



THE FARMERS TALK TO FARMERS

MUCH GUESS-WORK DONE IN FARMING

(Written Specially For The Bulletin.)
I have received two answers to my appeal for an explanation of 1919 potato scab in Cold Spring Gardens.

One is from a large potato grower in New Hampshire who seems to feel sure that his tip is the certain road to success. He writes:

"The cause of scab is barnyard manure. In spite of your unwillingness to admit this as the answer to your puzzle, it is the answer. Barnyard manure is the incubator and nursery of the scab microbe or bacillus or spore, or whatever it may be. Some years it may not produce scab on the potato but sure as you keep on using it, the epidemic will break loose sooner or later. It isn't old ground which causes the trouble; not either the witness or the dryness of the season; nor infection from your neighbor's fields; it's just barnyard manure in proof, let me tell you of an old neighbor of mine who once raised potatoes—good, clean, A No. 1 potatoes, for twenty-seven years running, on the same ground, without a break. But he never had a forkful of manure on the land. He used chemical fertilizers only, and never had a scabby potato in the twenty-seven years."

That seems fat-footed enough, doesn't it? With potatoes at their present price and chemical fertilizers at its present cost, I wonder just how much profit the average potato-grower would have obtained this year, if he had followed this plan? I seem to have read before, in the advertisement of a fertilizer company, a reference to this twenty-seven consecutive years' cropping of a potato field in New Hampshire. The advertisement referred to the grower as a Mr. Blank "of New Hampshire and Boston." From which I inferred that Mr. Blank was one of those back-to-the-landers who, having made his money in the city, was spending it on a farm. Such people, who farm for fun and don't care how much the fun costs them, sometimes have remarkable experiences. As a rule, however, these experiences are not of great practical value to real farmers. They do not point the way to more profitable farming, but simply show what will sometimes happen if you have money to burn and like to let it smoke.

My second correspondent, from Eastern Connecticut, is less sure. He submits suppositions of which he says: "Although mere guess work, it seems to me they may, possibly, be correct." Following is his hypothesis:

"At the time the early potatoes were the size of marbles, thousands, perhaps millions of scab-seed (or spores) were floating in the air over the potato ground. A shower of rain brought them to the ground. Other showers washed them into the soil. Those that came in contact with the potatoes stayed there and started to grow. These that did not, were washed deeper and deeper into the soil by frequent rains. When the Russets commenced to set, no more scab-seed was available, having been washed down below the potato hills. If it keeps its vitality, water, by capillary attraction, may bring it to the surface again next summer—possibly this fall."

You will notice that the validity of my first correspondent's assertion rests on the assumption that the seed or spores of scab are found in barnyard manure. The validity of my second correspondent's guess depends on the assumption that the scab spores are air-borne, and washed into the soil by showers.

Not being myself informed as to the first source of the scab infection I can't possibly tell which, if either, of these assumptions is correct. One thing is fairly clear—they are both wrong. We shall have to leave it to the spore experts to tell us, if they happen to know, where scab comes from, how it is spread, and how it is propagated and distributed. The custom of soaking potato seed in formalin or corrosive sublimate, before planting, as an insurance against scab, would seem to indicate that the scab-spores were on the seed before it was taken from the bins or had come into contact with either manure or air-borne and rain-washed spores at the field.

Anyway, neither of these contradictory suggestions answers my call for a warranted explanation. Both are, as the last frankly admits itself to be, just guesses. I, as a Yankee of the eighth New England generation, from original Yorkshire stock, have the inherited and fairly developed capacity to do any reasonable amount of guessing, myself. You know that "I guess" is the most universal Yankee phrase.

Please understand that I do not minimize the value of guessing. Neither its value as a mental stimulant, nor its worth as a practical stepping stone in a swamp of doubt. Out west they tell a story of Rudyard Kipling, the English author. He was traveling on a minor western railroad when the train stopped longer than usual at a small station for one reason or another. Kipling got out and sauntered up forward towards the engine. Directly ahead of it was a deep gorge, spanned by a very rickety-looking bridge. The more Kipling looked at that structure, the more panicky he grew. "May, look here," he exclaimed to the engineer, who was on the ground beside his engine, swabbing away at its bearings. "My good fellow, you don't really

mean to say that you're going to run this train over the bridge of poles and fence-rails?" The engineer was quick to recognize that it was a thorough-going Englishman who was addressing him. "Ye see, in this country when they build a bridge we guess that it's made to run over, and we guess that it'll hold up. Sometimes we guess ourselves safe across and sometimes we guess ourselves into h—, and we never know which it's going to be till we try it."

There's a deal of guessing going on in other occupations besides railroading. I don't know one where it is more general or more necessary than in farming. Sometimes, in the far distant future, some great philosopher is going to grasp the inter-relationships of the few things we now know about farming and the other things which our successors are going to find out, and combine them into a real science of agriculture. At present, when "there ain't no such thing," we have to go it blindly much of the time. We make the best guess we can, and take our chances on the outcome. Sometimes our guessing leads to great success. Whereupon we are apt to plume ourselves upon our sagacity. And sometimes our guessing—results in a potato crop so scabby that it isn't worth digging. Whereupon, we are properly humble. We admit that we made a bad guess, that time.

After all, isn't that about the way of it? However, as things are, we are not called on to feel too acute shame when our guess proves a blunder. We have to work with the tools at hand. Fraytly nearly all our farming tools are clumsy contradictions, lacking in the efficiency which we all have an ideal of. We do the best we can with them, wishing, indeed, that they were better, but accepting them, nevertheless, poor as they are, as the best practically attainable.

Similarly, in the planning of farm operations, we have to use our ingenuity and our guess-work in the absence of knowledge and certainty. It is another case of doing the best we can with the means available.

There's, to many of us, the chief charm of farm work. It is hard; it is dirty; it is often unremunerative; it is a weary, weary round, plodding by uncertain lights to uncertain ends. It is a continual taking of chances. But, for that very reason, it has an attraction for certain of us which no occupation based on assurance certainties could possibly have.

If you pour strong vinegar on soda it will effervesce. It will always do so. There's no doubt about it. The result is as assured as the operation is simple.

And can you imagine a man finding real comfort and satisfaction in taking up, as a life-work, the mixing of soda and vinegar to see them fizz?

But when we farmers plow and plant and cultivate, we're playing a big game the results of which are by no means assured. We may win; we may lose; all we can do is to play the game the best we know how and watch what happens.

What pleasure can a great chess expert find in sitting down to a game with an amateur? The expert, knowing, from the first move of the first pawn, that he's going to checkmate the other fellow in about so many plays. But when you and I sit down to a game of backgammon, neither being experts, we have got either of us any certainty who's going

ing to win. It isn't called chess, but an skill and somewhat on luck, somewhat on our foresight in moving the pieces, and somewhat on chance in the fall of the dice. The result is a thing of excitement which gives zest to the game; a game which the chess expert, however, is making an inexpert beginner, an average fool.

So with farming. The very fact that it is largely guess-work is to many of us, an incentive, a stimulant, a pleasure. We make our guesses against the uncertainties of soil and season and man, and know, when we win the thrill which comes with victory. Sometimes with victory after a long struggle of varying chances and changing prospects.

It's quite a trick to hold the world, the flesh and the devil, which is about the combination the farmer has to struggle against. When he guesses right and sees all three laid away in hospital for co-operation, he feels somewhat as though he did when he took a bet from the cater and sweetens from the strong. Thank you, friends, for your guesses. We'll have to keep on guessing for some time longer. I am,

THE FARMER

COX PLAYS FOR VOICE OF FORMER SERVICE MEN
New York, Sept. 29.—The reasons why former service men should support the Democratic ticket, proposed by Governor Cox, were made public here today by the Democratic National Committee.

The ten arguments were included by the Democratic National Committee in the following letter to the Argonne Post Weekly of Des Moines, Iowa:

"There are no ten reasons—nor indeed any other number of reasons—why a hard-bound republican or democratic partisan. I cannot refrain from uttering my sentiments at this point, before proceeding.

"Uncompromising partisanship would dry up the well-springs of this healthy public sentiment which has made America. It would make men willing to those who would make the party policy would forever stagnate the intellectual development of our people.

"I believe in political parties and I have affiliated myself with the Democratic party because I have agreed with its tenets as to government. I shall, therefore, with your pardon, give you the ten reasons why an ex-service man should support the Democratic candidate:

"Because they have constantly called the broadest principles of progressive development, pertaining to the spirit of the century for independent political judgment.

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conditions are not ideal, America is at this hour the safest place in which to live, the most desirable and the best born every standpoint, and because it will come through progressive evolution to a still higher plane of development despite the attempts of reactionaries like Senator Harding to stop it."

AMERICAN RED CROSS IN GERMANY TO HAVE AIRPLANES
Cincinnati, Sept. 29.—(By The A. P.) The American forces in Germany will have an aviation unit in operation within the next few weeks, it was learned here today. The newest type of United States Army airplanes which have been developed recently in America have been shipped to Germany and a group of aviators already has arrived. The unit will become an active part of the Red Cross as soon as final arrangements have been completed.

OHIO PROTECTS SECTIONAL PRIDE
Columbus, O., Sept. 29.—The Ohio public utilities commission today wired the Interstate Commerce commission at Washington asking immediate revision of the coal priority orders under which New England and the northeast are receiving coal which normally supplies Ohio consumers.

LAUNCHED AT CRAMPS
Philadelphia, Sept. 29.—The destroyer Paul Jones, the last of the forty-six vessels of that type ordered by the government in its war program was launched today at Cramps' shipyard.

MISS BAGLEY SISTER-IN-LAW OF THE NAVY DANIELS
The christening party for the Paul Jones, 314 feet 5 inches long and will have a speed of 35 knots.

STAFFORDVILLE
Miss Anna Cecile Fagan, daughter of Mrs. James Fagan, was united in marriage with Luke Denis Sulecki, by Rev. F. J. O'Neill at St. Edward's church, at 8 o'clock Monday morning, September 27. The bride was given in white crepe de chine, wore a veil and a wreath of orange blossoms and carried a nosegay of bride roses. The bridesmaid, Miss C. Elizabeth Fagan, sister of the bride wore pink gossamer with lily of the valley and carried pink roses. The best man was Robert T. Welch of Stamford. The groom's gift to the bride was a fur neck piece and to the best man a pair of K. of C. cuff links. The bride's gift to the groom was a gold watch and to the bridesmaid she gave a pearl brooch. A reception was held at the home of the bride immediately after the ceremony, after which Mr. and Mrs. Sulecki left for a trip to Fort Detrick, N. C. The bride wore a traveling suit of dark blue. She received many useful and beautiful gifts. Guests were present from Boston, Providence and Hartford.

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Peanut Brittle, selected nuts, lb.	39c
Horns Made Nut Fudge, lb.	59c
Chocolates and Bon-Bons, packed in 1 lb. boxes, lb.	79c
Bitter Sweet Vanillas, lb 59c	
Milk Chocolates, several different kinds, packed in one lb. boxes, lb. \$1.00	
Regular price \$1.50	
Lady Fingers, made from fresh coconut and bitter sweet chocolate, lb.	79c
Fresh Home Made Toasted Marshmallows lb.	69c
Favorite Kisses, fresh marshmallow dipped in caramel, lb.	79c
Large, Tempting Bitter Sweet Chocolate Peppermints, lb.	59c
Assorted Gum Drops 1 pound	59c

OWING TO THE RAINY WEATHER, WE WILL CONTINUE OUR SALE FRIDAY AND SATURDAY

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neck piece and to the best man a pair of K. of C. cuff links. The bride's gift to the groom was a gold watch and to the bridesmaid she gave a pearl brooch. A reception was held at the home of the bride immediately after the ceremony, after which Mr. and Mrs. Sulecki left for a trip to Fort Detrick, N. C. The bride wore a traveling suit of dark blue. She received many useful and beautiful gifts. Guests were present from Boston, Providence and Hartford.

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