



6 Pages for the MODERN FARMER



NEWSY NOTES

By AGRICOLA

THE ADVANCE OF THE FUNGI is the title of a chunky volume in the Public Library. Now the word fungi—which in this case means the little specks that cause the ill of the potato crop—is pretty nearly a synonym to the ordinary reader, who, as a rule, scared stiff by the technical descriptions of the Author who published this book in 1940, in Oxford, England, in 1940, is now, however, something of a historian and a poet as well as a scientist, and has made good use of the attributes of all three. The result is both informative and interesting. He does not give much classificatory description; in fact he has a slap at the late George Massee of Kent, who published a systematic "Flora of the British Fungi" in four volumes. One need not agree with Prof. Large in disparaging such works, since they have the same function as charts have to an explorer. The author's goal tempts the botanist, the field, the systematist assures him that at least his feet are on the right road. By means of Massee's "British Fungi" and other works, he brought over with me. I have been enabled to identify a very considerable number of our (fungal) particularly the larger species. Fungi are the same, on both sides of the Atlantic.

The first hundred pages of the book under comment, are taken up with an account of the Potato Murrain, the most serious of our potato enemies, the "Blight" under that name, but that is what is meant. In August, 1845, The Gardener's Chronicle (London) gave an account of a new disease had broken out on the Continent, among the potatoes; and by September it had invaded all England except a few spots in the north. Every kind of potato was attacked, and all when dug, were marked with dark patches symptomatic of the murrain.

A review of the seasons of 1845, E. J. Kirby, in the "Gardener's Chronicle" There was in Britain a hot dry spell till the end of July, then a most extraordinary change to incessant rain and fog, with a temperature lower than had been known for a couple of decades. We two had a wet fall last year, and it has snowed or rained nearly all the time since then, with temperature well below the average for the kind of weather to foster the "murrain" too.

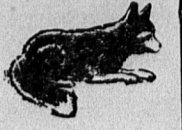
Immediately a battle was joined as to the cause of the visitation. Dr. Lindley, the most eminent botanist of his day, concluded that the potato had absorbed so much water, which they could not get rid of in the usual way owing to absence of sunshine, that they took the case of dropsy, and that the "murrain" set in. The Rev. M. J. Berkeley, a brilliant example of those clergymen of the Established Church who became eminent naturally, gave his verdict that the cause of the disease was a microscopic fungus. Time has proved the clergyman right and the botanist wrong; the fact remained that the water had spread the fungus, and the fungus and nothing could be done about it!

The loss of the potato crop in Ireland was bad enough, but in England it was a disaster. The people there had come to rely mainly on the potato as an article of food and for ten months of the year used little else. The months of July and August were called "Meal Months" since grain was added to the bill of fare at that time. The history of the time makes little reading and Professor Large does not do it. He gives the story of the potato in the sister kingdom. The crop failed again in 1846, and the British Government was obliged to pay out £1,000,000 for the first time—paid to the amount of 8,000,000 pounds for the 18 months period. Such was the damage caused by a small fungus that "in the period from 1845 to 1850 million people died in Ireland, and one as a direct consequence of the famine and one and a half million emigrated." And not only from Ireland; get out the old Macnam's Atlas of P. E. Island, and you will find many from all parts of the United Kingdom, and their home here in those doleful years.

So little was known about plant diseases at that time that people rather than believe in a causal (not casual) organism, put the malady down to "electricity," "degeneration," "Will of God," or a supposed "internal burning of the plant, over the oxygen of the air being too strong for it." As science advanced and optical apparatus improved these fanciful views were thrust aside by the facts discovered, and the blame was placed where it belonged. Then suddenly all went wrong again: the potato crop dipped once more—not as badly as before, but it was not so visible to the blame. It was the first indication that bacteria attacked plants as well as humans. Since 1920 we have been made aware that even more subtle maladies, the A. B. X. and Y and the Leaf Roll viruses have taken toll of the potato crop, and many others have been added to the list since 1930.

Now the above is rather on the scientific side, but do not get the idea that Prof. Large's book is not for the layman. It caters for, and appeals to, everybody. Her is a gem from the last chapter, speaking of "Overproduction." Mr. Large says: "Every year there was news of foodstuffs being left to rot, or being dumped in (to) the sea, or being burnt for fuel. In Great Britain there were the several marketing boards operating to restrict production and to maintain prices, but it was for the producers, but more particularly for the distributors, under thin cover of some real endeavor to improve grades and quality." Quite an iconoclast, is Prof. Large! with his book, despite its traces of cynical humor, is well worth reading.

TIMELY NOTES ON TOPICS CONNECTED WITH Silver Fox Farming



The Japanese had a surplus of silver fox pelts this season which they wished to sell in the United States but were not permitted. They have since found a market in Argentina where they have disposed of 10,000 skins, completely satisfying the local demand. They are expected to bring in another shipment in October. This will have the effect of shutting out quite a number of United States and Canadian silver fox pelts but not the high quality ones, as the Japanese skins are notorious for quality, being fed mostly on a fish diet.

Approximately 80% of the silver offering of the New York Auction Company was disposed of last week at an average rise of 15 per cent for the \$10 and upgrade values, and of 10 per cent for the lower ranges under that level, and for the darker phases as compared with July. There were 4,619 full silvers auctioned and they brought an average price of \$40.28 with a high of \$175 for a large, very bright, full furred sparkling pelt. There were 1,274 three-quarters offered, 75% of these sold at an average of \$28.06 and a top of \$41. They were not a high-class collection. There were 1,512 half silvers and 76% of these averaged \$21.37 with a high of \$32. Quarter silvers averaged \$16.31. Low grades of which there were 4,392, averaged \$13.78. The average for the collection omitting the low grades was \$32.26.

Nutra farms are closing up in the Argentina and there are now only about twenty left because the cost of breeding proved too high in comparison with prices obtainable. The ranches nutraals also lacked the uniformity of color found on wild animals. For sometimes they found a market in the south until the buyers became aware of the difference in color between the wild and farm bred animals, but now they cannot be marketed at a profitable price.

There is a strong demand in the United States for Argentina fox skins, of which 80% of the Argentina stocks have already been sold at prices ranging from 30% to 40% above last year's levels. Argentina shipments of fox skins to the United States from January to July, 1941, totalled 123,295 against 101,000 for the corresponding period of 1940. We don't know just what type of skin an Argentina fox is but we presume they must be very much cheaper than red foxes.

According to the Canadian Commercial Intelligence Journal the ban on the importation of furs into Australia has directed attention to the possibility of establishing a fur industry there. In the year ending June 30th, 1939, Australia imported undressed furs to the value of \$1,250,000, the principal suppliers being the United States with \$350,000 worth and Canada with about the same. Recently the Victoria State Government has been approached for permission to import undressed silver foxes and to establish silver fox farms in the colder parts of the State. It is understood that sites have already been selected for an experimental farm which would be stocked with silver foxes estimated at \$1,000 a pair. Foxes would be scientifically bred and reared on the farms.

In Tasmania also the breeding of fur bearing animals on an extensive scale is contemplated by a company which has applied to the Government for the lease of suitable swamp country. They will first breed Tasmanian water rats—similar to our muskrats—and after engaging in breeding silver foxes, cross



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CONSERVATION

A WEEKLY COLUMN OF PRACTICAL OPINIONS OF THE VITAL ISSUES AFFECTING THE USES AND ABUSES OF NATURAL RESOURCES BY MR. LUDLOW JENKINS MARSHFIELD.

THE LAW OF CHRISTIAN KINDNESS

(Excerpt from a Humane Sunday Sermon by the Rev. J. H. Dennis, St. Alban's Church, Chicago, Ill.)

Christian Kindness—Kindness based upon and growing out of Christian principle and Christian grace—St. Paul includes among what he calls the "fruits of the spirit." Kindness is an indescribable quality of spirit, a fineness of nature and of human touch, which draws others to us, and easily and naturally leads us to smooth the way of life for others, wherever possible.

Christian kindness is something more than mere good nature. It is good nature elevated to a high plane, springing from the purest motive. St. Paul links it with love—"The Kindness and love of God our Father towards Men."

Christian Kindness is a matter of the heart, the mind, the will; it is an acquired disposition, a distinct

fores to finance the cost of employing a full time secretary. The directors realized this position and as a result Mr. Holman resigned on the 31st of May, although he agreed to do the actual secretarial work until the next annual meeting which will be held in Winnipeg in November during the fox show there.

Mr. Holman has put in a great deal of work trying to promote the new Association and the new foxes; work that has gone far in developing the industry to its present state and it is unfortunate that it was unable to finance a full time secretary because the results later would have undoubtedly more than compensated for the immediate cost.

At the Canadian National Exhibition, Toronto, which was held the latter part of August and first week in September, there was a rabbit exhibit which while it did not maintain the old-time interest, yet to real rabbit raisers it was a most enjoyable affair. The Angoras seemed to be the most popular and Mrs. C. Brunt of Scarborough Junction, Ontario, walked off with top awards.

Early pelting vs late pelting... There is no question but early pelting is detrimental from a price standpoint. A fox pelt may look perfectly prime to a casual glancer, but there is no question that it is not and cannot be ready for market until November 15th at least. The guard fur may be long but the underfur will be weak and it takes good underfur to support good guard fur so the pelt will be flat after it has been taken off a few days. Then again the hide will be blue and that means when the pelt is needed the guard hairs will loosen and fall out to some extent at least, so we would advise our fellow ranchers not to push their foxes along for early pelting but to try to hold them until November 15th at least. After that one can pelt until January 1st, according to the way the foxes come along.

There is no question that in some parts of this Prov. foxes fur in earlier than others and one must take account of it in ranching. Color is so important that we cannot leave the pelting operation too late or otherwise we have reached that brownish tinge which is most undesirable. Let us use our heads to good advantage this year. Watch our foxes carefully and get the maximum results. This promises to be a year when prices will be good and give us a fair margin of profit over and above the cost of production.

4,000 silver foxes were offered for the American National Fur Breeders' Association by Lamson, Fraser & Huth September 19th. Fulls averaged \$39, three-quarters \$25, eights and \$27.5. Silver fox had no outstanding pelts among them.

Ranch mink has been strong in recent auctions in New York, advances of 10% being chronicled at two recent sales. The top price was \$30 and an average price at Lamson's sales of \$22.50 for 8,000 skins was realized. Mink breeders are all their own best prospects for their product. Of course the jump in mink will have its effect in silver fox. All furs are up so silver fox has to keep moving with the rest of them.

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SUMMERSIDE, P. E. I.

Assistance Given To P.E.I. Sheepmen During Year 1941

(By D. S. Irvine, Senior Live Stock Fieldman)

The Dominion and Provincial Departments of Agriculture are particularly interested in assisting Sheep Breeders in the securing of pure bred rams. The Dominion Department of Agriculture provides a grading service under which a ram and shearing are graded lambs and shearings are graded into XXX and XX grades. The ram lambs must weigh 100 pounds or better at the time of grading and must be of good type. Rams grading XXX are of sufficient type and quality to head pure bred flocks while the XX grade contains the useful pure bred rams which may have some small imperfections, but are considered satisfactory for grade flocks.

The Ram Club Policy, also conducted by the Dominion Department of Agriculture, is designed to assist breeders and flock owners to secure graded and registered ram lambs and shearing rams at a reasonable price. Clubs of ten or more members may be formed to secure rams of the same breed, and rams are provided according to grade and the deposits of members. While every effort will be made by the Department to purchase only rams that will prove satisfactory at service, the Department assumes no responsibility for rams purchased by breeders. Owing to the short time available for organizing clubs, it is customary for members to forward deposits and the clubs are formed by the Dominion Department of Agriculture, after an appeal has been received.

This year in Prince Edward Island the cost of graded and registered Oxford and Shropshire rams, under the Ram Club Policy, is as follows:

XXX Ram Lamb	\$11.00
XXX Ram Lamb	\$14.00
XX Shearing Ram	\$17.00
XXX Shearing Ram	\$20.00

Breeders and flock owners interested in the purchase of a ram under the Policy should correspond with the Senior Live Stock Fieldman, Box 489, Charlottetown, or the Agricultural Representative for their particular County.

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By George McManur

BRINGING UP FATHER



ODDS AND ENDS

Mifflin. A paragraph recently in Notes by the Way, now appears in the Sept. 11th issue of the Farmer's Advocate. I remember it because it states that "dandelion roots contain digitalin"—a piece of information that surprised me greatly. Digitalin is the name of the common Foxglove, and digitalin

U. S. MAKES READY

While Vichy France spends \$5,000,000 improving Dakar's fortifications and the Dakar-Niger railroads, U.S. concern about the Nationalization of West Africa is taking a practical turn according to a Stockholm report. Engineers and troops, it is said, are fortifying a Sierra Leone, 600 miles south of Dakar. This will provide an answer also to the new Vichy base at Abidjan.