

COMPLETE STORY OF THE MOST FAMOUS FOX RANCH IN THE WORLD—HON. CHAS. DALTON

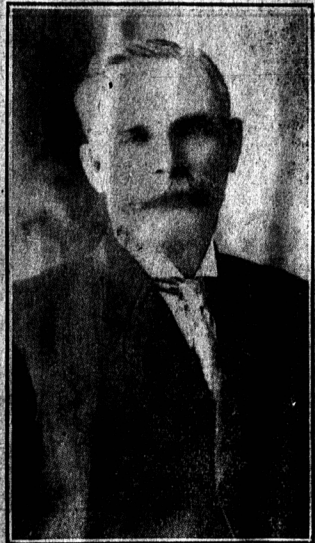
Pioneer of Prince Edward Island's Greatest Industry Gives For Publication the Following Extended and Authentic Story of His Career—Much Interesting and Valuable Information Submitted Respecting the Furs Which Have Won the Highest Prices in the World's Market—What the \$100,000 Sale by the Dalton Company to the Russian Syndicate Means to the Industry.

(The following article is reproduced from the Patriot which published it in its special Milestone edition. The Editor of the Patriot, Mr. McDonald, interviewed Hon. Charles Dalton, who furnished the interesting facts which appear in the following article. (Copyright applied for.) As the name of Edison is closely linked with electrical invention and discovery, as the name of Burbank with plant propagation, so the name of Charles Dalton is associated with fox ranching, in Prince Edward Island.

He is the father of an industry which is making the Island famed beyond the Seven Seas; he is the pioneer who blazed the trail, a trail which has widened and extended into a royal road to riches, along which many successful Islanders at home, are travelling today.

ing one exceptionally fine specimen, which appears as an illustration in this article. "Do you think it possible for a black fox to be blacker than that," asked Mr. Dalton, as we watched one who was pacing back and forth in his wire-lined box, in which the male is kept during the summer. The coloring was perfect, and barring a bunch of white on the tail, there was not a single white hair to be seen.

made men, he is, first of all, modest and not given to self-glorification but we secured from him some facts concerning his career, which should



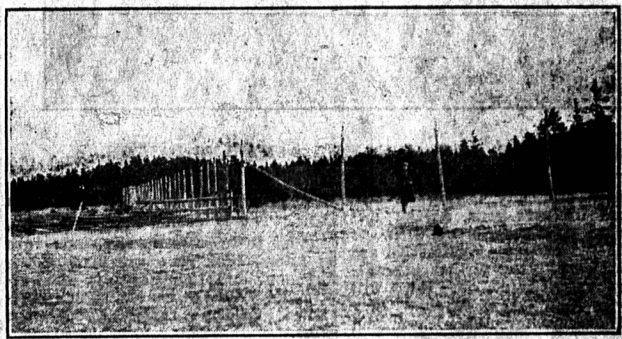
THE HON. CHARLES DALTON, M. L. A., President of The Charles Dalton Silver Black Fox Company, Ltd.

make very interesting reading. "He was a farmer's boy, a son of the late Patrick Dalton of Nail Pond, and in his youth worked hard on his father's farm. He inherited no wealth for his father had none to spare, but he was blessed with a strong physique and abundant energy. He loved life in the open and was a keen sportsman, taking delight in shooting and trapping and thus gaining that knowledge of wild animals which stood him in good stead in later years. Even today gunning is one of his favorite recreations and he is noted as being one of the best shots in the West. In his boyhood, foxes were very plentiful in his vicinity and he tells that on one occasion when he put bait out in order to get foxes near enough to shoot, eight came up to it. They were all reds. Thirty-five years ago, he trapped a black fox, the skin of which he sold for \$32. He knew that the black fox was the rarest of its kind and commanded a high price, and he always

the stock, I desired. I procured a pair of silver blacks from John Martin of Lot 40, and killed the Anticosti silvers. The Martin pair which were a year old, were the Adam and Eve of the present generation of black foxes in this province. They were dug out of a den in the woods and were almost black. I subsequently bought three dark silvers from Joseph Noonan, Albany and four of about the same quality from Louis Spence, of Bedouque. I sold the skins of the lightest color animals and kept the dark ones for breeding. Up to this time, \$200 was the highest price I received for any of them. The Anticosti's brought about \$20. I was at this time living on the homestead at Nail Pond, three miles from Tignish. For a number of years I kept the foxes in a shed back of the barn but with only a fair measure of success. Up to the year 1894, I was the only fox breeder on the Island. In that year, I entered into partnership with a hunting chum of mine, R. T. Oulton who lived on Cherry Island, in Alberton Harbor. On that island we built the first wire enclosure ever used to keep foxes in. After this enclosure the ranches of the present day were modelled. We started with three pairs from my own ranch at home, Mr. Oulton having none. Cherry Island contains about three hundred acres of land, partially wooded and we chose it because of its privacy and because foxes are loath to take to the water and could easily be recaptured if they escaped in summer. Here, we carried on breeding with the utmost privacy allowing no visitors. We met with a good measure of success rearing some animals, losing some each year and learning something from our losses. In 1897, I removed to Tignish and started the dry-woods business. I built there the ranch we visited today, and stocked it with four pairs from the Alberton ranch, leaving in the latter the same number in the charge of Mr. Oulton. My partnership with him continued until last year when he removed to Fort Elgin to take charge of a ranch there. We divided the stock. I removed all of mine to Tignish. I would like here to pay a tribute to my partner, Mr. Oulton, an honorable, honest, straightforward man. During the years we were together when we shared each other's disappointments and discouragements and shared too, the joys in solving the problems which, at first perplexed us, when we found our stock setting better and the price increasing for the higher grades. I had ample opportunity of finding his real worth. We made it our policy to look out for the best stock, changing the blood from time to time, in order to keep the animals strong and vigorous. We discarded of nothing but the best until the year 1902, when we sold our first live animals—one pair—to another rancher in the Western part of the County for \$240. Today, a pair of a similar kind would be worth from \$10,000 to \$12,000. One was black and the other a very dark silver. The last time we killed foxes for the skin was for the 1910 sales, the product of the year 1909.

among the reds. The black fox is distinguished from others by the total absence of white and silver hairs, except on the tip of the tail. The hairs are three inches long. In the black fox each individual hair has a blue section one and a half inches long next to the body and the rest of the hair is black. In the silver fox, each individual hair is made up of the following—starting with the body—blue, for one and a half inches, black one half inch, white one half inch, black one half inch. "There is not in its wild state in this province any fox as black as the breeds which I have developed," said Mr. Dalton. "Do the black foxes change color as they grow older." "Very slightly. The silvers are usually darker the first year than

coarser furred animal than is straight breeding. A pair of good crosses may sometimes throw a silver, but they are more liable to throw their own kind. If the offspring is bred to a full black, some of the litter may be black. If the red is bred to a black, red, the predominant color will usually be the result, but I have known reds and blacks to be in the same litter on several occasions, that is in, their wild state. "How is the importation of reds affecting the industry?" "It is not interfering with the sale of blacks, but after a man has experimented with reds and thus learns how to breed successfully, it should tend to give him a desire to procure blacks." "Would you recommend the breed-



GENERAL VIEW OF THE CHARLES DALTON RANCH AT TIGNISH

they are the fourth or fifth year. The black foxes we started out with had all some silver, but by careful selection of the blackest we developed a type which now leads the world." "The black fox is not a freak. A freak I consider an abnormal accident, contrary to the laws of nature. A freak will not produce a freak, but the off-spring will revert back to the usual type." Mr. Dalton in response to further questioning, proceeded to deal with the "patch" or cross foxes. "In the London fur market there is no such term as patches. They are all listed as "crosses." Such foxes are a color variety the same as the silvers but more closely allied to the silvers than to the reds. They are a combination of silver, red and black. The red color is found on the sides of the neck, back of the shoulders, round the ears, the silver on the back, the black on the face and nose.

ing of the blue fox here?" "This is an Arctic fox which is not suitable to our Island climate. It has been bred in Vermont with a fair measure of success. It is a different species from the black, red or silver, it is the same species as the white fox. The skin is not worth more than \$20 or \$50, it killed any time. It has a thicker under-fur than the black fox but outer fur is not so heavy or so long.

LEADS THE WORLD "Why do the Island black fox furs lead the world?" "A large percentage of them take a higher price than the same color or any other color from any other part of the world. A cold, rainy season will produce better fur than a warm dry season. The less sunlight the better the lustre, and the darker the fur. Our Island climate is cooler, the changes of temperature are less marked than in other parts of the Mainland and the fur adapting itself to these changes has developed more uniformly than in other countries. As the fur reaches its state of perfection, the middle of January, the temperature later in the winter does not affect its texture."

MIXED BREEDING Then, the question of mixed breeding was discussed. "The crossing of blacks with patches gives uncertain results," said Mr. Dalton. We usually get a

(Continued on Page Two.)

DIFFICULTIES OVERCOME

"What were the greatest difficulties to be overcome in the pioneer years of the industry," was our next question. "When I first started," said Mr. Dalton, "I kept the animals in ordinary board sheds, connected by shutters. They used to lose their litters, owing to the disturbances usually associated with a barnyard. The first year we kept them in a wire enclosure, we had no overhang and two foxes climbed out. At first we had only one strip of wire between each pen. The foxes used to get their legs through and kill each other. We stopped this by doubling the partitions. At first we kept two females in one pen. This resulted in jealousy and when the two had young in the same pen, they destroyed each other's litters. Then, we had trouble with the water getting in their nests and causing death to the pups." "Had you any diseases to contend with?" "Nothing but what was common to beasts and liable to effect other animals as well. The fox is a hardy creature. He enjoys being out in the snow and it takes a temperature of from fifteen to twenty degrees below zero to drive him into his nest."

THE COLOR QUESTION

We next proceeded to get Mr. Dalton's views on the color question, in the fox family. "The black fox, silver fox and red fox are all the same species, differing only in color. Litters have been found in the woods with some black pups among the reds, or silvers a-



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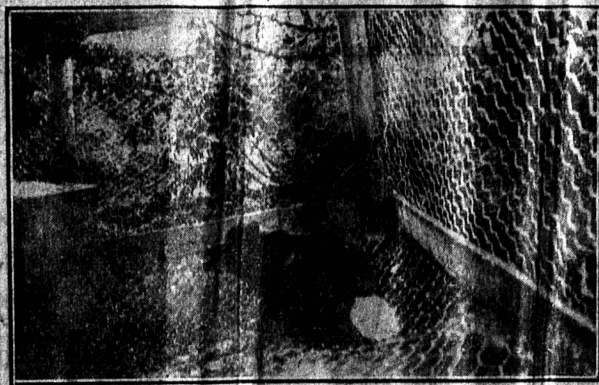


PHOTO OF ONE OF THE BLACK BEAUTIES.

which many successful Islanders at home, are travelling today. Rudyard Kipling, Jack London, C. G. D. Roberts, and other writers of animal stories, will find in the history of this industry, material on which to base a tale, which will make the reading world sit up, and if they ever take fox-ranching for a theme, we hope, in the name of British fair-play, they will not follow the example of the "Strand" magazine, which omitted the name of Prince Edward Island from its article, just as the "Graphic" and "Illustrated News" wiped us off their maps of Canada. The silver black fox literature, so far as published to date, has lacked one great essential, and that is anything like a detailed and extended statement given directly to the Press by the Hon. Charles Dalton, the pioneer prospector of the Island's El Dorado. It is the happy privilege now, of the Patriot to give its readers such a story, secured by the Patriot Editor, during his recent visit to the Dalton ranch, at Tignish.

at Dalton through the ranch, the proprietor explained the various features, as we went along. This ranch is the second of its kind to be constructed in the province and is similar in design to others already described in the Patriot. The majority of the pens are forty feet by fifty feet, and a number are fifty feet square. In each, was a plentiful growth of the trees mentioned above and a covering of grass. "I believe in plenty of shade for the foxes," observed Mr. Dalton, "and in having conditions as near the wild state, as possible." They do not know that they are in captivity and the lustre of the fur is improved by contact with the bushes as they dart through them. The presence of grass tends to clean the furs. Mr. Dalton does not see an advantage in having the animals tame. He is not a believer in the "pet fox" theory and the animals, with a few exceptions, did not stay long in the open to be admired and quickly fled to cover.

THE FOXES FOOD "Do you put the females on a special diet when they are with young?" we asked him. "No," he replied, "I make no change in the usual system of feeding. I give my foxes about the same food all the year round, principally meat and fresh fish. Rabbits are a good natural food for them and possibly these might be kept in a large area, if well protected from hawks and owls. This ranch was at one time quite a rabbit preserve. A number found their way into the outside pens and some of them were killed by foxes, which had found their way to the outer enclosure. "Do you have any trouble with snow?" "Not of recent years but in the winter of 1908, the ranch was completely covered. A number of the foxes escaped but came back again, and took refuge in their own pens." "How is your ranch protected?" "Locks to the inner pens are no protection against robbers who have simply to cut the wire with nippers to effect an entrance, but a blood hound is always on guard and I am installing a system of electric bells connected with my residence, so they will immediately warn me of the approach of interlopers around the ranch. After we had been taken through the ranch and returned to the outer gate, we found that we had been locked in by the keeper, who had come to his dinner but we escaped through a special exit, known to Mr. Dalton.

FIVE GOLDEN ACRES

Occupying a sequestered site, three hundred yards from the Dalton re-

SURVIVAL OF THE BLACKEST

We succeeded however, in viewing some at close range and photograph-

THE FOXES FOOD

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MR. DALTON ENTERING HIS RANCH.

had confidence he could be bred in captivity. About thirty years ago, a pair of black pups was captured near North Cape by a young farmer, who sold both to another man, the latter paying \$5, for one and giving a cow for the other. The owner kept them in a stable. In the second year he raised two pups killing them the same fall for their pets. He kept the original pair for three years, without receiving any increase. Then, he killed them and gave up the business. Thus the venture ended in failure and breeding in captivity seemed to be doomed. It remained for Mr. Charles Dalton to point the way to success. Here is the story of the beginning of the industry, as told in his own words. "In 1887, I bought a pair of silver foxes from the Island of Anticosti. There was not then in captivity any other pair of breeding foxes in this province. They were a litter of four but as they did not produce

THE PIONEER'S STORY

If the pioneer of fox ranching in this province has achieved phenomenal success and amassed great wealth in this unique business, it is but reading the reward of his determination, shrewdness, intelligence, and industry. Like all pioneers, he has grown strong with struggling, he has learned adverse conditions, and he has gained wisdom from his mistakes. Like the major-



WALDRON B. PROWSE

General Manager, Secretary-Treasurer of Prowse Ltd., Charlottetown. Director of The Arma Bank Co., Ltd., and Provisional Secretary-Treasurer and Director of The Charles Dalton Silver Black Fox Co. Ltd.

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