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**Thronging Students.**

The registration of students for the college course, at the beginning of the present term, was unprecedentedly large; being practically 400, or nearly 50 per cent more than at the same time last year. The indications are for a similar increase in the enrollment for the School of Agriculture.

Last term the total number of students at University Farm, including the various short courses, was 1,541. The School Course proper attracted 704. The steady increase in the enrollment indicates a general awakening to the fact that a special scientific training is today as much of a necessity to those who would succeed on the farm as to those who would succeed in pulpit, court or counting-room.

**Seed Corn Conservation.**

The farmers who observed "Seed Corn Week," and who secured an adequate supply of fully-matured selected ears from which to plant their fields next spring, are to be congratulated; as also are those who, finding their corn backward and immature at that time, nevertheless were enabled by favorable weather to select their seed ears, in the same way, a little later. As an inferior resort, with those who are yet behind in securing seed, a selection from the best ears in the shock may still be made at husking time; but probabilities are so great that most corn in the shock will have been affected by frost, that such should not be planted unless carefully tested for germination. Better buy seed from a neighbor, who has been forehanded or fortunate enough to secure a surplus of good seed, than take the risk of using an inferior article. One Minnesota farmer last year sold his surplus of good seed corn at \$5 a bushel, shelled.

The right selection of seed corn on your farm will have been made to little purpose, however, unless it is rightly cared for between gathering and next spring's sowing. Having seen to it that it is thoroughly dried, let it next be your care to protect it from damp, from insects and from mice. Your seed-room is your treasure-house; let none of these robbers break in! Then, next spring, with fall-plowed land awaiting the planter, your battle for an increased production per acre will be half won in advance.—C. R. B., Extension Division.

**Irrigation and Water Saving.**

Doubtless many a Minnesota farmer has thought, during the past season, as he witnessed the destruction or curtailment of his crops by the long-continued drouth, "What a fine thing an irrigating plant would have been this year!" A few horticulturists and market-gardeners in this state have already installed such plants, and others are planning to do so. "By use of pumps and windmills or gasoline motors, many small pieces of land can be supplied with water. On many farms, small streams, lakes or swamps are so situated that their waters can easily be turned upon the land for irrigating purposes. These methods of helping nature to help itself have long since been learned by the settlers of the semi-arid regions of the West, where the irrigated lands are now the most highly productive of all lands." But the farmer to whom such sources of water supply are not yet available may, if he will, "bottle up" such a quantity of water, just under the surface of his land—by plowing it deeply in the fall so that it will absorb all the rains and melted snows, and then cultivating so as to keep it covered with a dust mulch,—as to assure a sufficiency of moisture for his crops. This is the whole secret of so-called "dry farming" which is in reality only irrigation under another form.—C. R. B., Extension Division.

**Local Packing Houses.**

A contributor to Wallace's Farmer suggests a cure for the present intolerable conditions, both in the marketing of live stock and in the supplying of meats to the consumer, the es-

tablishment of a local packing-plant in every county. He declares that "All of the live stock sold for packing purposes could just as well as not be packed within the borders of the county. A co-operative packing-plant could be managed as well as a co-operative creamery or an insurance company." He suggests that each such plant could be provided with an inspector from the State Agricultural School, his salary to be paid by a tax. All meats killed for packing, or refrigerated at the plant and sold fresh, would thus have a State guarantee of their wholesomeness. Such an arrangement would save the haul to Chicago and return. The farmers would get at least as good prices for their stock as now, and both they and the townspeople would pay far less for the finished products. The county packing-houses would have as little difficulty in disposing of their meats as the creameries have in disposing of their butter; for they would equally have the confidence of the consumers. All the economies in the use of by-products, etc., could be as readily practiced in the county establishments. So many reasons can be cited, in fact, why a system of local packing-houses should be preferred to the present system, that apparently only the inspiration of a good leadership is necessary to bring about the establishment of local concerns in large numbers.—C. R. B., Extension Division, Minn. University Farm.

**The Farm Help Problem.**

The endeavor to introduce upon American farms, and upon our larger areas, those intensive methods of cultivation which afford the only sure means of bringing production up to the higher level attained on the farms of many European and some Asiatic countries, finds itself everywhere hindered, and often entirely blocked, by the absence of efficient farm labor. Says a writer in the Farmers' Institute Annual:

"Talk as you may of better tillage, of better fertilization, of rotation of crops, and of the larger net profits per acre to every tiller of the soil, if he would adopt these improved methods of farming; if you cannot show the average farmer where he can get competent labor at somewhere near fair wages, he is going to turn a deaf ear to all your pleadings for improvement. For efficient farm labor cannot be bought, cannot be hired, cannot be contracted for."

It remains true, however, that in other countries there is a sufficiency of competent farm labor. It is also a known truth that thousands upon thousands of competent farm laborers—many of them the best in the world—annually leave those countries to seek new homes in the United States. The anomaly is then presented of a constant stream of labor of the kind desired, pouring across the Atlantic and losing itself in a great volume of similar labor already here, while the land-owners who need it are able to get of it little or none!

Evidently there is something wrong in the manner in which our farmers have approached the problem. May it not be that it has been approached too exclusively from the standpoint of the farmer's selfish desires, with too little consideration for the interests of either the laborer or the community at large?

Let the writer of the paragraph above quoted—let the average farmer, anywhere, who utters a similar complaint, ask himself: "What have I done to make life on my farm so attractive to the laborers whom I hire now and then, that they should wish to remain with me all the year 'round?" The effort has usually been merely to get as much work out of the laborer as possible during his stay, and to make that stay as brief as possible. Little, if any, consideration has been given to the fact that he is "a man," with probably the same aspirations, the same family affections and the same social needs, as the farmer himself. The transient laborer—even the regular "hired man"—is seldom made to feel "at home" in the house of his employer. The only place on the farmstead wherein he seems really "at home" is the barn. A barn is no place for any but masculine associations, so the farm "hand" is practically isolated from womankind, from children and from nearly all helpful social influences. The only condition under which a farm-hand's wife can ordinarily be received at a farmstead

is that she come as cook and general drudge—an office to which good husbands seldom like to invite their wives. And it was never intended that the "hand," any more than the farmer, should live alone.

To the writer, it has appeared that the only practical solution of this problem lies in a radical change in the method of dealing with farm workers, so far as it concerns their home and family life. The married laborer should be given the preference, and he should be provided with a cottage of his own; with a piece of land, one to five acres, which he may cultivate for his own benefit, and of which he should be offered an opportunity to become the owner. The idea could be extended so as to include the settlement, on similar tracts, of enough laborers, with their families, to supply all the needs of the farm in busy seasons. The necessary investment in each cottage, so provided, would not be large, and the possession of a little "home of his own", by each laborer, would go far to substitute, at a lower cost, permanent employment for the nomadism which is today such an unwholesome feature of the industrial situation on the farm.—C. R. Barns, Extension Division, Minn. University Farm.

The Duluth News-Tribune sounds a true note when it says: "The 'back to the farm' movement has run ahead of itself when it undertakes to transplant men from the city to the country with no preparation and no knowledge of farm requirements." It quotes W. J. Spillman, of the federal bureau of Farm Management, to the effect that many—perhaps a majority—of city men thus transplanted fail of success on the farm. The remedy suggested is the establishment of special schools in the cities, with courses supplemented by field-work, at hours when the aspirant toward farming is not engaged at his regular vocation. Such schools would probably soon give a more rational aspect to the "back to the farm" movement, first, by making it clear to all that modern farming is not a business that any one can "jump into" unprepared; and second, by affording facilities for preparation, the lack of which no doubt has kept the movement from assuming the large proportions which it might otherwise have gained in view of its unquestioned beneficial aspects, both to the individuals concerned and to the country at large.—C. R. B.

**Preservation of Poultry Manure.**

Fresh poultry manure has approximately twice the fertilizing value of cattle manure, if a comparison of the two products is based upon their nitrogen content. The nitrogenous compounds contained in poultry manure, however, are very unstable, and decompose readily into ammonia and volatile ammonium compounds. Consequently, unless proper care is taken, large quantities of nitrogen, which might be used for fertilizing, are lost.

Several methods have been suggested for retaining this nitrogen. They consist in mixing with the excrement either an absorbing substance or an acid compound which will chemically combine with the ammonia as fast as it is formed.

Experiments carried on at the Maine Experiment Station showed that poultry manure, untreated, as well as that mixed with sawdust, lost half of its nitrogen in the course of six months. Where the manure was stored with half of its weight of gypsum (land plaster) it lost a third, while that mixed with an equal weight of gypsum and about one-fifth of its weight of sawdust retained all of the original nitrogen. Equally good results were obtained by using from one-third to one-fourth of the weight of the manure of either kainite or acid phosphate.

From the standpoint of the mechanical condition, the mixture with land plaster gives the least desirable product, although the addition of sawdust aids materially in preventing the formation of hard cakes.

When the manure is to be kept only a few days before applying, good results may be obtained with dry loam or peat as an absorbent.

The absorbent used should be sprinkled daily, in the required quantity, on the floor of the hen-house;

from which, in combination with the excrement, it may be removed when desired.

The difficulties experienced in spreading poultry manure, on account of its sticky consistency, may be obviated by mixing with loam, peat or common stable manure. For economical use, it should be spread in relatively smaller amounts than other manures.

The admixture of lime or wood ashes is not advised, since decomposition is sufficiently rapid without their use.

It should be borne in mind that each of the absorbents suggested is in itself of value as a fertilizer; the least valuable being sawdust. Consequently the requirements of the soil should govern to some extent the choice of the absorbent used.—Rodney M. West, University Farm, St. Paul.

**Winter Protection for Small Fruits.**

It is now time to be thinking seriously of winter protection for small fruits. For strawberries, the usual covering of straw is good. In mild locations, a layer of straw not less than four inches thick should be applied. In more severe locations this should be increased to six inches, and in the prairie sections of the northwestern parts of the state it is desirable to use eight inches of straw, or even more. In some years almost any covering will do; but winter's that are hard on strawberries, and which injure or kill them out when not heavily covered, are sufficiently frequent to make it worth while to be well prepared. It is important to have the straw free from weed seeds. Marsh hay is an ideal covering for small patches, when it is available. It is better than straw. Manure should not be used unless it is very light, because it is liable to settle down and smother the plants. The covering should be applied as soon as the ground is frozen hard enough to hold up a wagon. Sometimes a part of it is put on even before this time.

Raspberries and blackberries are nearly always sufficiently benefited, by laying them down and covering with earth, to make the expense and trouble more than pay. The work is done by bending the canes to the north and covering them with earth. If the canes are large and stiff, and growing in hills, the best way is to dig a forkful or two of earth away from in front of the plant before bending over. It is more convenient to begin at the north end of the row. The entire cane should be covered with earth. This work may be done any time after the leaves fall, and before the ground freezes up. It cannot be done while there is frost in the canes, for they will snap off. The only pruning necessary before laying down is to remove the old canes and some of the new ones, if they are too numerous. Leave just enough of the new canes to bear a good crop the following year. If they are planted in hills, and the canes are large, stocky and well-branched, about four to six new canes in a hill will be sufficient. Horse power may be used in covering the canes, by first laying them down by hand and covering the tips with enough earth to hold them in place, and then plowing a furrow against the canes from each side. A man should then follow with a spade, and complete the covering in spots missed by the plow.

Currants need little protection except from deep snows, which sometimes break down the branches when settling in the spring. Bushes may be protected from such injury by simply tying them together, with light rope or binding-twine, tightly enough to hold them up straight, so that the snow cannot bend them down and break them.—A. R. Kohler, University Farm.

**Hog Cholera.**

Hog cholera is regarded by most veterinarians as a germ disease; though whether its specific germ has been isolated is still a matter of debate. The best way to prevent hog cholera is to keep the germs away from the hog. If hogs on a neighboring farm are sick, keep away from them and don't let anybody from the infected farm go near an uninfected hog pen, or upon the ground frequented by healthy hogs.

Ask the neighbor whose hogs are ill to stay away—first as a protection to your interests; and, second, as a protection to his interests. When buying hogs, quarantine the newcomers at a safe distance from the old lot for two or three weeks, to make sure they are not bringing infection to the farm. Don't take swine to the county fair until it is made certain, by veterinary inspection, that no diseased hogs will be there; and, when the hogs are taken back to the farm, quarantine them until all possibility of infection is passed. The Minnesota Experiment Station makes these suggestions with a knowledge that their application on the farm will save the lives of many hogs and greatly aid in eradicating the disease.

**No Surplus of Good Fruit.**

It is an interesting fact that the great extension of fruit growing, in all parts of the country, has been attended, not by a decline in prices, but by a very considerable advance. The question whether or not the multiplication of orchards and berry patches will have the effect of producing a glut, so as to render profitless the labor and expenditures of the fruit grower, seems, then, very likely to meet a negative reply.

In the first place the demand for all the fruits of North America is world-wide. The world's appetite for them is insatiable; and as the facilities for distributing them are better systematized through intelligent co-operative arrangements between growers and transportation agencies, and selling agencies in the cities, it seems as though the problem is to be, not how to get rid of surpluses, but how to get enough of any kind of good fruit. In years of great abundance in American apple orchards, good apples have sold in Mexico at 15c apiece. In London they have retailed at 25c apiece. Other fruits, capable of bearing transportation for long distances, have commanded proportionately high prices. Of course, these prices have been for choice fruit. In New York and Boston, even 10 and 15 cents apiece has been readily obtainable for choice apples.

Such exceptional figures as those above quoted are not, however, necessary as a basis for profitable fruit growing. The moderate prices paid by the mass of American consumers are sufficiently high for that; as in thousands of houses our people are learning to prefer fruit, at such moderate prices, to many another article of food which they have heretofore demanded.

The improvement of canning processes and the cheapening of apparatus has also its effect in insuring a market for fruits. Fruit farmers are not now dependent on "canneries." Recent inventions enable them to do the canning themselves.

It would seem, then, that the grower need only see to it that his fruit is of good quality, attractively put up and intelligently marketed, to be certain of a reasonable reward. But the day when neglected orchards and bushes could be depended on to produce salable crops has passed. The grower of today must be equipped by study for battling with insect pests; must be insistent in cultivation and in the use of the sprayer; and must, in short, give as close attention to his trees as the stockman does to his cattle, the doctor to his patients, or the merchant to keeping his stock of goods fresh and in salable condition.—C. R. Barns, Extension Division.

**Swiss Chard.**

Among the vegetables that have been especially desirable this season is Swiss chard, or leaf beet. This is an old vegetable, but one that does not seem to be grown a great deal. It is used entirely for greens, much the same as young beets or spinach. One advantage of Swiss chard is that leaves may be cut from it and others take their place, thus doing away with successive sowing. It is good any time from the time it is large enough to use until cold weather. When the plant gets pretty near full grown, the leaves may be picked and the midrib taken out, and the leaf part cooked the same as spinach. The midrib is also occasionally used, being cooked about the same as asparagus.—Le Roy Cady, Minn. University Farm.