

## ADDRESS OF W. G. SIMONSON

At the Meeting of the Stock-grower's Association,  
Tuesday.

### TALKS INTERESTINGLY ON FORAGE

The Range and Meadow Must be Preserved and Improved—How This May be Accomplished—Alfalfa, Brome and Other Grasses.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen:

Heretofore such has been the abundance of our pasture plants that little thought has been taken for their preservation and improvement. Pastures have been so managed as though the grasses could take care of themselves and the ranges have been so overstocked with the idea that the forage supply was inexhaustible. Disaster has followed in many sections and one of the greatest problems now before the department of agriculture is to discover methods of restoring the ranges. To wholly replace the forage plants of this region which by time and adaptation have become indigenuous to these alkali is yet in the experimental state, yet the importance of the move is so great as to call, I believe, for state appropriations to carry on the experimental work along scientific lines, and the problem is so vast that it is of national importance and the only solution lies in a thorough knowledge of the habits and species of forage plants of our native pastures.

The future prosperity of this section turns more upon the preservation and increased cultivation of grasses than any one other subject. Rather than emulate and carry out the growth of the two blades of grass, as suggested, most of us have so overstocked our ranges that it is true that where formerly five blades of grass grew there is but one now.

From personal experience I am unable to advise you of the methods and mechanism of doubling the forage of this region and can only offer some suggestions, but that it can be done I am firmly convinced as I am of the fact that the grade of our stock can be improved by the application of intelligence. You can talk about your short horns, your white faces, your red poles, and your black poles, until you are as black in the face as the latter, yet what do they amount to if they have insufficient forage and no amount of fine breeding will supply the deficiency.

That throughout the whole west there has been in the past decade a great deterioration and diminution in the forage crop of grass is so generally conceded that it will be passed at this time as an admitted fact. Heretofore the open range was everybody's territory, but subsequently, as settlers by a mutual consent have allotted territory to each other, if this overpasturage continues the devastation can be traced to the door of the devastator. And when I say to you that a very large percent of the variety of our grasses are annual and must come up and go to seed each year to keep the native plant renewed, you can readily see that constant pasturage will soon destroy such varieties and thus reduce the quantity of the forage.

The open range and free grass have been intoxicants to us all and we have possessed no proprietary rights in the future of the free range and its grasses, and therefore no incentive to their preservation. We have eaten the annual grasses before they have gone to seed and said to ourselves, "let the future take care of itself." These pastures must have better treatment and rest, or in time they will be worthless. The only difference between good grazing lands and a desert is grass. In this region grass, and not corn, is king. Therefore I trust that you see the importance of the situation and feel the great economic facts involved in taking steps to remedy the impending evil.

What is the remedy?

I cannot say to you exactly what I wish to at this time, but when the millennium comes and we each own or have a proprietary right to all our range lands there will be a greater inducement to preserve these grasses, but in the meantime I believe it the duty of those who use the free range to try and preserve it and add to the primitive grasses such as experiment and investigation may prove can and will grow. We have asked to lease these lands so that we might exercise proprietary rights over them, but our necessities and the good of the country have not been understood even by our own legislature, and our wants have been barred by the misguided opinion of a political majority.

We must cut down our herds. Many in this immediate section have become satisfied of this necessity and acted accordingly, and I feel safe in saying that this section is not carrying over 50 percent of the cattle it did one year ago, and I think more profitable results will follow with another 20 percent cut.

To improve the range I would sug-

gest changing the summer range into the winter range, and thus give the annual grasses on the summer range a chance to seed and reproduce themselves. All ranches should be supplied with appliances to fight prairie fires, as these fires destroy the under or bottom grasses which, when in a semi-decomposed state, serve as a blanket to retard the surface evaporation; besides these grasses are great fertilizers, and their destruction by fire is to my personal knowledge known to damage the range for three years thereafter.

So much for the range. How about the meadow? In going from the range to the meadow, while literally to lower and damper lands, yet metaphorically speaking, our feet are on less boggy ground, as experiment has already shown, our hay crops can be more than doubled by ploughing up the meadow and planting tame grasses.

In improving the meadow the future as well as the present must enter the discussion. All grasses are divided, botanically, into two distinct classes. To use the scientific term, they are either leguminous or non-leguminous. Leguminous grasses are those with a tap root and a broad, spreading leaf, and the roots run deep in the ground, while the non-leguminous grasses have a spreading root, are shallow feeders, and have a parallel vein leaf. Alfalfa, clovers and brome grasses belong to the first class, and timothy, red top and blue stem belong to the second class. To resist the drouth, which is the largest problem we have, we must grow grasses that are deep feeders, that is, those whose roots will go to moisture, or to a depth not affected by surface influences. Alfalfa and brome grass will do this, and therefore from a standpoint of drouth resistance they are the grasses to sow. There is another reason for their selection which is all important, and it is this: Their roots feed deep and are constantly bringing up from below to the surface of the ground valuable nitrogenous plant food that is enriching the soil, while timothy or red top and grasses of that variety which feed only upon the surface of the ground are constantly draining the soil of its vitality and in a few years would impoverish it, and further in dry seasons these shallow feeding grasses are more liable to be killed out. The sowing of timothy on wet meadow land that has been foul with tickle grass and weeds has proven very successfully to drive out these pests and has furnished very good hay, but for an average meadow where the water is 8 or 10 feet below the surface I would most emphatically recommend sowing either alfalfa or bromis intermis, commonly known as brome grass. Alfalfa will produce more tons to the acre than brome grass but the latter furnishes an exceedingly early and good pasture, it being even earlier than black root grass, and affords a good March and April feed. The brome grass statements are made on the strength of an interview with W. N. Anderson of Bingham, Nebraska, who has been raising both alfalfa and brome grass about six years, and of the two his preference is the latter.

Were you to ask me to name in this paper what single product of the soil would in the near future assume the greatest importance in our state, from what I have read during the past year I would say alfalfa. Its nutritious qualities, its abundant growth, its hardness, its ability to resist drouth, its enrichment of the soil, its staying qualities when rooted, all speak for it a prominent place with us in the near future, and no ranchman whose meadow cuts under a ton to the acre, with water 8 or 10 feet from the surface, can afford to not plough it up and sow it to alfalfa.

Just one word on when to cut the hay. About eighteen years ago Prof. R. C. Kedzie, of Michigan, made several analysis of grasses to determine at what period in their growth they carry the most sacarine substance, and the result of his experiments was that he made the statement that when grasses were commencing to blossom they carry more soluble sacarine matter than at any other time in their growth and that after the blossom began to wither the grass stems began to get fibrous and then woody. If this statement is true the time to cut the hay is when it is in blossom. I believe we are cutting our hay too late. We allow it to become woody and almost worthless and it is my judgment that one ton of hay cut in season is worth two ton cut a month later.

We must experiment of the time to cut, also on whether it will pay to disk the meadow, and I have been told that disking has been carried on quite extensively in the territory west of Holyoke, with very good results. And in making these experiments we must be more than passive observers. We must take part and see the results of our own efforts. The railroad company has employed men for no other purpose than to devise economical methods to conduct their affairs. With them system and economy is the soul of their business; then why shouldn't we make a study of the stock carrying capacity of our ranches with a view of producing and marketing beef cheaply, and if done intelligently profit will follow as sure as darkness follows daylight. The grass question is an economic one. Our policy should be reclamation and not deterioration and if we would receive the largest economic value that these lands will contribute we must increase the grass capacity of our ranches.

"All flesh is grass," and you cannot produce flesh without grass any more than you can lift yourself out of your own boots.

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