

Value of Toads and Birds

Farmers Who Fail to Protect Them Neglect a Matter of Much Importance.

ENGLISH gardeners pay \$25 a hundred for live toads. A college professor has estimated that every time a boy kills a toad he virtually destroys \$20 worth of crops. Toads, garter snakes, ladybugs and song birds are little assistant gardeners whose services are not fully appreciated. They ask only a living and in return destroy great numbers of injurious pests. Not being at all fussy about his meals the toad will devour flies, caterpillars, spiders and hornets with equal gusto, and the amount of living meat which he is able to dispose of in the course of a day is marvelous. That is the reason he is so valuable in the garden. He makes way with thousands of pests that feed on the vegetables, the flowers and the field crops.

The toad's tongue is fastened at the front of his mouth, curiously enough, and can be thrown out like a spring, with wonderful celerity. On the end of his tongue is a sticky secretion which will hold the victim like a piece of fly paper. One toad has been seen to eat 20 caterpillars in 10 minutes, which should be sufficient evidence of his value as an assistant gardener. Toads feed at night and like a secluded shelter during the day so that the gardener will serve both his own interest and those of his diminutive helper by making little holes about the garden and covering them with flat stones or short pieces of board. It might be added that the old superstition that toads cause warts is pure buncome.

Like the toads, the pretty and harmless garter snakes destroy thousands of pests and should be encouraged. There is absolutely no excuse for killing them. The ladybug is a little polka-dotted red or orange beetle, whose mission in life is to make way with as many plant lice as possible. It is a worthy object from the gardeners' point of view, for these lice or aphids are very common and troublesome pests and at work, indoors or out, the year around. It is unfortunate that many people, in their ignorance, kill the ladybugs, taking it for granted that because they are bugs they are harmful. In Colorado, the orchardists pay \$5 per quart for them and never have enough offered. Wherever ants are found one may be sure that there are plant lice, but while the ants protect and nurture the pests, the ladybug makes incessant warfare upon them, for which service we are her debtors.

Although some birds do considerable damage in the orchard and garden, most kinds are highly beneficial, and they should be encouraged for purely economic reasons if no others. In the wholesale destruction of birds, the farmers and garden makers of the country have suffered a loss amounting to many millions of dollars. Left to herself, nature maintains a well averaged balance, but men insist on upsetting this balance whenever they congregate. Having driven out the birds they are obliged to depend upon poisons and various noxious doses to do their work. The rapidity with which insects pests multiply in a garden is almost incredible. A single ten-foot cherry tree has been found to harbor 12 million plant lice. If the potato bug were allowed to increase without molestation, the progeny of a

single pair would amount to 60 million in one season. Many caterpillars eat twice their weight of leaves each day and some kinds increase in size in a short life ten thousand times. Is it any wonder that the birds are needed?

Cost of Production

AMERICAN wheat growers and farmers will be interested in a report of a commission appointed by the government of Saskatchewan "to examine into the ways and means for bettering the position of Saskatchewan grain in the European markets." Incident to this investigation, the commission looked into the cost of producing wheat under present conditions in that province of Canada.

The wheat producers of various sections of the United States will be interested to know that under present conditions the cost of producing wheat as determined by the commission is reported to be 55 cents per bushel on the farm and 62 cents per bushel f. o. b. cars at country points.

According to the report, the cost of production has increased 12.15 per cent since 1909, while, on the other hand, the price of wheat to the Saskatchewan farmer has decreased from \$1.15 cents per bushel in 1909 to 66 1-8 cents per bushel in 1913, leaving a net return, on this basis, of 4 1-8 cents per bushel to the farmer.

It is possible that the interesting

figures which have been developed by the grain commission will account for the fact that a large number of American farmers who have, in recent years, left the States to engage in farming in this territory are now asking for a certificate which permits the return of household effects to the United States. If the economic situation suggested in the above statement is not the cause, perhaps it may be found in the long and rigorous winters characteristic of this section as compared with those in the leading farming districts of the States.

Let \$25,000 Dryden Bridge Contract. After reviewing bids submitted for the Dryden bridge and approaches, including a mile of permanent highway, the county commissioners awarded the work to the local contracting firm of

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Bailey & O'Connor, their bid being \$2,035 below the estimated cost of construction, \$27,000. The next lowest bidder was Charles G. Huber, who stated that he would undertake the work for \$26,625, or \$376 below the estimate of the county engineer. The building of the Dryden bridge will be a great aid in absorbing the floating labor element passing through the valley, while it will put considerable money into circulation.

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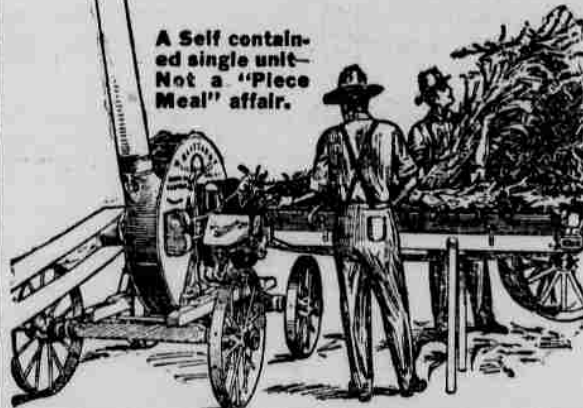
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