

(February 18, 1929)

Farming in Ontario

BY DR. G. L. CHRISTIE,
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PRESIDENT DALY:—Gentlemen, this is Dr. Christie's first visit to our Club. I sincerely trust, Sir, it may be but the forerunner of an annual address. Dr. Christie's record is summarized very briefly on the card, gentlemen. We could have written pages as to what he has done and accomplished for agriculture. He has received much recognition but I feel that Dr. Christie considers his greatest honor the request to come back to Ontario as President of the College from which he graduated in 1902.

In these days of frenzied speculation, consolidation, expansion and great trusts, each one seemingly bigger than the last, we are apt to lose sight of agriculture which, after all, is our basic and banner industry and without whose success these others would be non-existent. No more worthy representative of that great industry can be found anywhere than our guest of today. Gentlemen, it is my very great pleasure to introduce that representative, the President of the Ontario Agricultural College, Dr. Christie.

DR. CHRISTIE:—Mr. Chairman, Minister of Agriculture, Sir Robert, members of the club and friends, this invitation was accepted with a great deal of pleasure. First, for the reason that I wanted to meet members of this club and to identify myself with the great movement that is backed and promoted through your club and, again, that I might have the opportunity of telling you something of the agricultural work in which I am interested.

If I were to make the usual Presidential address I should start with the beginnings of agriculture and trace down the various steps of development until the present and then I might tell you something about what I propose

to do. But for fear time may be called I am proposing to start in with modern day agriculture. So, if you will permit me, I want to read to you a letter which came to our office Saturday morning. It is from a boy of sixteen years old to our Poultry Department.

"I have written to you different times dealing with poultry questions and I have received your helpful information. I thought may be you might like to know how deeply interested in poultry I am because at the present time I am only sixteen years old.

"Five years ago I started with a setting of eggs from the school fair. That fall I had two barred rock pullets which were dandies. In the spring I set their eggs and the next fall I had fifteen pullets. These averaged 198 each for the year. The next year I had twenty-one hens and last year I had 120 pullets, and this year I am tending to 550. 400 of these are my own and they are laying about 45% and were not very early hatched. I would like to have attended your one month poultry course, but could not get away." Dr. Christie—These are the kind of boys we are getting on Ontario farms—interested in their work and not working for a job.

"I have been told that you are interested in what young boys are doing in poultry so this is why I wrote you as I did about my past. I intend to make poultry my life work. At the present time, I have three breeds, Barred Rocks, White Leghorns and Arconas. I would be very glad to know what your opinion of the Arcona is for commercial farming and how the three breeds compare as to cost of feed.

"Do you think three pounds of cod liver oil meal has as much value as one pint of cod liver oil for one hundred pounds of mash? How much alfalfa meal do you advise using in one hundred pounds of mash made up of equal parts of bran, middlings, corn meal, ground oats and meat scraps?

"What is your opinion of the new incubator that is being put out this year called the Canadian? Has it ever been tested out by your college? What is your opinion of the Miller 'Ideal' incubator?

"I read an article in *The Toronto Globe* where it said

that at the Ontario Poultry Association, you said that hens that were forced under lights during the winter months do not lay so good (sic) in summer months. Do you think this is a definite fact? I thought of this this fall when I was wiring my hen houses and I quit, and another thing, I think the eggs from these birds do not hatch so good." Dr. Christie—There is a chance for a sermon here.

"Do you think that hens should not be fed corn while the eggs are being gathered for hatching? I know an instance last year where a person had three hundred white Leghorn pullets. He fed them corn all winter and summer, never stopping it, also he fed all the blood and livers the hens could get away with. This person helped a butcher kill so he had lots of blood. In the spring, these eggs hatched 300 chickens from 400 eggs every time and nearly all lived and pullets from these eggs are laying fifty per cent. now. How do you account for this?"

"Do you think poultry raising for eggs is being overdone?"

"Why do they not put a heavy sentence on chicken thieves when they are caught? They are getting quite common.

"I hope you will be able to answer my questions."

That is typical of letters that are being received by the departments of the Agricultural College. That letter is a wonderful letter if you analyse it. In the first place, it tells you that we have boys on the farm interested in agriculture. You read in papers—the headline for the paper today is "boys are leaving farms." Another subject is "How are we going to keep boys on the farm?" If you came with me on a trip through the Province you will find a large army of young men on the farm, trying farming and thinking hard, calling for help. I am not going to say anything about the boys and old men leaving the farm. I am concerned about the boys who are staying on the farm and making a success. We can do a real good job by helping them. This fellow puts up some definite questions. That boy not only has to think out the problems of the poultry industry, but he has to think out problems of the soil, crops and marketing of his poultry and eggs.

In other words, the boy who successfully operates his poultry plant, dairy plant, fruit orchard or truck garden has to be a real man with a lot of grey matter that is going to supplement the work that he can do with his hands and legs. Until we place on Ontario farms these young men who can do that job—until then we will have a lot of trouble and a lot of new problems.

The question now is that of education, that of answering these serious problems that arise. They are calling for help so that is one of the big problems of research. The Poultry Department is conducting experiments. If we are to have pullets lay early in the fall or early winter the chicks must be hatched in the early spring or early winter. Now during the month of March eggs may be placed in incubators. We do not have much sunshine. In other words, we have one hundred more hours sunshine in the month of June than we have in the month of March and when Canadian or Ontario farmers set out to raise eggs from hens in the month of March we get an average hatch of 28%. Hens fed on the same ration in the month of June will give a hatch of eggs of 89%. One hundred hours of sunshine in the month of June makes a difference of 23 or 28 and 83%. Now American hatchery men in the United States recognize this. These men living further south and getting longer days and getting a larger amount of sunshine, can hatch chicks at a lower cost than farmers in Ontario. So they are sending chicks over the border and selling them. The hatchery man in Ontario has been at a great disadvantage. With the help of the Empire Marketing Board, Professor Graham started an experiment at the College on the relation of rations and the hatchability of eggs. From three years work they had discovered where we will add cod liver oil that we have increased the hatchability. In other words, cod liver oil made up or served as a substitute for sunshine. How much is that worth to Ontario farmers or poultrymen? They can hold their own against any hatcheryman in any place in the world. That gives you an idea of what I mean by that kind of research work—the phase of research work I have been interested in.

Something must be done in Ontario with reference to

the marketing of our crops. The tomato crop for instance. The usual way to approach the marketing problem is to start out and gather statistics. Go to the farmers and find out the number of acres they grow and go to the cannery and find out the amount they pay and the amount they receive for sales and figure the cost per dozen; figure out the cost of production on a farm and publish a bulletin and you have conducted a real investigation. But nobody has received very much benefit. What the farmer wants to know; what the cannery wants to know is this, how much can the canner afford to pay for one ton of good tomatoes and how much will he make in profit?

In my work in Indiana, before I left, we went out to the canneries which handled tomatoes. Our own men graded 600 tons of tomatoes at factories, followed them through the factories and followed them to the point where they were sold. We discovered that No. 1 tomatoes which our men graded, made just twice as many dozen cans of tomatoes as the ordinary run delivered by the farmer. You can determine what No. 1 tomatoes are worth. The difference between No. 1 and the others is that No. 1 are \$18 and those delivered by the average farmer are \$11. That is a fair spread. This encouraged eleven factories in Indiana to follow the plans and accept the grades as established by our men. The season 1928 has been satisfactory because they both made profit. In the State of Indiana 26 factories will follow that plan. We want to know the same thing in Ontario. What does the farmer say? "I want my tomatoes to be all No. 1." Where does he go for help? Immediately to the Agricultural College. How do you get information? How can I take care of this crop? How should they be packed? How should they be handled? When are they to be delivered to the factory? You have a price of \$7 there as an incentive to get the farmer to do what he ought to do. It is going to be impossible until we get incentive there, a large amount of exceptionally hard work. Agricultural research must be carried on in connection with marketing of stock as well as crops.

A few weeks before I left Indiana to come here, a neighbor woman came into my home and said, "What do

you know about Canadian bacon?" I said, "I know it is good bacon produced in a good country, produced by the best people there are. It ought to be good." She said, "I was at the grocery store asking for bacon. I was told they had Canadian bacon but it was ten cents a pound more." She used it a few days and said, "It is worth ten cents a pound extra and we are going to use it all the time."

I went to Smithfield Market and I found in specially provided stalls No. 1 fresh beef killed in Glasgow or Aberdeen and sent over here. We find that Scotch beef selling as high as fifteen cents above frozen beef that come from the Argentine. In other words, people who wanted No. 1 were willing to pay a little extra. Today, Ireland is producing shorthorn steers of high quality, shipping them to Scotland, to feed them in the hills of Scotland, slaughtering them in Glasgow or Aberdeen and other points and sending them to Liverpool and London to be sold at a high price. As you would naturally expect, Scotland gets credit for good beef. I might point out this that thirty-five years ago when the pork industry in Ontario was in a chaotic state the Agricultural College with the co-operation of the Davies Company and other factories of this city started in a program of improvement that has resulted in the development of Canadian bacon and hogs which stand as the best types in the world. Canadian bacon is standardized, goes to our own tables and across the land on tables of thousands of consumers and they are willing to pay the price for that bacon because it is good. When you come to beef you cannot say so much. Ontario produces a lot of beef, but not of good quality. Half of one per cent. of the beef that goes to Scotland is classed as No. 1. When your good wife says to some friends she is going to give a steak supper and buys steak, there is always a gamble. Whenever you mention serving a steak supper, there is always a hesitancy and they wonder if it is going to be good and they always sit there with a real puzzled face when you cut the steak. What do you do? We have roast chicken that is easily cooked when friends come to visit. That is not right. It is wrong. We will never promote the beef industry until we learn in Ontario how to produce high class beef in quality as we have learned

to produce Canadian bacon. If there is any research work that would yield results, it will be research work started along that line—interest in soil surveys, interest in work that will allow us to get out and map soils. I wish I had a map to show you of one of the counties which is completed. In Norfolk we found soils low in price, many of them ready to be abandoned. Soil surveys have shown us that these soils are suitable for tobacco production. Thousands of acres are being planted with it and are returning yields in tobacco that make it a profitable venture. We cannot find that in other counties. When you come to fertilizing the soil it is necessary to know the type of soil on which you work. We have an experimental farm at Guelph for this purpose. The farmer has a right to raise the question in his mind and ask whether those crops are grown on soil similar to mine and grown under the same climatic conditions. You and I know that they are not the same. You know soils differ. Experiments conducted on one type of soil will not answer to another type of soil in another part of the Province. Place these maps in the hands of our farmers. When they read the results at Guelph, Norfolk or at Ottawa or some other point, they refer to the map and discover that field No. 4 on it is the type of soil similar to theirs. It serves him in a good way. Make experimental work return yields they should return.

We are interested in boys. A large number of boys get put out on Ontario farms. They should be good Ontario boys. I am interested in taking in good boys that come from Great Britain, Scandinavia or elsewhere and in helping them in every way we can. I am ready to help first our good Ontario boys. They must be the kind who will be ready to meet the conditions of the hour. What are those conditions? When my grandfather had a little farm down in Dundas County it was covered with heavy oak and ash trees. With the help of a neighbor he built a little cabin and cleared the land. He was a farmer. He cleared a little land, sowed wheat and oats and accumulated some stock. Year by year the border was pushed back until the farm was cleared. Then my father came along and put up fences, dairy equipment and introduced hogs and

sheep. He started on another basis. Now my brother is on the same farm. My brother in 1929 is doing an entirely different job of farming from my grandfather or my father. Let me give you a little instance. My brother wanted to get a car load of cattle and my father wanted some cattle. My father would go along to the dealer, smoke by the hour, talk about everything under heaven except cattle. Days and days were spent discussing the government just to get the cattle away at a low price. My brother wants to buy a car load of cattle. He first goes to the bank and makes arrangements for a loan of money; he comes to Toronto and goes to a commission firm. He tells them what he wants. They arrange to buy a car load of steers. They arrange to ship them. He goes to the feed man and arranges supplementary credit. He feeds them through the winter—five or six months. He follows the markets. He has to study the markets to see what the prices are and what the demand is, and determine the most opportune time for selling. He has to arrange with the railroad company to ship them. He pays insurance and a number of other charges too long to mention. These are added together and subtracted from the amount of money received. He goes home to the bank and turns the check over to them; goes to the feed dealer and arranges for an extension of credit; goes to his wife and gets another loan. That is the experience of a man on the farm in 1928, 1929 or 1935. In other words, it is necessary for the man who goes on the farm today to farm just as efficiently and profitably as father farmed. My father had twenty-five years of experience; it cost him more for his education than my brother.

The boy that goes out on that farm must know field soil and must know the adaptability of crops. He must know how to market and the prices. If he does not, he cannot live in the community and pay the price for his farm. That man cannot wait for ten years to get or buy his experience. He must get it from books, the Agricultural College or an Agricultural representative, from neighbors or some other place. He has to work on a business basis. Unless he is able to do that he has no place on the Ontario farm. These fellows that are longing for the days

of our grandfathers are just wishing to go back to the time when they did not have to think or work. They will have to get the spirit of the hour. They will have to understand that 1929, 1935 and 1940 will demand more of them day by day in the way of grey matter, of hard planning, thinking and work. It is demanded of the farmer, the merchant, it is demanded of the manufacturer, of every class of man everywhere who wishes to succeed at the present time; and the farmer must do the same thing. When I read you the letter about that boy—he has the spirit of the hour. He has been working, planning and thinking of the business in which he is engaged. There is a real demand for what we call farm education, for the agricultural activities as promoted by the Department of Agriculture; for the instruction and work going on at Agricultural Colleges.

I am just here today to review these things, to get you to think, to see if you will join with us on some of these big problems which are before us at the present time. If we can do that we are going to render a wonderful service. In conclusion, let me say I am glad to come here. I am hoping, Mr. Chairman, that you will see your way clear some time to come to our camps at Guelph and see our experimental fields, see the equipment that the Government is placing there in the interests of Agriculture. Acquaint yourself with this important work and then join hands with us. Let us not go out with the idea that the farmer is on one side of the fence and the business man on the other. No longer is the farm divorced from the town. The farmer must deal with the business man every day and the business man must depend on the farmer for buying power. Your success must mean something to him. With that spirit and program of co-operation, agriculture in Ontario will go ahead and will succeed and this province and this Dominion will be in the lead.