

PROGRESSIVE FARMER

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"I am standing now just behind the curtain, and in full glow of the coming sunset. Behind me are the shadows on the track, before me lies the dark valley and the river. When I mingle with its dark waters I want to cast one lingering look upon a country whose government is of the people, for the people, and by the people."—L. L. Polk, July 18, 1899.

PRACTICAL FARM NOTES.

Written for The Progressive Farmer by the Editor and Guy E. Mitchell.

Here's a bit of old advice—so old that it sounds "obehnutty." Still we believe it cannot be too often emphasized, and so we give it again:

"Study the needs of your local market and try to anticipate its needs. If it needs strawberries, raise them. If it needs eggs, try to have eggs. If it needs chickens, raise them. If it needs potatoes, raise them. Always keep your eyes open, and every time you go to town, which should not be too often, try to take something to sell."

Rape may now be sown. A full description of this crop and its value was given in The Progressive Farmer of May 30th. If you have lost that issue of the paper, send postal card request for free copy of Circular No. 12 "Rape as a Forage Crop" to Secretary of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. Those who have our issue of May 30th, but wish to know more of this crop, should also send for a copy of this circular. We hope that rape will be more extensively grown in this State during the coming season.

At the Twenty eighth Annual meeting of the Kansas Board of Agriculture, Mr. J. N. Grau, of Mitchell county, Kansas, who is largely and profitably in the sheep business there, read a paper prepared at the suggestion of Secretary F. D. Coburn, giving his ideas of how best to manage and care for the flock, and his method of selecting animals for breeding purposes. For the last 14 years his flock has numbered from 800 to 1,000, and as he has succeeded by close attention to his business, his observations should be of no little interest and value.

He says in part:
I fatten my surplus stock for market. In the selection of breeding ewes I never pay much attention to the fine lines of fiber, but more to the Constitution, good form, no wrinkles on body, good fleece, or long, dense staple of wool, and good milking qualities—as this can be had in sheep as well as in cows, and to produce a good lamb they must have an abundant supply of milk. I sort out about one-third to one-half of my ewe lambs for breeders at one year old, sending the rest to market for mutton; always feeding the lambs well so as to get the size of the sheep the first year. If neglected they will grow smaller every year. By this way of selecting and feeding I have increased the average size of my flock twenty pounds. In selecting the rams, I look for a good constitution, which will represent a good feeder and always the best in the flock, of a good form for mutton; shown by well sprung ribs, breadth across the shoulders, a deep breast, with front legs well set apart, a short neck and erect carriage; short head, with broad nostrils, giving plenty of room to breathe the pure air of the range; with three to four inch

ple of dense wool, with only a reasonable quantity of oil, and weighing from 175 to 200 pounds at maturity.

I wean my lambs in September. For the last two years I have turned them on a piece of standing sorghum, giving them also some cracked corn, which I give the best of results. As soon as the grass gets dry and poor, which is about the first of October, I commence to feed the older sheep one bushel of corn to the 100 head per day. Sometimes I feed corn fodder with corn on until I get my corn husked out; then turn them in the stalk field, and give one bushel of corn to the 100 head per day. My breeding ewes run out every day in the stalk field, from morning until night, except in severe snow storms, when I think it is not best to leave them out all day. Exercise is necessary for good health and constitution and for raising strong lambs. From about the first of March I feed corn fodder and alfalfa hay until grass starts to grow."

Millet is in many sections very popular as a "catch" crop. The Agricultural Department has recently introduced some varieties which promise to create a new interest in the crop. Mr. Thomas A. Williams, the Assistant Agronomist of the Department, has been making a specialty of the study of various kinds of millets and states that it is his opinion that this plant is destined to be much more largely grown in the United States than it is at present.

"It is astonishing," he said, in talking with us recently on the subject, "to think that millet feeds about one-third of the population of the globe. About thirty-five or forty million acres of millet are grown annually in India alone. We have here various varieties. In the United States the fox tail millets are grown almost exclusively for forage. They are strong and rapid growers and grow largely from the surface soil. The great mass of strong fibrous roots have a beneficial effect on the physical condition of the soil, particularly in the case of new land. A crop of millet on new 'breaking' aids materially in subduing the land for the next succeeding crop.

German millet is grown a good deal here. It makes a heavy yield of forage under favorable conditions, but does not stand drought so well as the smaller varieties, such as Common millet and Hungarian. The hay is coarser and less valuable than that from the smaller millet, but when the forage can be fed in the green state. This variety is an excellent one to grow, on account of its heavy yield. Hungarian millet does not resist drought as well as the common millet, but with favorable conditions of soil and moisture, it usually gives a somewhat heavier yield.

"A millet has been recently placed on the market under the name of 'New Siberian Millet,' which is regarded by some as but a form of Hungarian. The Japanese millets form another class. They are comparatively large forms, giving heavy yield of seed and forage under favorable conditions, but with little ability to stand drought—less than any of the commonly grown sorts.

"Under average conditions. Barn yard Millet is one of the most productive of the annual hay grasses, yielding at the Hatch Station from twelve to eighteen tons of fresh or four to six tons of cured forage per acre. By seeding early in May and cutting as soon as the plants come into blossom, a second crop may be obtained.

"When millet is handled as a primary crop, seeding is generally done during the latter part of May or early in June in the North, and, of course, correspondingly earlier in the South; or, if the moisture conditions are favorable, it may be delayed as late as August 1st in the latter region, the general rule being to sow millet as soon as the corn is planted.

"Cutting foxtail millets for hay should never be delayed until the seed has begun to ripen, particularly if it is to be fed to horses. On the other hand, it is best not to cut too early, as the hay is liable to have a more or less laxative effect upon the animals eating it. However, it is better cut early than late. The hay may be safely cut any time during the period from complete 'heading out' to late bloom.

"The use of millet as an element in annual pastures may well receive greater attention from farmers in sections where there is a general shortage

of pasture. Such varieties as Hungarian and Common millet, which 'sprout' from the root well, are best to sow for pasturage. Some of the Korean varieties may prove valuable for this purpose. There are few of the annual grasses better adapted for use in pastures. Sheep and calves may be pastured on this crop with excellent results. It would be well to mix some other crop, like field peas, with the millet, or to allow the animals to run on a field of clover, rape, or some such crop for a portion of the time.

"In some sections of the country the foxtail millets have gained the reputation of being injurious to certain kinds of stock and are therefore regarded with suspicion by many farmers and stockmen. Like many other forage plants, these millets become very harsh and woody with age, and are then difficult of thorough mastication and hard to digest. Then, too, at this stage of growth the beards are stiff and harsh and not only difficult to digest, but produce more or less irritation in the digestive tract of the animal, and sometimes unite with other indigestible substances, forming compact balls in the stomach and ultimately causing death. This difficulty may be avoided by cutting the hay in proper season, as recommended. No more trouble seems to have been experienced in feeding millets in the fresh state than with any other succulent forage. Most of the injury has arisen from feeding the hay in large quantities with little or no grain or forage and for extended period."

AGRICULTURE.

BROOM SEDGE.

Much has recently been said both for and against broom sedge, the Andropogon Virginicus of the botanist, and as I have seen no treatise that gives both sides of the question justice, I will offer a few remarks that some may find instructive and valuable.

That broom sedge has been of great value in some places, mostly the thinner soils of the South, no one can successfully deny. And that it is useful still is good evidence that present methods of farming are far from what they should be.

Broom sedge is valuable only when the soil has been robbed of its richer constituents by too heavy cropping, and is no longer able to grow valuable products. The sedge then springs up and acts as a mechanical obstruction in preventing the soil from washing. And, too, notwithstanding the strong claims to the contrary, an exhausted field will be found to have grown richer after being covered with broom sedge for several years, though it is more probable that this is due to independent chemical changes than from the effects of the broom sedge. Of course this effect would be lost were the soil not held.

Then, again, when burned off in the early spring it makes excellent pasture for cattle, and the milk from cows on this pasture has a delicate flavor that cannot be surpassed. On the other hand, it may be said that by proper care the soil will not need the broom sedge, but should be clovered or sown in grass when not in active cultivation, and the pasture would be better and more lasting.

It is a great curse to the meadow, though it will hardly get a hold in clover from the fact that the ground should be plowed by the third year.

The older men of this country say that the time was when broom sedge in a "bottom meadow" was unheard of, but unhappily it is now the rule instead of an exception.

There is a very prevalent opinion that broom sedge will not grow upon rich land. The fact is it will grow in the richest soil, but seldom does from the fact that other and quick growing plants precede it and give the sedge no chance. There are spots too poor to grow broom sedge though often but few yards in extent.

The proper time for burning of "sage" fields is just before vegetation in the spring from the fact that if burned earlier much of the soil would be lost by the washing occasioned by the heavy rains, and if burned later—well, it might not burn, and then you want your pasture as early as you can get it.

The beginning of the end of the broom sedge's usefulness is at hand. Let us hope so at least.—John J. Caldwell, in Home and Farm.

THE FARMER AND HIS TAXES

Edgar L. Vincent, in The Gentleman Farmer.

Some things of a difficult nature the farmer may for the time being put away out of sight, and take up at some more convenient season. One problem he must face from year's end to year's end, that of taxation. It is ever present with him. He looks forward to it with foreboding and always with the feeling that in some way he is being unjustly dealt with. As time goes on the question becomes more and more serious. Not only are the visits of the tax gatherer more frequent, but the demands made by him become more and more burdensome. New officers are created every year, calling for new outlay of money. Not only that; those who are filling offices already in existence demand larger salaries. Hardly are they once warmed in their chairs before they begin to scheme for more pay. New and costly public buildings must be built, and old ones enlarged and made more luxurious. Most of the public buildings of this country are perfect palaces, beautiful, commodious, elegant in all their appointments.

Now, all this is pleasant to think of in a way. We all admire beauty in architecture. One feeling that these buildings belong to our country, our town, our capital city, our nation, is one which inspires in every heart a certain sense of pride. We like to think that our land is in no degree behind any other country in the splendor of its public buildings, and we do not want one of our officials to be in need of any good thing while serving us in a public capacity. Our pride is that we care for those whom we have chosen to honor as well as any nation under the sun. We also take pleasure in pointing to the way in which we care for the unfortunate poor and insane and for the orphan and the old soldier. Some of the institutions devoted to charitable purposes are fairly gorgeous in their equipments and their inmates are maintained at an expense far exceeding that attending the living of the ordinary man.

While our expenses have thus been piling up and are still growing greater, has our ability to pay become proportionately large? And here we stumble upon the first real difficulty. While the wealth of this country is rapidly increasing the taxable property has not and will not keep pace with the demands upon it. More and more severe become the burdens of taxation; more and more serious grows the problem how these burdens are to be borne, and more and more uncertain seems the future. All over this country legislative bodies are studying upon methods of taxation; but of the hundreds and hundreds of plans proposed, not one looks toward the lightening of the burden; but rather toward the tightening of the coils, so that no one may by any possible chance escape; and the most disheartening part of it all is that the more stringent the laws become the more terrible are their results upon the farmer. Whosoever escapes, he cannot. Others may hide their property; his is open to the day. Thirty years ago an old lady kept a cozy inn on the road from York to Scarborough. This house she called "The Four Alls;" and when asked to explain the meaning of this strange sign, she said: "The Queen governs all; the parson prays for all; the soldier fights for all; and the farmer pays for all." The farmer pays for all. Significant words, yet as true as significant.

It is highly interesting to note the effect in the various States of the experiments made in taxation. Without taking time to make a careful study of the conditions everywhere, it may be profitable to look at two or three individual cases. One might suppose that in the old State of Massachusetts, the tax laws would by this time have reached a state of comparative perfection. Whether this is so or not may be determined by the fact that among the distinguished petitioners asking for the repeal of the present law governing the taxation of mortgages in that State are two professors of political economy, one chairman of the Boston assessors who has served a quarter of a century, the present tax commissioner, the head of the State tax department and scores of local assessors. The comptroller of the State of New York in his recent report says: "The present tax laws, as administered, (I will say nothing about their provisions) are unfair, unjust and discriminating.

Certain classes of property are forced to pay more than their fair proportion of taxation, while other classes escape entirely, or pay very little. The entire tax system is disjointed and unsystematic. * * * Not two counties in the State assess real estate according to the same rule, disparity exists among the towns of the same county. "The report of the tax commissioners of the same State for the current year shows very conclusively how unjustly the burden of taxation falls upon the farmers. They say: "It is generally conceded that the personal property liable to assessment in this State fully equals, and probably exceeds, the value of the real estate. The total personal assessment is only about one-seventh of the assessment of the real property. The enforcement of the law has, in many instances, caused added injustice to rural communities, where the burden of taxation has hitherto fallen most heavily." Now show why this is so. "Of all the personal property liable to assessment in agricultural districts, ninety per cent. is of a visible, tangible character, open to the observation of the assessor, and which he cannot overlook in the honest discharge of his official duty; while in the cities by far the larger proportion is intangible, easily concealed, and of a kind which successfully defies the most conscientious effort on the part of the assessor to reach it."

Within a few days the writer has received a letter from a prominent Ohio farmer asking for light on the methods in force in New York and indicating a decided dissatisfaction with the severe listing laws of his native State. The State of Illinois is struggling with the same vexed problem, and an act has just emerged from a joint committee of the Senate and House providing for radical changes in the methods of assessing property. A commission appointed to investigate the subject of taxation in New Jersey last year reported: "As to personal property we regret to say that the assessors appear to make no earnest or honest effort to reach it anywhere except in the agricultural districts." Everywhere the farmer takes the burden. Professor Plehn, of the University of California, writing a few weeks ago on the tax laws of that State says: "Real estate in California pays nine-tenths of all taxes."

But it is not necessary to multiply cases. It is the same story all over this country—unfair laws, unjustly administered and the farmer getting the worst of it all the time.

Now, let us ask how the farmer is standing up under this load: It is probably true that in some respects there has been an improvement within the past few months, in spite of the present iniquitous tax laws in operation. But a single quotation from the annual report of the Commissioner of Labor Statistics of New York just from the press will show how things stand in that great State. He says: "The farming industry in our State is in a most deplorable condition, with exceedingly poor prospects for recovery or improvement in the immediate future. As a rule, no interest has been realized on farm instruments during the years 1894 1895 and 1896. Where there were no mortgages requiring interest payments, a farmer was considered almost miraculously fortunate if his income from products could be made to pay the cost of production, and even that degree of success was only attainable by stinted allowances for household expense, and by starving the soil; and when the farmer was hampered by a mortgage indebtedness, he ran behind and incurred the penalty of foreclosure." An honest, but sad and discouraging confession for a public official of a great State to make; and who can doubt that this statement only voices the true state of affairs in all parts of this beautiful country of ours? We all know that farming has been far down in the slough for a long time. We may hope for better things and God grant the hope may be realized.

But if I were to be content to point out the evils of the present tax laws this article would have little value. It is no sign of greatness simply to find fault. The situation is one of the utmost seriousness. The very foundation of the success and welfare of this country are being threatened, and we do well to approach this part of our subject soberly and earnestly. How shall we collect the necessary revenue to carry on the affairs of our States?

Let us start with this promise: Our country has been able to raise sufficient revenue for all ordinary purposes by indirect taxation. By this is meant the levying and collecting of many without resorting to the assessing of any real or personal property in any part of the country. Sometimes, through great economical changes, our revenue has fallen off so that we have been obliged to borrow for temporary needs; but usually we have been able to keep a comfortable surplus on hand. It is true that no State could adopt the same system which prevails in the nation; that is out of the question, but is there not here a suggestion of which we may avail ourselves?

In support of the contention that we may defray all State expenses without resorting to the assessment of real or personal property, so far as the State itself is concerned, let us look at the State of New York. In the year 1897, the sum of \$20,500,000 in round numbers, was raised by taxation. Of this amount, the sum of \$8,708,000 was raised by taxes levied upon insurance, organizations, corporations, inheritances, excises and similar sources. Only one third of the excise moneys paid in was directed to the State treasury. It has been suggested that another one third might safely be appropriated by the State, thus decreasing the amount to be raised by about \$4,000,000; but this diversion probably would not be popular for the reason that the sums accruing to the various local treasuries are of great benefit in relieving the burden of home expenses. But there are strong arguments in favor of adopting changes in the methods of taxing railroads which would add greatly to the resources of the State without materially increasing their burden. The State of Connecticut has, I am informed, such a system which has been in operation for many years to the complete satisfaction of all concerned. By methods similar to those above described the State of Pennsylvania raised more than \$13,000,000 in the year 1897; and there is no reason whatever to doubt that a system might be devised along these lines whereby direct taxation might be entirely abolished as a means of maintaining the current expenses of the State, thus leaving each county free to meet its local obligations in whatever way it might deem most expedient.

The New York Tax Reform Association is at the present time advocating a taxation. The features of this bill may be simply stated as follows: In assessing real property, the assessors must assess the value of the land separately from all buildings, fences and other improvements, and must set down in separate columns the value of every piece of land and all the improvements thereon. The board of supervisors of each county may direct that all taxes other than State taxes may be levied exclusively on the assessed value of personal property alone, or upon the assessed value of real estate alone, including all land improvements, or on the assessed value of land alone, aside from the improvements, or on the assessed value of land improvements and personal property taken together. In cities, the common council may direct how direct taxes, for municipal purposes shall be raised and may adopt any one of the plans above specified. Under this system, it is maintained, many of the present inequalities would be removed, and the experience of the State of Pennsylvania is referred to in proof of this position. In that State, as we learn from the report of a commission appointed to investigate the tax in 1872, "less dissatisfaction is probably expressed and less trouble reported by officials than in any other State. Real estate is not regarded as unduly burdened, rents in her large cities are comparatively low, while under the inducements offered by liberal legislation, population and wealth are very rapidly increasing; and this increase continues down to the present time.

We cannot resist the temptation to compare the results of the liberal policy of Pennsylvania with those which follow the enforcement of the listing laws which are in force in some of the States, such as Ohio and Illinois. In those States every tax payer is compelled to make a detailed statement of all his personal property under oath. A study measure providing for home rule in five rural counties of Ohio in which the assessed value of farms is more

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