

The Gazette-News

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Saturday, December 16, 1911.

THE CORN CONTESTS, PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE.

Something less than two years ago in a letter in The Gazette-News Haywood Parker urged the inauguration of boys' corn growing contests in Buncombe county, and started the fund for prizes with a subscription of \$25. This was the first definite step in this direction; in editorial and other articles The Gazette-News had described at length the corn growing contests in other sections, the starting point of demonstration work in practical intensive farming.

Other citizens added to Mr. Parker's subscription, and a prize fund was raised and organization effected for both boys' and men's contests in this county. The time for preparation for the 1910 crop was inadequate, but The Gazette-News endeavored to interest all the counties in this section; and offered a prize of \$50 for the best acre yield of corn, without restriction.

Space is not available to review the movement's progress during this two years period. A few men and a few boys were enlisted for the 1910 crop, some of the foremost citizens of Buncombe and other counties entered the contest, raised excellent crops of corn, and thoroughly enjoyed it. The best that man or boy succeeded in doing in Buncombe was less than 100 bushels, and the gentleman who won The Gazette-News' \$50, A. H. Elmore of Swain county, went only a few bushels over the hundred. The results for 1910 were nothing very remarkable, in themselves, but the history of the past season shows that they were vastly important, in that a real beginning was made; the beginning of a movement that will continue throughout the years, we have no doubt.

Two important factors were added: the establishment by the county and national authorities of the farm demonstration work with a salaried agent, E. D. Weaver, whose personal work has been of great value, and some organization through the public schools, due to the interest of the board of education and the county superintendent. No report has been furnished by the contest committee as to the number entered in the various contests, the number dropping out and the number staying to the end. Many data of highly significant nature has, however, been made available.

Except at isolated points, the 1910 corn growing season was almost one prolonged drought. The demonstrator reported 29 men who averaged more than 77 bushels to the acre. The maximum yield for Buncombe was brought up to 158.93, and by a boy, at that; his nearest adult competitor being about 30 bushels below him. This boy, Corbett Alexander, raised his corn at a cost of 41 cents a bushel, the net profit being \$60.45, which added to his \$45 prize money gives him \$105.45 for his devotion to that acre of ground last summer. The second and third boys raised more corn than did the leader in the 1910 contest. Grady Rhymer, second, is one of the very best farmers in the county, for while he got less than 104 bushels he raised his corn at a cost of 24 cents a bushel—that is fine farming; his acre netted him nearly as much money as Corbett Alexander made of his. There are hundreds of men growing corn in Buncombe who evidently know less about corn growing than these boys whose yields were reported yesterday.

The comparison of results in 1910 and 1911 gives an idea of what may reasonably be expected next season. The demonstrator states that men and boys throughout the county are eager for planting time to come. His scores of assistant demonstrators enrolled are but a minority of men who, without saying anything about it, are working along the same lines. It is apparent that this work must inevitably tend to raise the acre average of the county and more rapidly approach the present maximum records are approached. It is practically certain that 100 bushels more on an acre could be produced in Buncombe soil than Young Alexander raised; beyond that, new methods would have to be introduced. One man who knows a great deal about corn said the other day that dynamiting in winter, and heavy manuring; a second manuring later, with some subsoil method to work the fertilizer far down in the deep seed bed, with present methods of cultivation would, he believed, be the way to the maximum. He said that the deep pulverization would insure an abundance of moisture and enable the roots to reach down to it; the fertilizer that had been worked in deep would insure a constant supply of rich food for the roots. This, however, is merely a theory; we do not profess to be a corn doctor.

Those who are to compete in these contests next year ought to be already well started with plans and preparations and many doubtless are. However, there is yet time to make a beginning. The Gazette-News if it can secure them will publish records of a number of the best crops of 1911, showing how the thing is done. We wish to assure Corbett Alexander, and Grady Rhymer and Gay Young and these other boys that we have not words sufficient to express our opinion of the importance of what they have done, and if we had we should not express it, for fear it might spoil them. Buncombe county is proud of them. If they will all just keep right on the way they have started, educate themselves for business farming and spend their lives tilling old Buncombe soil, each will achieve a magnificent success, "all things being equal"—which is to say, if they will resolve that nothing shall prevent them from being good, and industrious, and simple. But if for any reason any of them should feel the call to some other line of work, in business or the professions, let no one try to compel him to stay on the farm. They will probably succeed in whatever they undertake. As long as they are on the farm, however, it is their duty to be good farmers and set a good example for the grown men around them.

As for this newspaper, it finds abundant ground for satisfaction with everything involved in this simple matter of the corn contests. The material universe, and the existence of Omnipotence, Omnipresence and Omnidiscience, might be postulated from a grain of corn.

A RICH FIELD LITTLE TILLED.
The recent address of Dr. Oscar Dowling, president of the Louisiana State board of health, before the Association of Life Insurance Presidents in New York, is an able statement of the value of preventive medicine. Dr. Dowling last year started a health train campaign in Louisiana, which he says, resulted in stimulating many sanitary reforms, and his address was in advocacy of this innovation, but many of his utterances have a wide application. Here is one noteworthy statement he made:

Waiting for disease to arise in the individual and then attacking it involves enormous economic waste, a waste of time, energy, earnings and efficiency. Nor is this the sum total of the consequences. Modern mental sciences fortify the conclusions of scientific medicine that disease is the cause, direct or indirect, of vice, crime, insanity, pauperism and defective minds—the worst evils of our present-day civilization. The results of the practical application of the principles of modern scientific medicine are convincing. Yet with tangible proofs of the wonders that may be wrought in environment for individual and public health comparatively little has been accomplished.

And that little oft times is, accomplished under difficulties. "A stitch in time saves nine," has become a proverb, but is little applied in practice.

"We want to unify in order to control," Governor Wilson said to an audience in Baltimore the other night, speaking in advocacy of the adoption of commission government in the Maryland city. "I do not understand the reason of those persons who say that unification, centralization, is undemocratic. I do not know a thing which is undemocratic, except that which prevents the people from controlling. And I stand for the proposition that anything that secures control by public opinion is fundamentally and radically democratic. I do not have to argue that. It is too obvious. As a friend of mine said, 'I am not arguing with you, I am telling you.'" Richard S. Childs, secretary of the Short Ballot organization, originator of the term "short ballot" and founder of the organization, puts it somewhat thus, with more force than elegance: "If it does not democ it is not a democracy. It may look like a democracy, it may be said of it that it ought to work and there is no reason why it should not work; but if it does not democ it is not democracy."

We earnestly bid those of the democratic household of faith who are pained, chagrined and humiliated by the complexity of Democrats in the passage by the house of the pension bill which is to add some \$75,000,000 a year to the annual expenditure, to cheer up, and remember that the same bills effected economies amounting to some \$100,000,000 a year.

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