

FARM AND FIELD.

THE FENCE PROBLEM.

It is rarely worth worrying over the problems in agriculture which apparently loom up in the future. From past experience we have noticed that by the time the expected difficulty confronts us its solution is rendered easy through the inventions, researches and discoveries of the period. To some extent this is true with regard to the problem of fencing material for our farms. As the supply of material in the older States has decreased, farmers have learned to do with fewer fences than would formerly be thought possible. Barbed wire and hedges are supplying the fencing material of the west. Really, the greatest difficulty just at present is with the transition from herding stock to putting in enclosed pastures which is now occurring in some of the western territories. When the increase of cultivated crops makes it necessary to fence stock in enclosed pastures, it involves an enormous amount of fence building in a short time. Say what we may against the barbed wire, this is likely to be the popular fence in the far west for many years to come. Hedges require time, and, under the intensely cold winters of the treeless plains, alternated with fierce summer droughts, the hedgerow soon becomes ragged and a poor protection against stock. If old prices had been maintained, the barbed wire would still have steadily grown in popularity. With the reduction in price recently made, this style of fence will soon distance all competitors. Boards, posts and rails will not be entirely superseded, but they will be used only to supplement the wire, and give it more the look of a fence of the olden time, except in the few remaining sections where lumber is still reasonably cheap.

So far as looks are concerned the less visible the fence appears the better it is. How the wily farmers in new and especially in wooded settlements criss-crossed their land with crooked rail fences into five or ten-acre lots has always been a mystery to us. They were born to habits of industry and perseverance unknown to the present generation. Grim necessity is a hard taskmaster. In many localities these same fences, so laboriously made years ago, are now being removed, and the removal effects even a greater improvement in the landscape than their original construction. In long cultivated farms, we still have a great many remains of former fences, the owners of which would like to clear them away, but cannot always find time and help to do the work. An old fence now is pretty sure to be filled with rubbish, piles of stones on rocky land, bushes, trees and weeds of all kinds. To remove these sometimes requires nearly as much work as the original clearing of the soil from forest. A farmer who had several such old fence rows to clear out, recently remarked that his problem with fences was not how to get more, but how to rid himself of what he had. This is true in many older portions of the country, and especially where stock has been mainly kept by pasturing. It is a slovenly system at the best, encouraging the growth of weeds, as the pasture is rarely mown to destroy them.

In the near future we shall undoubtedly learn to do with a much less amount of fencing than we have needed heretofore. Farmers are beginning to learn that the after-feed on meadows and the new seeding on stubble are worth much more to lie on the land than to be close cropped by cattle. If pastured at all it will be so late in the season that few or no crops will need to be fenced from stock. Such fences as are needed in the interior of the farm should be constructed when possible, so that they can be easily moved and

reset wherever wanted. One hundred rods of movable fence will make a fair sized lot on most farms, large enough at least for the stock that will ordinarily be kept under any system. If pasturing is not to be abandoned altogether, except on cheap lands, it will be retained in connection with partial soiling. With movable fences the farmer can hurdle his cattle and sheep, feeding them with extra rations sufficient to rapidly increase the fertility of the soil. The plan of restoring fertility by keeping stock on land, giving them nothing more than they can pick from its thin and innutritious herbage, is too much like a man trying to lift himself up by his boot straps.

Few stone walls will be built in the future except on road or line fences or on unusually rocky farms. The strong point that they will last forever, is really the most serious objection to them. In many places where land is growing in value, stone walls are being taken down, and the ground they occupied turned into cultivated fields, besides destroying the thistles that they almost invariably harbour. Stone fences, though apparently cheap, acquire such an amount of labour, as to make them as dear as any. The great bulk now standing was laid when labour was much less expensive than at present. When stone walls become shaken by frost, as most always happens in northern latitudes, it usually requires more expense to relay them than was given for their original construction. Hence they are generally neglected, and their tumble-down condition is often the most serious drawback to the neat appearance of the farm, as they are themselves an obstacle to the best style of modern farming.—*The American Cultivator.*

THE GOOD OF CLOVER.

J. M. McCullough concludes a paper on clover, in the *Iowa Homestead*, with the following:

"If possible, clover should precede and follow every crop. Every uncultivated field and all unoccupied land should rest in clover; and the wealth of the country would be improved if the wild grasses and weeds were forced to give way to clover, for we know that noxious gases and vapours are continually rising from the earth. Some of them are from decaying vegetable or animal matter, and some of them are miasma. All are offensive to the smell, and injurious to the health of man. Clover, by means of its chemical powers, not only absorbs these gases and feeds upon them, but freely gives out oxygen, which unites with them, and oxydizes or destroys them, and in this way cleanses the tainted air. Because of this salutary effect of growing clover upon the air, we say of people who live in affluence and luxury, 'They live in clover.'"

HOW A PASTURE IS MADE.

In Great Britain, Holland, and in some of the best dairy districts in this country, land is selected for a pasture as it is for any particular crop. Regard is paid to its adaptability to produce a large amount of fine rich grasses. The soil or sod is prepared to receive the seed, which is selected with special reference to the production of grass to be eaten while it is in its green state. Great pains are taken to render the soil as productive as possible. Water is supplied or drained off as the wants of the land require. Weeds and bushes are exterminated or kept in subjection. Fertilizers are applied as they are to land devoted to cultivated crops. Loose soils are rendered more compact by the use of the roller, and very heavy soils are loosened by the employment of the harrow or scarifier. Most farmers in this country, however, neglect all these things. Land is not selected for a pasture. If it is too rocky,

broken, or difficult to cultivate; if it is too wet or too dry to produce good crops of corn, grain, potatoes or roots, it is devoted to pasturage. Land is selected for other purposes, but the land for pasturage is what was rejected as unsuited for any other use. Sometimes a piece of land originally productive is devoted to pasture purposes. If this is the case it is generally after it "has been cropped to death." It is first planted to corn for several years, then sown to grain for a period equally long, and then laid down to grass suited for mowing purposes. After the crop of grass becomes so light that it scarcely pays for the work of cutting, the farmer concludes that the only thing he can do with the land is to devote it to supporting stock during the summer when he expects to make the most out of them. There are no evidences of beneficent design in most of the pastures in this country. They are the work of chance or neglect.—*Times.*

SELL WHAT YOU CAN.

Farmers should look over their stock at this season of the year, and not keep stock all winter to be fed and housed at a considerable cost, only to find when spring comes that it is worth no more, and perhaps less, than it was in the fall. This rule applies not only to cattle and sheep, but to poultry. Moreover, the principle may be applied to crops. Where a reasonable profit can be obtained by selling the crops of the fields and orchards in the fall, it is better to sell them than to hold for higher prices. There is always a risk in keeping, for prices may not rise, and the crops kept may be badly affected by atmosphere or other causes not considered. So far as live stock is concerned, it is pretty certain that next spring will see lower prices than at present prevail. Meat is still very dear, in spite of the glowing crop reports from all parts of the land; but as the people begin to realize the extent of the crops they will clamour for lower prices, and a decline must eventually come. Money realized for stock or crops now, and deposited safely, will draw interest, and can neither die nor decay, whereas the live stock may do the one or the crops the other.

The wise and well-to-do farmer is not he who has a great surplus of stock or crops on hand. Success is as much due to selling at the right time as in buying at the right price. Reasonable profits and prompt returns should be the rule of the farmer, who, just as surely as a merchant, will find it well not to keep any kind of salable material too long on hand.

DESTROYING WEEDS.

I have never found any difficulty in covering any vegetable growth, with the different ploughs I have used in the past forty years, and I have farmed on both light and heavy soils. Any of the newer chilled cast-iron ploughs I think may be made to answer. I am now using the Wiard. If the growth is short, any good plough will turn it under; if it is tall, a heavy chain or weed-hook will do it as well. I plough under clover and rye when it is two or three feet high with the aid of a log-chain attached to the plough, so that not a vestige of any green thing is seen above ground. If I could not depend on having a perfectly clean surface after ploughing, I would give up farming, for without this thorough result, there would be only a constant and unsuccessful struggle. I have never found the least difficulty in having a thorough fallow when I want one.

It is often denied that perennial weeds can be thus destroyed; but in every case when I have been able to ascertain the facts, it is because the work had been imperfectly performed, or because too long intervals were allowed to elapse between