the remaining uses for wood, combined with the scantiness of supply, are bound to raise it to such prices that people will set about planting land to forest. It is the rough land which should chiefly be used for purposes of timber production; but so acute will the scarcity soon become that the man with a piece of thrifty hardwood timber, even on good soil, will doubtless make more out of it than he could with plow and cultivator. In Germany, where land is worth several times as much per acre as it is here, there is a larger percentage under forest than in the older parts of Ontario, Quebec and Prince Edward Island. The Germans are awake to the value of forest. They care for it zealously, and never cut a tree without planting one in its place. There is wealth in store for the Canadian farmer who is enterprising enough to grow timber.

Let every man with the vestige of a bush fence it off and keep out stock. Even though it appears quite decayed, and doomed to extinction, a few years' protection from grazing will allow the seedlings to crowd out the grass. After that the old trees revive and make more vigorous growth. A striking case of this was told and illustrated in "The Farmer's Advocate" last winter, and many others have come under our observation. What Nature has done, Nature can do. Give her a chance. First fence out your stock, and, as a further means of inducing neighbors to take up the good work, so important from a public as well as an individual standpoint, use your influence to have the township council pass a by-law according to the act put through at Toronto last winter, exempting from taxation unpastured woodland, to the extent of one acre for every ten in the farm. Do it now.

#### A CORN PROPAGANDA.

In this issue "The Farmer's Advocate" begins a special series of contributions on the subject of corn-improvement and corn-growing in Canada. Large areas of Ontario and other Eastern Provinces are peculiarly favorable for the production of this magnificent stock-food crop, as the experience of years has amply demonstrated; but, with the characteristic conservatism of Canadians, we have been slow to develop its potentialities. Of late years, the use of the silo for preserving both grain and stalks as fodder for dairy cows, fattening cattle and other stock has given corn-production its greatest stimulus, but when we have to import over \$6,000,000 worth of corn, mostly for feeding purposes, the necessities of the case stand out in bold relief, also the timeliness of a propaganda for increasing the acreage grown. In probably no other crop is there an equal promise of increased profit, and no other leaves the land in equal condition for the crop that is to follow. The grain yield, as well as the growth of fodder, must be a desideratum hereafter. As has been already pointed out, "home-grown" seed corn is the most to be desired, and its production is likely to be best done by specialists in different localities. That more seed will be wanted, is a foregone conclusion, for

the country is going to grow more corn. There is room for very great and general improvement in seed-corn growing and the subsequent care of the crop. We trust that those who appreciate the immense value of corn, and whose experience will aid in the intelligent discussion of the subject, will not be slow to avail themselves of the use of these columns. Meanwhile, in preparing for the approaching season's operations, plan to increase the acreage, secure an early supply of tested seed of a variety best adapted to the locality, and make such improvements in manuring, preliminary cultivation and tillage as will ensure a high-class crop.

#### FAITH BACKED UP BY MONEY.

It is encouraging to note the interest being taken by well-informed men in the use of some such implement as the drag or leveller for keeping earth roads in condition. On the other hand, it is astonishing how many have never given it any serious consideration. In the office of Mr. A. W. Campbell, Good Roads Commissioner, Public Works Department, Toronto, there was a man recently who had come for advice. He was the reeve of a township which owned several graders, and by the use of these had got its roads pretty well shaped up. Mr. Campbell advised him to have a dozen drags made and scattered over the township, to be used frequently on every beat. It was a brand-new idea to this particular man, but he fell in with it at once, and results may be looked for in that municipality.

There is a question in some minds as to what is the best form of drag. Some fail to see any advantage in the split-log drag over the old-fashioned leveller. The latter implement is used to pare down the roads after they are somewhat dry. When used often enough, it does a vast amount of good, but it is usually difficult to secure a man who will hitch on to it at the season when its use would be most beneficial. Instead of scraping the roads when they are drying up after a rain, farmers are anxious to get in their seeding or cultivate their corn. The road is neglected till hard and dry, by which time travel has worn some sort of a track, and the short-sighted opinion prevails that it is no use scraping then.

The split-log drag, on the other hand, is used to puddle the roads while still muddy, before one can work on his land. In the United States they claim that splendid results have rewarded its frequent use, and it is time we try it more widely in Canada. Confident that we could induce our readers to take hold of it in earnest, "The Farmer's Advocate" is backing its faith with money and action. In co-operation with Mr. A. W. Campbell, Good Roads Commissioner and Deputy Minister of Public Works, we are offering, as announced last week and this, \$100 in prizes to encourage experimentation with this simple device. It is not even necessary to use the two halves of a split log. Square timbers may be used instead, and if a man thinks he can do better work with a couple of pieces of steel rail, he is welcome to try them. Above everything else, we are anxious to secure information. By the co-operation of our public-spirited subscribers, we hope so to advertise and prove the value of dragging roads that township councils may be induced to take up the drag, and do something to keep their roads good after having gone to the expense of grading them up.

LET US TRY THE SPLIT-LOG DRAG.