

AGRICULTURE FAR FROM DECADENCE

Farmers Never so Prosperous,
Says Hon. J. S. Duff.

AN OPTIMISTIC REPORT.

Depopulation of Rural Districts Has
Stopped and Tide Has Now Turned—Value of Farm Products Has
Greatly Increased.

"I desire to dispel the impression, if any such exists, that Ontario agriculture is decadent, and to establish clearly the fact that far from being a source of pessimism, there never was a time when agriculture was so prosperous and the outlook so bright."

Backed by convincing statistics, this statement of the Hon. J. S. Duff, Minister of Agriculture, puts into concise form the spirit of optimism that runs through the annual reports of the Department of Agriculture, just issued, and incidentally contains what may be the answer of the department to the open letter of Mr. J. W. Flavelle, dealing somewhat gloomily with existing conditions.

The Minister, in giving comparisons, shows that in the twenty-one years from 1866 to 1907 there was a decrease in rural population of over one hundred thousand, but he points out that since then the tide has been running the other way, the increase in the past two years having been well over five thousand.

The Wealth of the Province.

But it is in the increasing wealth of the farming industry that Hon. Mr. Duff finds special cause for congratulation. Both the aggregate and the average prosperity of the farmers are greater now than ever before. The crop statistics furnish the proof. In the five years from 1904 to 1909 the value of field crops increased \$32,772,887. Adding the increase from orchards, small fruits, live stock and dairying, the

Minister finds that the annual output of the farms has increased by \$50,000,000, bringing it up to some \$250,000,000.

"It is sometimes said that Ontario land is becoming decadent; that the soil is losing its fertility," continues the Minister, and he proceeds to show that the average yield of field crops in the past quarter century has steadily increased. Compared with the average yield of the farms of the United States, Ontario has a big lead and comparisons with the States of Iowa, Ohio, Illinois, Kansas, Indiana and New York show that Ontario leads every one of them except in the output of hay. Only one State shows a better return than Ontario in any grain. Illinois has a slightly higher average in barley and oats, but the difference is more than made up by Ontario's big lead in wheat.

The report of the department includes under one cover all the returns from all the various branches which were hitherto made in separate reports.

Record Attendance at Guelph.

The Ontario Agricultural College had the highest attendance on record, the number including the girls at the Macdonald Institute, aggregating 1,386. This included 975 men between sixteen and forty years of age. Those in the general course numbered 443, while those taking the short courses slightly exceeded that number. At the end of the last term twenty-eight took the degree of B.S.A. and seventy-four the Associate Diploma.

Naturally, practically all those taking the short courses came from Ontario farms and went back to Ontario farms, but in the regular student body there are representatives from all the Provinces of the Dominion and seventeen outside countries. Of the 443 in the general course Ontario contributed 303, other Provinces ranking as follows: British Columbia, 27; Nova Scotia, 11; Alberta, 9; Saskatchewan, 8; Manitoba, 4; New Brunswick, 2; Quebec, 2. From outside countries the record is: England, 26; South Africa, 12; United States, 10; Scotland, 6; Jamaica, 5; Ireland, 3; Wales, 2; Japan, 2; New Zealand, 2; Argentine, 2; Brazil, 1; East Indies, 1; France, 1; India, 1; Spain, 1; Germany, 1.

Drainage Demonstrations.

The report in dealing with the work of the college describes the progress of the educational campaign being carried on for better drainage of the farms. During the year one hundred and thirty-two demonstrations were given. In this connection reports showed that drained land produced \$20 per acre more than land in need of drainage.

Bringing in Farm Laborers.

The work of colonization and immigration was carried on vigorously. The total number of immigrants sent to farms by the Bureau of Colonization was 1,757, and by the Salvation Army 1,758. The latter organization brought out 2,718 other immigrants and 281 domestics. Other organizations contributed, and the total recorded additions to the population of the Province during the year amounted to 7,581.

Under the arrangement whereby the Province advances passage money to farm hands, loans of \$11,334.50 were paid. The success of the experiment is shown by the fact that already nearly seventy-five per cent. has been paid back.

The Work of Reforestation.

During the year 400 acres of land was added to the forestation in Norfolk county, where the department is experimenting in reforestation. The total land at the station is now 1,300 acres. About 200,000 plants, chiefly white pine and jack pine, chestnut and red oak, were set out during the year. The distribution of seedlings, chiefly to farmers, amounted to 200,000.

The report deals with the work accomplished by the agricultural societies branch, the live stock branch and the farmer's clubs. The experiments in increasing the production of fruit and the successful results attending them are also described.