

Dairying in Northern Wisconsin

BY PROF. THOS. SHAW*

THE adaptation of northern Wisconsin to dairying is owing, first, to the wonderful suitability which the soil has shown to the production of pastures, to its wonderful adaptation in the production of legumes, to the elegance and variety of crops of small grains produced, to the fact that it can grow immense quantities of fodder corn and soiling foods:

know; but they come and come to remain forever. If the birds and winds could speak, they would probably tell us whence they come. Their rapid growth suggests the thought of spontaneous generation, which is, of course, impossible. But their coming so quickly and growing so luxuriantly calls up the thought of the high adaptation of the country to those grasses. Even in



A Natural Pasture

because it will produce field roots abundantly, because it has ample shade and water: and for the further reason that it is happily situated with reference to markets.

THE PASTURES.

No sooner has the forest been cut away and fire done its work in removing the encumbering timber and brush than blue grass and white clover spring up like magic and take possession of the land. Where they come from so quickly nobody seems to

trails in the forest they thrive where they must needs struggle for the light. This abundant growth not only furnishes fine pastures, permanent in character if desired, but their presence is an assurance that here is a land with a high adaptation to a great variety of crops. In such a soil mixed pastures, also permanent in character, and containing many varieties, can undoubtedly be grown, but the need for these has not yet been felt by the settler.

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GROWTH OF LEGUMES.

The open prairie all up and down the Mississippi basin has shown high adaptation in the production of carbonaceous foods. But in some areas, especially along its western border, it has not been found so easy to grow protein crops to balance the great preponderance in the carbonaceous food elements. In other words, it is not easy to furnish food leguminous in charac-

legumes and both can be used to great advantage in dairying. Alfalfa has feeding properties the same as clover. It remains much longer in the soil favorable to its growth, produces two or three crops per year, and is equally adapted to the production of fodder and soiling food to be fed summer and winter respectively.

Peas, which will not grow at their best in the central states, because of



On the "Burnt Over" Lands near Phillips

ter to make a balanced ration that can be fed along with corn. In northern Wisconsin this question is already settled. The growth of clover is simply phenomenal. The ease with which clover can be grown, the certainty with which a stand can be secured, the extraordinary luxuriance of the clover meadows and clover pastures, can scarcely be credited by one who has never visited the country. The reasons for this remarkable growth of clover are doubtless to be looked for in the abundance of the elements found in the soil which are essential to the plentiful production of this legume. The protecting snow of winter also still further favors its growth, but these are only an aid to, rather than the cause of, its free growth.

In the extraordinary growth of clover in all its leading varieties, as, for instance, the medium, the mammoth and the alsike, a guaranty is furnished that alfalfa and peas are also likely to grow abundantly. Both are

the midsummer suns, do grow admirably in the moderate summer climate of northern Wisconsin, tempered as it is by proximity to the great lakes. This has been proved by the crops grown. But before they had ever been tried, the assurance of success in the growth of Canada field peas was furnished in the timber of this region and the climate amid which it grew.

The seed of Canada field peas is now largely drawn from Canada. Some day it will be largely drawn from northern Wisconsin, unless, indeed, the crops should all be required in feeding dairy cows and other live stock.

CROPS OF SMALL GRAIN.

The forest trees speak of a soil well adapted to small grains. The character of the soil was a guaranty of the same, and so the settlers have found it to be. Winter rye can be depended upon any season when it has been properly sown, either for pasture or

for the grain. Wheat will grow very well also, but there is not much necessity for growing it in a country pre-eminently adapted to dairying. It would not be correct to say that this region has the same adaptation for wheat culture as the prairies of the northwest, and yet there are no good reasons why good crops may not be grown when desired, in all the years to come. What has been said of wheat may also be said of flax. Oats and barley grow in fine form. The weather is favorable to the growth and maturing of oats and barley, both of which are, or ought to be, staple food crops on land with a high adaptation for dairying. And the permanency of these crops is assured under the fertility of the soil and can easily be maintained through the growing of clover and other legumes.

FODDER CORN.

The settler in the corn belt can readily be made to assent to the proposition that clover and good grasses may grow in the area named, but he shakes his head when he is told that good crops of corn can readily be grown thus far north. And yet, incredulous as it may seem to him, or to any one else, it is true. More than once I have said that as much food for cattle can be obtained from an acre of corn

grown in northern Wisconsin and northern Minnesota, as from an equal area in the heart of the corn belt. I say it again, and without fear of successful contradiction. The acre in the north when fed to the cow will in time produce as much of dairy products as the acre further south, as now grown. Fodder corn may thus be grown, and splendid yields may be obtained. The same is true of sorghum grown for a similar purpose. The corn does not need to be husked, but may be fed directly in the cured form, run through the cutting box and mixed with other foods, or it may be fed in the shredded form or in ensilage. It may be fed along with ample supplies of clover hay, alfalfa or pea and oat hay, thus making a nicely balanced ration.

SOILING CROPS.

The growing of soiling crops, that is, crops to be cut and fed green in a dairy country, is always an important question. Where these can be grown in unbroken succession, the milk flow can be maintained regardless of the character of the season. This region has more than average adaptation for the growing of these crops. The alfalfa crop would be ready to cut and be fed thus, in the early days of June. Immediately after the first cutting the red clover would be ready. Before this



On a Dairy Farm, Taylor County

was gone, peas and oats sown for the purpose would be in the blossoming stage. Before this crop had become too ripe for feeding, millet or corn or the second growth of alfalfa or clover would be ready. Before these crops had been fed sorghum would be far enough advanced for cutting and this crop, with the autumn pastures, could be made to carry the stock right into the winter season, that is, until the first snow had put upon the pastures their winter covering. Such a complete succession of soiling foods can be grown in but a few localities, and all of these named are high in milk producing qualities.

FIELD ROOTS.

The soil that produces the crops just named is also well adapted to the production of field roots. The temperature is not too warm in summer for the growth of rutabagas, and the soil in hardwood timber areas shows a higher adaptability for such a purpose than the vegetable soils of the prairie. Mangles, carrots and sugar beets will respond admirably to the efforts of those who grow them properly. All these are excellent for dairy cows, except rutabagas, which taint the milk. These, however, are good for young cattle, and are no less helpful in growing swine.

SHADE AND WATER.

Shade in a dairy country is always a factor of much importance. Animals which have it rot when torrid suns are shining down from a heated sky cannot possibly produce so well as those who have shade to adequately protect them. Because of this the wise dairyman always tries to furnish pastures well supplied with shade trees. The shade trees may be had to any extent in the region under consideration, unless the settlers are so supremely foolish as to cut away all the trees in the fields in which they intend having their abiding pastures. Groves and

thickets may be retained in certain portions, in which the shade will be dense, or trees may be left in clumps



or individually as may be desired. And if the settlers are only discerning and wise enough to leave uncleared a rim of the natural forest around their dwellings on the windward side, they will have perpetual protection around those dwellings, which even the north wind cannot penetrate. Generally, however, the first thought of the settler is to cut away everything that obscures his view in the immediate vicinity of his home, and then, long years after, he sets to work to plant trees to take the place of those which he had been so eager to destroy.

Reference has been made to the frequency of the running streams. But water is not hard to get from wells. The distance to go is not far, and the supply is plentiful. It is not alkaline, or brackish, or bitter, but clear as that which flows from the crystal streams.

PROXIMITY TO MARKETS.

Dairy products, and indeed any products, find ready sale to the North, East and West. The demand comes from the lumber camps, from Chicago, from the cities beyond the lakes, and from the great and growing cities on the Minnesota border. In time the demand from the lumber camps will cease, but that from the East, South and West will grow greater, especially for dairying and live stock products.