AGRONOMY

NATURE RAMBLINGS by Frank Thone

The Forgiving Grass

➤ GRASS is the great forgiver. From the time when the first pioneers into the West emerged from the forest lands (which they also destroyed) into the prairies, they have ravaged the sod. They ripped through the long, tenacious cords of its roots (often cursing their toughness the while) with giant plows drawn by many yoke of oxen, later by steam and gasoline tractors. For them there was no virtue in sod, only in quick-cash crops of grain.

A generation of dust-storms and erosion finally brought a tardy awakening, and to some extent at least a return of the saving, protecting sod. Even now, with necessity for larger food supplies becoming urgent, there is a hesitancy about replowing the rebuilt sod.

When the pressure for more grain becomes still greater, as it almost inevitably will, are we going to be able to cling to this undoubtedly sound agronomic practice, or will we gamble with the possibility of more dust storms, worse water erosion, in a few years for the sake of more food and industrial alcohol now? It is a difficult dilemma to contemplate.

Fortunately, there may be a way out, without having to choose either of the evil alternatives. The grass itself may be brought to yield the increased supplies of food, through new techniques of harvesting and feeding.

Formerly, about all you could do with grass, beyond immediate pasturing, was to cut and cure it for hay. But in the curing process a large share of the nutritive value of the grass was lost. Hay was considered (and rightly) as not the highest-grade feed possible for livestock.

However, the new knowledge of grass management calls for cutting the crop earlier than would be considered right for hay, while both protein and vitamin contents are at their highest, and while a more appetizing flavor will tempt animals to eat more heartily and hence demand less of expensive "finishing" feeds like oil-cake or alfalfa meal. This young-cut grass may either be put into silos or cured quickly under artificial heat, rather than being slowly dried in the sun, turning tough in the process.

Both these forms of new-grass feed are now highly praised as better balanced meat- and milk-makers than hay, and hence better competitors against the soil-exhausting grain crops in the important matter of net profit per acre.

Science News Letter, November 6, 1943

MEDICINE

Cancer Research

New discoveries in diagnosis and treatment of cancer are predicted. Disease is becoming important in armed forces, particularly among the women.

➤ DISCOVERY of new methods of diagnosis, treatment and possibly prevention of cancer as research increases knowledge of the disease, was predicted by Dr. Clarence C. Little, director of the American Society for the Control of Cancer, at the Wartime Conference of the American Public Health Association in New York.

Island-hopping strategy rather than a single major victory will be the means of conquering cancer, he indicated.

"Because of the breadth of the subject it is impossible to predict when and how these discoveries will be made," Dr. Little said. "It seems, however, safe to state that there will be many such advances, each marking restricted but definite progress rather than any great outstanding contribution that solves the entire problem of cancer."

Cancer is already appearing among the service forces, particularly breast cancer among service women, J. Lewis Neff, executive secretary of the Nassau County, N. Y., Medical Society, stated.

He urged increased efforts toward cancer control not only in spite of, but because of the war.

An average of 22 new cancer patients per day were admitted to Veterans' Administration hospitals in 1941, he stated, adding that systematic health supervision and physical examination backed by intelligent educational work among the service forces today should reduce the number of cancer patients a few years hence among veterans of the present war.

Cancer is now included as a subject for formal study in the secondary schools and colleges of Nassau County, N. Y., he reported. Besides this and more generalized educational activities, the Nassau County Cancer Committee has for 15 years conducted a long-range cancer-fighting program involving provision for adequate facilities for diagnosis and treatment of cancer and adequate utilization of these facilities.

Science News Letter, November 6, 1943

INVENTION

New Dust Mop Cleaner Eliminates Shaking the Mop

➤ A DUST MOP CLEANER, recently patented, eliminates the necessity of shaking the mop out of the window. The dusty dust mop is inserted in a box case, agitated mechanically, and the dust drawn by a suction fan into a holding bag similar to those used in vacuum cleaners. In the operation the dust mop is given a gentle beating by an ingenious set of "wipers" or "tongues."

The patent, No. 2,331,457, was granted to Cecil R. Curtis, Los Angeles, Calif.

Science News Letter, November 6, 1943