

The Winter Lecture Course at Kimberton Farms Agricultural School

Richard B. Gregg

The 1942 winter lecture course at Kimberton Farms Agricultural School was a rich feast of farming knowledge, experience and wisdom. It began on January 5th and ran six weeks to February 14th.

The first week on the geology, chemistry and biology of the soil was handled entirely by Dr. Pfeiffer. In addition to his very interesting lectures every morning there were periods for questions and discussion. The afternoons were filled with demonstrations and practice of laboratory and field techniques of soil testing.

During the second week there were two courses by Mr. Roger D. Hale, one every morning on farm economics, the other every afternoon covering farm bookkeeping and farm organization. Mr. Nigel Altman, one of the resident students, gave four lectures on manure and compost, followed in the afternoons by demonstrations and field practice in the making of manure and compost heaps and their treatment. On two evenings of that week Dr. Pfeiffer gave absorbing lectures on the history of farming from the most primitive times.

In the third week Dr. Pfeiffer gave us some of the results of his widely varied experience and observation in regard to the proper treatment of the soil. Dr. Herman von Baravalle, in four lectures, told us most interesting and useful facts which a farmer should know about the stars. These were supplemented in the evenings with lantern slides and outdoor observations. His enthusiasm was most infectious. For four afternoons he enlightened us on farm mathematics and measurements. Mr. Oscar Lovdal, the farm assistant, lectured on the feeding of beef cattle and supervised some practice in the judging of Angus cattle in which we all took part. Mrs. Nadya Barnes told us about meat for the market. Dr. Ernest Stearly, the farm's veterinary, told us in two lectures what a farmer should know and do for a sick animal. Miss Evelyn Speiden lectured on beekeeping.

During the fourth week Dr. Pfeiffer continued his illuminating and very practical discussion of the proper treatment of soils; he also gave two very interesting lectures on plant ecology. Mr. Edward Barnes, another of the resident students, opened up valuable new aspects of meteorology; and Mr. Harold Golde, likewise a resident student, lectured on poultry: feeding, health, diseases, statistics and costs. Mr. Robert Emde, another resident student, gave us a wealth of information on the feeding of dairy cattle, and Dr. Pfeiffer for three afternoons supervised our practice in the judging of Guernsey cattle.

On Saturday and Sunday of that week there was the annual meeting of the Bio-Dynamic Farming and Gardening Association. In addition to many instructive reports on the progress of bio-dynamic farms in various parts of the United States, there was the usual routine business of election of officers and the report of the Treasurer. The officers were elected as follows:

MR. O. F. GARDNER, of Florida, *President*

MR. ROGER D. HALE, of Maine, *Vice-President*

MISS EVELYN SPEIDEN, of Kimberton Farms, *Secretary-Treasurer*

DR. E. PFEIFFER, Director of Kimberton Farms Agricultural School,
Scientific Advisor

And as Directors, in addition to the four officers, Messrs. Myrin and Stillman.

In the next week there were five interesting lectures by Dr. Hermann Poppelbaum on mammals and birds around the farm; a biological seminary also by him every afternoon but Saturday; three demonstrations and practice periods on seed selection conducted by Miss Mathilde V. Fragstein; a series of five demonstrations and explanations of farm machines, their use and upkeep conducted by Mr. Oscar Lovdal; another lecture on beekeeping by Miss Evelyn Speiden, and a very interesting trip to the Nut Tree Nursery of Mr. John W. Hershey in Downingtown, Pa. Mr. Hershey has been using the bio-dynamic method in his nursery for several years and told us of its valuable results.

That Saturday and Sunday there was a valuable set of morning and afternoon lectures and demonstrations on gardening by Dr. Pfeiffer and the delights of herb raising by Miss Speiden. These were attended by a number of extra people, including four representatives of The Garden Club of America. Dr. Pfeiffer carried on with his very stimulating evening lectures on the history of farming. He showed that many civilizations have sinned against the earth and created huge deserts and how ours also is in grave danger of this result. He brought out the spiritual meaning of agriculture—a significance which is seldom even mentioned at most farm colleges. Mr. A. F. A. Konig, one of the students from Connecticut, gave two excellent talks on goat keeping and housing.

During the last week Miss Speiden continued her talks on the herb garden and gave also a series of three talks on vegetable gardening. Dr. Pfeiffer gave four helpful talks on the significance of plants other than the cultivated ones. There were also two highly useful discussions of greenhouse culture. There were demonstrations on the use of bio-dynamic sprays; and lectures by Dr. Pfeiffer and Mr. Altman on the treatment of an orchard and a demonstration of orchard treatment. Mrs. Barnes talked twice again on the farm household. Mr. H. A. W. Myrin, through whose generosity the farm and the school operates, gave two interesting evening talks on his experiences in Russia and South America.

We wish there were space to describe the lectures in more detail. Every single one was interesting and of direct value to dirt farmers or gardeners.

The entire series of lectures and discussions, though full of rich intellectual content, was thoroughly practical and gave one a strong desire to go out and apply the knowledge. In this respect this agricultural school differs from most others. The usual agricultural college tends to draw the students away from dirt farming and to turn them into farm economists, teachers and technicians. Kimberton Farms Agricultural School sets the emphasis on practice and produces students who are eager to practice better farming.

It is interesting to note the places from which the students came. The total number of students was 56, coming from 45 different villages, townships or cities. Fourteen were from Pennsylvania; 11 from New York State, outside of New York City; 8 from New York City; 7 from Connecticut; 2 each from New Jersey, Maryland, Massachusetts and Vermont; and 1 each from Georgia, California, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Illinois, Maine and Delaware. In addition there are 10 resident students, of whom 3 are from New York City and 1 each from Massachusetts, Illinois, Connecticut, New York State, Wisconsin, Nebraska and California.

These figures indicate that the interest in and influence of bio-dynamic principles and practice is widespread in the United States and destined to become much wider and stronger.

Altogether the winter session was distinctly encouraging.

A Closed Circuit*

... "Here is an old experiment of Charles Darwin which is to the point. In a field he covered 100 heads of clover with a net so that no insect could reach them, and marked off another group of 100 heads which he left free to the visits of insects. After the flowers were over and the seeds set, he examined all the heads: the exposed heads produced about 2,700 seeds, the covered heads had no seeds at all. Darwin noticed that the insects which visit red clover were mainly humble-bees (it requires an insect with a tongue about three-eighths of an inch in length to reach the nectar in these flowers) and he pointed out (in his *Origin of Species*) that the number of humble-bees depend 'in a great degree' upon the number of field mice, for field mice destroy their combs and nests; the more field mice, the fewer humble-bees and the less ripe clover seed. But near villages the number of field mice is determined, amongst other things, by the number of cats; so that the more cats, the fewer field mice, the more humble-bees, and the greater chance of a fertile crop of clover seed near the village. And some irreverent person has added that the number of cats in a village depends upon the number of old maids; and so—well, you can follow the chain of events for yourself; but is it not odd that the preferences of a village community may, all unconsciously, be influencing seed crops in the fields through the partnership between insects and flowers?"

* Quotation from "Design in Nature" by James Ritchie, published by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1937, pages 104, 105.

Kimberton Farms Agricultural School

Phoenixville, R. R. # 2
Pennsylvania

Winter Course in the Fundamentals of Farming, Including
the Bio-Dynamic Method

January 18th to February 6th, 1943

January 18-23	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
A. M. 8:30-10:	Soil Chemistry and Physics					Farm Organi- zation
10:30-12:	Humus Compost and Manure— How to Produce and Apply			How to Choose a proper Crop Rotation		
P. M. 2:00-3:30	Round trip through Kimberton Farms		A Demonstration of the proper Compost and Manure Treatment			
4:00-5:30	Soil Sampling		Laboratory: Soil testing			
8:00-10:	Plant Requirements on the Soil					

January 25-30	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
A. M. 8:30-10:	Tilling the Soil			Cultivation and Harvest		Pasture Treatment
10:30-12:	Botany with a special view to the dynamic properties in plant life					Hayland Treatment
P. M. 2:00-3:30	Farm machines and their proper use					
4:00-5:30	Laboratory: Experiments and Demonstrations in Plant Physiology					
8:00-10:	The Development of Farming					

February 1-6	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
A. M. 8:30-10:	Farm Economics, Bookkeeping and Statistics					Annual Meeting Bio- Dynamic Farming and Gardening Assoc.
10:30-12:	Dairy Management			Beef Cattle, Feeding and Breeding		
P. M. 2:00-3:30	The Judging of Dairy Cattle		The Judging of Beef Cattle		Feeding Poultry	
4:00-5:30	Seed Breeding and Selection			Swine	Judging Poultry	
8:00-10:	Cattle Diseases		Wood and Forest Management			

Tuition fee for the entire course \$40.
for any single week 15.

A deposit of \$5. with application is required.

Room and board can be provided in the vicinity at fair prices.

Apply early.

A course about bio-dynamic gardening, (truck, herb, and flower gardening)
will be held from March 8th to 14th, 1943.