Farm Crop Queries

Conducted by Professor Henry G. Bell

The object of this department is to place at the service of our farm readers the advice of an acknowledged authority on all subjects pertaining to soils and crops.

Address all questions to Professor Henry G. Bell, in care of The Wilson Publishing Company, Limited, Toronto, and answers will appear in this column in the order in which they are received. When writing kindly mention this paper. As space is limited it is advisable where immediate reply is necessary that a stamped and addressed envelope be enclosed with the question, when the answer will be mailed direct.

J. R. S.:—I may grow quite a lot of sugar beets this season. Will you please tell me how to prepare the soil so as to get best possible yields.

Answer:—For sugar beets a medium loam soil should be chosen. If grown on a heavy clay the beet roots tend to become forked, which means low sugar and excessive waste. The ground should be deeply plowed and stirred to a depth of 8 to 12 inches. It will be all the better if the ground has been fall plowed. The crop of beets will depend very largely upon the plantfood supply in addition to the thoroughness of tillage that you give the seedbed. Keep in mind that you want to give the crop an early start and carry it through a vigorous growing season in order to get highest percentage of sugar and largest yield. As a general rule it is better to use fertilizer on the beet field and to apply manure to corn or some other crop, unless the manure is well rotted, then it should be worked into the seedbed carefully, just before disking and harrowing. Some successful beet growers use as high as 800 lbs. of fertilizer to the acre. You will have to regulate the amount you use in accordance with how recent the land has been manured and how rich it is naturally. The fertilizer should contain from 2 to 4 per cent. ammonia, 8 to 10 per cent. phosphoric acid, and 2 to 4 per cent. potash. The potash is especially necessary for sugar beets since they contain a large amount of starch and it is potash that is so closely related to the formation of starch within the beet. 200 lbs. of the fertilizer is best applied through the fertilizer dropping attachment of the beet planter. The remainder should be drilled into the seedbed with the fertilizer dropper of the grain drill before the beets are planted. If you do not have a grain drill with fertilizer sowing attachment, scatter the fertilizer broadcast over the field are preparing for beets, either with a lime spreader or by hand, and then work the fertilizer into the soil thoroughly by harrowing. Since beets are a deep rooted crop fertilizers should be worked well into the beet soil.

C. W. W.:—1. Would you advise me to use basic slag on my potatoes? Our potatoes were pretty scabby last year and I would like to know what to do to get rid of the scab. I had quite a bit of wood ashes saved up last winter and some people tell me to put them on other crops. 2. I would like to get my tomatoes also to ripen earlier. How can I work my tomato land to do this?

Answer:—1. I would not advise applying slag to potatoes. First because slag contains only phosphoric acid plantfood which is of use for the potato crop, whereas the rapid growing, heavy feeding potato requires a good supply of nitrogen and potash; and second, because slag contains considerable amount of active lime which produces ideal conditions for the growth of potato scab. Apply your slag to grain crops that have been well manured. The phosphoric acid of the slag will tend to balance up the weak point in manure as a grain fertilizer. Use a medium to high grade fertilizer on potatoes if you wish to get best results. Successful potato growers use fertilizers analyzing from 3 to 5 per cent. ammonia, 6 to 8 per cent. phosphoric acid and 3 to 5 per cent. potash. You will be safe in applying anywhere from 400 to 800 lbs. to the acre, working it into the potato drills or holes before the pieces are dropped. Do not drop the potato on top of fertilizer. 2. In order to get your tomatoes to ripen earlier apply a fertilizer high in phosphoric acid, say one analyzing from 10 to 12 per cent. phosphoric acid, along with 1 or 2 per cent ammonia. Successful tomato growers use from 300 to 800 lbs. per acre of such fertilizer, working it into the soil through the fertilizer dropper of the grain drill or by scattering a handful around the places where the tomato plants are to be set, working the fertilizer well into the soil so that the available plantfood may immediately dissolve and help the growing crop.

H. G. R.:—What can I do to prevent my tomatoes from rotting on the vines? The rot begins on the blossom end and gradually enlarges until the fruit is rendered unfit for use or market. Will spraying control the disease?

Answer:—The blossom end rot of tomatoes is a trouble that is not fully understood. It is not due to any blight or bacterial attack, but is the result of some break in the continuous growth of the plant. It may be due to an over-stimulation of the stock growth, which would result from too heavy manuring, or the application of too large quantities of nitrate of soda or some other nitrogen carriers. It may also be due to irregular watering. The best preventatives are careful tillage of the tomato soils and mulching so as to maintain a constant moisture supply and the application of a fair supply of well- balanced fertilizer, so that there may be a regular supply of suitable nourishment for the developing plant. The amount and analysis of such a fertilizer to use to the acre has been outlined in the preceding question.

The Dairy

The Pure-Bred Herd.

Recently a writer stated that it is not necessary for all farmers to have pure-bred herds of dairy cattle. He explains that the owner of the pure-bred herd should have the same relation to the owner of grade cattle as the corn breeder has to the other farmers who raise crops of market corn. Of course, it is not necessary for all farmers to be corn breeders but they do wish to have a place to go to obtain pure seed when they need it.

However, this does not mean that more good blood is not needed in most herds. This blood can be supplied by the use of the pure-bred sire and good grade herds. The farmer who owns pure-bred stock is able to supply pure-bred sires to other farmers who do not own a pure-bred cow but wish to improve the quality of their herd by the use of a pure-bred sire. The point seems interesting and if it is correct some farmers who feel that they have to apologize for their grade cows can now feel that thy are doing all right if they are selling a fair quantity of market milk from their grade cows and making an effort to improve their herd by the use of the pure-bred sire.

For many years, however, we have learned the difference between pure-bred and scrub stock and it has always seemed that the arguments have been all in favor of the pure-breds. It is rather difficult for some farmers to feel that they are really getting along with their dairy cattle until they are able to own some pure-bred stock. The ownership of a pure-bred herd gives a farmer some business opportunities that the owner of grade stock lacks. The chance of selling stock at auction in co-operation with other owners of the same breed, is a great advantage to the farmer in some communities. The sales of bull calves for sires often prove very profitable transactions. The study of pedigrees and breeding records is interesting and instructive and no farmer really gets interested in such things until he owns a few pure-bred animals.

One thing is certain. There is no immediate danger of there being too many breeders of pure-bred dairy cattle. The writer believes that farmers with good grade herds can make fine progress by the use of a pure-bred sire but also believes that the farmer who is able to take up pure-bred stock raising on at least a small scale should not be satisfied to continue with grades if he is interested in pure-bred animals and enjoys working with them. There will always be enough farmers who do not wish to breed seed corn or pure-bred cattle. The farmers who do take up that work seem to find it verv profitable.

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A NEW LANDED GENTRY

By S. O. S.

And always he wears a complacent smile.

There has been a lot of disapproval voiced lately against the importation of titles. Personally we can't see what all the row is about. It surely cannot hamper a man's usefulness in life just to have a few initials hitched on to the rear end of his name or for that matter to have a "Sir" drum-majoring in front.

On the other hand we do view with concern the growth of the Landed Gentry whom the farmers of Ontario are unconsciously creating. In every town and village you see the creating under way. In every town and village you will find at least one gentleman of Hebrew extraction who delights in the name of Scrapinsky, Junkovitch or something just as suggestive. They come to this country from Russia, Austria, Hungary, Poland and other European countries; sometimes with sufficient funds to purchase an ancient horse and wagon and rent a storage yard, but more often these accessories come later. In either event they soon acquire sufficient English to transact their business of buying and selling old iron and other materials. And their best customers are the farmers. For proof of this statement just glance at the next junk pile you pass and you will see that it is made up largely of binder, mower and other implement parts, which through exposure and want of care on the farmers' part, have been scrapped. These implements were cut off in the prime of their useful life.

Now this metal collecting business is a remunerative one, for after a few years of buying for a song and selling at a good profit our Hebrew friend is in a position to return to the land from whence he came, where by virtue of the wealth he has made from the Canadian farmer he is able to purchase a baronial hall, the original baron having left his estate for financial reasons, and being perhaps now engaged as a waiter in a Toronto hotel or possibly employing his artistic talents in creating studies in black and tan in a shoe shine parlor.

Our retired scrapman is now in a position to live at ease for the rest of his life. With our mind's eye we can see him watching his goats grazing on the verdant hills of his estate, we can see his look of pleasure as his eye follows the gambols of his kids both Jewish and goatish. Or again, we see him testing the luscious fruit of his vineyard. And always he wears a complacent smile, a smile so broad that even his patriarchal beard cannot obscure it. For all these good things are his, received at the hands of the careless Canadian farmer.

The farmer will continue to plow, sow and reap; incidentally he will neglect to build an implement shed, and thus continue the business of providing scrap for the junk man's successor.

The Sunday School

INTERNATIONAL LESSON MAY 25.

Lesson VIII. Repentance—Jonah 3: 1-10; Luke 13: 1-5; Acts 2: 37, 38. Golden Text, Mark 1: 14.

Jonah 3. 1-10. The Repentance of Nineveh. "Yet forty days." Jonah had no message of mercy or of hope. He did not bring to Nineveh the whole of the truth with which he had been entrusted. Jonah represents very perfectly the spirit of many of the Jews scattered throughout the world in the period of Babylonian exile and after, who desired the overthrow of the heathen nations and the triumph of Israel over the enemies who had so long oppressed them. Their feeling was a perfectly natural one, for they had undoubtedly suffered great wrongs. See, for example, Isaiah's prediction of the doom of Assyria (Isa. 10: 16-19 and 24-27), Nahum's vivid portrayal of the fall of Nineveh (Nah. 2, 3), and the "burden of Babylon" (Isa. 13, 14). But the Lord had given to Israel another message for the heathen world. Israel, as His people and His servant, was to be for "a light to the Gentiles" and for "salvation unto the end of the earth." Jonah had left out of sight in his preaching the mercy of God. But his stern and unqualified denunciation of doom stirred the people of the great city to repentance, and with fasting and in sackcloth they cried for mercy to God.

"Let them turn every one from his evil way." The king's proclamation shows an appreciation of what repentance really means. The Old Testament words mean simply "turning" and "being sorry." It is turning from sin, turning to God, seeking to do God's will. In his ignorance, the king could not give the people any assurance of God's mercy. The prophet, if he had been so disposed, might have done that. But the king said, "Who knoweth?" It might be, he thought, that God would regard their penitence and would have mercy upon them.

"And God repented." He was sorry for them, had compassion upon them, and turned from His purpose to destroy them.

Luke 13: 1-5. A Solemn Warning. "Sinners above all." The reference is apparently to events which had recently happened. The Galileans had been notably rebellious against Roman authority, and Josephus mentions more than one massacre in which they suffered. This appears to have been a case where, by the orders of Pilate, the Roman governor, a number of Galileans were slaughtered while offering sacrifice. There had also been an accident at Jerusalem, when eighteen persons were killed by the fall of a tower. It was the common thing in those days to regard calamities of that sort, or sickness, as a punishment for sin. That was the way in which Job's friends regarded his sickness, but the book of Job is written as a protest against its application to him. Jesus says here, "Think ye that they were offenders above all?" "I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

It is true that calamity and suffering often seem to be the judgment of God, but it is likewise true that the innocent suffer with the guilty. Such experiences do sometimes lead men to repentance, but Christ's warning is addressed to all, for all are in equal need of repentance.

There is a graphic picture drawn in Acts 2: 37-42, of the scene which followed Peter's preaching at Pentecost. Many were convicted of sin, "pricked in their heart." They came to the apostles saying, "What shall we do? The answer was, "Repent ye and be baptized." Repentance was the turning of heart and mind toward God revealed in Christ. Baptism was the open profession of Christ and sign of reception into the company of those who believed in Him. These were the conditions upon which the apostle could assure them of "remission of sins," and "the gift of the Holy Spirit."

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Bedtime Stories

Jack Rabbit's Rise in Life.

Once the funniest thing happened to little Jack Rabbit! It really did. Jack was an inquisitive little body and one warm day not long ago, finding a door invitingly open, he hopped into the kitchen of a nice little house.

The cook was upstairs and Jack wiggled his nose and twinkled his ears, and saw what he could see. Then he hopped here and there, sampling several things that appealed to him, looked through the cookbook to see if there were any new recipes his wife might fancy and glanced over the morning paper.

It was then that a neat little package struck his eye. It was lying beside a big wooden bowl. Jack rather fancied it was good to eat, so he tucked it under his arm, and then, as he heard footsteps coming down the stairs, he scurried off as fast as he could.

Halfway home he began to nibble bits of the package. It tasted rather queer, but he kept right on nibbling till it was gone, paper and all. Then he went into his underground cozy little hole and fell sound asleep, for, to tell the truth, it made him feel very funny.

A loud scream wakened him.

"Rabbit's foot and cat's ears!"

It was the voice of his wife, sounding rather smothered. Jack felt smothered, too, and very puffy.

Then a strange thing happened, he began to grow bigger and bigger and bigger. Now he filled the whole room and Mrs. Jack with a scream fell backward into the entry. Now his head bumped against the ceiling, then it popped right out of the roof, and after it his shoulders. His poor house was a ruin. And poor Mrs. Jack! Where was she?

Jack could not stop to look, for, you see, he never stopped growing. He shot up as tall as a tree and out till he was fat as a house.

He gave a hop and landed a mile from his home, and still he kept growing. Now he was tall as two trees and every hop carried him ten miles further. Then he stopped growing.

He began to cry, for he was so lonely away up in the air and so big. And as he did not know what else to do he kept on hopping and at ten miles a hop he soon got to—where do you 'spose? The Kingdom of Giants! And a giant little boy just danced with glee when he saw Jack.

"What a dear little bunny!" cried the giant little boy, hugging Jack.

And he was a dear little giant rabbit, for the package he had eaten was yeast. And no wonder he rose up so high. Anyway, he lived happily ever after—or pretty happily, I guess!

Every dairyman should devote himself to the work of instructing his neighbors by example and precept.

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If you ever give your boy or girl a pig or calf you should see that they get the money for it when it is sold. If not, their sense of justice is liable to be greatly stirred and what might have been an inducement to hold them to the farm becomes a club to drive them from it.

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