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How the Concrete Fence Post Came



The Travelling Agent Tells About Improved Farm Conditions Back Home

"ONE of the most striking changes among the farmers in the vicinity of my old home," said the travelling agent of a large Canadian firm of agricultural implement manufacturers, upon his return from a visit to his birthplace, in the State of New York, recently, "is the better and more permanent character of the buildings and various farm improvements."

"I remember now, years ago, it took my father and all three of us boys one whole day to harvest a certain field. The present owner of the place says that his young son now does that work in a single day, and so far as he can see he never even has to mop his brow."

"Talking with some of the farmers in that section, regarding the methods of the present day, as compared with the past, I find that a very great saving has been effected by the introduction of the use of cement. The price of this article, when I was a boy, was almost prohibitive. In fact, we had hardly ever heard of cement at all, and when we did, it was more as a luxury—an article to mend the dishes in mother's kitchen—rather than as an article to be used out on the farm. Nowadays, most of the boys have been learning how to use it, and no matter where you go you are sure to see something made of it."

"I was particularly struck with a fence which my brother put up on his place, some years ago. My brother and I, you must know, particularly hated looking after fences. We used to prop the posts up mainly by aid of the stones we had picked off the property. Somehow these stones would get removed, and down would come the fence. Father used to be a little hard on us sometimes we thought. When the other boys were off playing he used to set us at work repairing these fences. As the stones wouldn't hold the posts up, he made us dig holes deep in the ground, and drive the posts down into them. These held fairly well, but the trouble was that the posts would rot. That did not matter so much those days, for posts were cheap. The

trouble was that we had to go over the fence and repair it and waste all sorts of time over it. In fact, the fence was the bane of our lives, and must have cost a lot to keep in repair.

"A good many accidents took place, one way and another, with those fences, which it seems to me now must have cost father even more than the fences did. I remember one night the horses got tearing around the fields and bumped into a part of the fence which had been neglected for some time past, for the reason that we were busy harvesting the hay. There was a field of green grain. The horses got into it and trampled all over it; but worse than that they gorged themselves with it, with the result that two of them died the following day, and the other two were barely pulled through by the aid of a veterinary from the nearest town.

"As I was about to say, my brother, who lives on part of the old farm, took me down to the place where the horses broke through that time. He told me that when he saw cement being used so much he wondered if it wouldn't be a good thing to make fence posts of, so that they would not rot or break. He got into touch with a cement firm, without further delay, with the result that they sent him full instructions regarding the making of cement fence posts.

"Jack was very proud of his fence, and it struck me, when he showed it to me, that I had never seen anything nicer. It was as straight as a die, and there wasn't a sign of a break in it from end to end. The posts were all upright, and the wire and smooth wire—was as tight and as trim as it used to be on Judge Foster's lawn. Jack asked me how long I thought it was since the fence was built. I told him perhaps a few months—four or five months. 'Well,' said he, 'make it years instead of months and you would be nearer it.'

"It was a fact that for half a dozen years that fence had stood there, and that during that time not a break had taken place, and

Jack had not spent five minutes looking after it.

"I asked my brother if the fence had not been a little costly.

"Said he: 'That's the cheapest fence I ever had on my farm. It cost more to begin with than the old kind we used to have so much trouble with when we were boys, but once put up it is there forever. Those posts can never rot. The longer they are up, the harder and the stronger they become. I made a few little mistakes when I began the work, but they were not serious, and I now know how to provide against them. One of the great advantages of this sort of fence is that it never needs to be repaired. I suppose, in the course of time, the wire will rust out and break, but that will not be the fault of the posts; and as you will remember, it was always the posts that used to give us the worry when we were boys.'

"I asked him if the posts never loosened and fell over to one side in the way that used to make so much work for us in the old days.

"Well," said he, "they do loosen sometimes. But do you remember how solid the wooden posts used to be after they had been in the ground a good while and before they began to rot. The longer they remained there the solid-er they became. That's the way with these posts. I never have to tinker with them, so that they are never disturbed, but are allowed to become imbedded in the earth. I have sunk them pretty deep, so that the frost will not affect them, and the result is that the fence is always just as you see it now. The strongest man on this farm could hardly move one of those posts. I am just now completing the last fence on my farm, and after it is finished the fence problem on this place will be settled forever. No more time will be wasted looking after them, and there will be no danger of the horses breaking in like they did at this spot thirty years ago, or so—as you may remember."

"I remembered all right, and as we stood there laughing, we instinctively began rubbing the sore spots once more, which father left on us upon that memorable occasion."

Forest Fires

During the past summer forest fires have been devouring the growth of centuries with ruthless rapacity. Nothern Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia have suffered most. Fine tracts of merchantable timber worth millions of dollars have been destroyed, square mile upon square mile of young growth coming on to supply the demands of the future has been wiped out of existence. In Northern Ontario, where but a thin layer of vegetable mould covers the rocks, the soft, oozy forest floor, the only hope of vegetation and equable stream flow has been completely destroyed, leaving a cheerless rocky waste for generations to come. Even if no thought be given to the lives lost, it must be admitted that the loss occasioned this year by forest fires has been nothing short of appalling.

Can nothing be done, then, to prevent this loss? The answer is that much can be done. The solution of the problem is indicated in two words—public sentiment. The two principal causes of forest fires are campers and railways, and public opinion must be brought to bear upon these. The tourist-camper does not at all realize the extent of the damage which his unextinguished camp fire may do. Laws against leaving camp fires burning are already on the statute books, but it is quite evident that their observance rests mainly with the tourist himself. He must be impressed with the very serious nature of his offence. If a man sets fire to a building, he is convicted of arson and sent to prison as a felon, but if his unextinguished camp fire burns down millions of dollars worth of timber and perhaps destroys human life as well, he is, at best, made to pay a small fine. When public opinion views this carelessness of the camper as a criminal act and frowns upon him accordingly, considerable progress will have been made in lessening the number of forest fires from this cause.

But it is the railways that spread the most destruction. Traversing, as they do, the great lone stretches of uninhabited timber areas, the sparks from their locomotives start numerous fires that gain great headway before being detected. Too often the right-of-way piled high with inflammable rubbish, furnishes a tinder-box for these conflagrations. The owner of destroyed property along the line has found it almost impossible under the present laws to get damages from the railway company, so difficult is it to fix the responsibility, and so expensive is the process of litigation. In order to lessen the number of fires due to this cause, the Committee on Forests of the Commission of Conservation has proposed to make the railways pecuniarily responsible. It has recommended that there be added to the Railway Act a clause making them liable to a fine of \$1,000, recoverable by summary prosecution before a stipendiary magistrate or two justices of the peace, for every fire started by sparks from their locomotives. It makes no difference whether the fire begins outside the right-of-way or spreads therefrom to adjoining land. The railways are exempt from this fine if they can show that they have the best modern appliances on their locomotives to prevent the emission of sparks, that their employees have not shown negligence in conducting to the starting of the fire, and that they have maintained an efficient and properly equipped staff of fire rangers. In other words the Committee proposes to lessen the number of fires caused by sparks from locomotives by having the railways fined for the damage they do, unless they take every possible precaution to prevent such damage. This is obviously a fair recommendation as regards both the railways and the public, and the effort to have it made law is worthy of public support. Every Canadian is deeply interested in the protection of our forests; for each forest fire means that he and his children will have to pay higher prices for every foot of lumber they use. Such a measure, for the preservation of our forests, as that recommended by the Committee on Forests of the Commission of Conservation should, therefore, commend itself to every public-spirited citizen and newspaper in Canada.



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