

and several excursions of farmers from various parts of the province, are chronicled, and the commendatory resolutions passed by these visitors recorded. The golden opinions expressed on these occasions are highly creditable to both officers and students.

The report mentions the following items of progress and improvement for the year:—

"A museum has been opened; large additions have been made to the library; an anemometer has been put up, and observations taken three times a day instead of twice, as formerly; pipes have been laid from the city water-works to the college; and a professor of horticulture has been appointed. We have a nice, cheerful reading-room, and a commodious library. The former is exactly suited to our wants; the latter is not quite large enough. Over 3,000 volumes of choice reading were transferred from the library of the Education Office to the shelves of this institution. Since that time we have been able to boast of a very handsome library—not extensive, but well selected. It now contains 3,639 volumes of reports, herd-books, books of reference, and general reading. We have also forty-two papers and magazines on file in the reading-room."

The amount expended for all purposes during 1881 was \$27,573.62, and the revenue from the farm \$7,384.16, making the net expenditure for the year \$20,189.46. A comparison of salaries paid at the Michigan State Agricultural College with those given at the Ontario Institution shows that the merit of economy, if such it be, is on our side. But, in our view, even the Michigan men are underpaid. There are still many wants, both inside and outside the college, which, it is to be hoped, will in due time be supplied. Of these, the report gives a detailed statement. The Legislature should see that these are attended to without delay. Such an institution ought not to go a-begging for anything likely to increase its efficiency. The copious accounts given by Prof. Brown of his crop-growing and stock-feeding experiments, cannot be briefly summarized in a notice like this. We shall enrich the columns of the RURAL CANADIAN from their treasures of "wit and wisdom." As a sample, we invite the special attention of our readers to the section on "Permanent Pasture," which will be found in the "Field and Farm" department of our present issue.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED.

BURPEE'S FARM ANNUAL.—This is a well-got-up catalogue of garden, farm, and flower seeds; also of "blooded stock," issued by W. Atlee Burpee & Co., Philadelphia, Pa.

FARM TALK.—We are in receipt of a copy of the new work entitled Farm Talk, written by Geo. E. Brackett, of Belfast, Me. It contains 23 chapters and 144 pages, and, as its title implies, is a series of talks on various farming subjects, put in every-day talk style. Every person interested in farming matters will find it very readable. Printed on fine paper, with portrait.

REUBEN WEDGE, of Beverley—lot 12, 7th con.—who is well known for the fine stock he keeps, sold the other day to Archibald Carr, of Kansas City, a span of yearling Clyde fillies for \$350. The fillies weighed just 2,495 lbs., which is a pretty good heft for a pair of yearlings.

SKETCHES OF CANADIAN WILD BIRDS.

BY W. L. KELLS, LISTOWEL, ONT.

THE LARGE BLACK-BIRD.

This species, in its general habits, form, and plumage, closely resembles the crow, but it is, of course, much smaller. It is about fourteen inches in length; its colour is deep black, the neck of the male being of a glossy-green hue. It is migratory and gregarious, moving about before and after the breeding season in flocks, arriving in Ontario in April, and departing again in September. Soon after their arrival in the spring, the older birds separate in pairs, and commence to repair their old nests, or select places for the construction of new ones. When not disturbed, they will occupy the same places year after year.

The places generally selected for nesting purposes are hollows in trees, deserted nests of woodpeckers, among the thick branches of trees, and sometimes in clumps of willows and the tops of low evergreens. Their favourite *habitat* is low swampy lands in the vicinity of settlements, and along the margins of creeks and rivers near towns and villages, for they do not penetrate into the woods, but, on the contrary, seem to delight in the neighbourhood of cultivated fields and human habitations. The nest of the blackbird is formed of weeds, vines, grass, wool and horse-hair, cemented with mud, and lined with fine dry grass and strawberry vines. The eggs, four to six in number, are of a blue colour spotted with blackish-brown, and unless the first nest is destroyed, it does not breed more than once in the season. While incubation, which lasts two weeks, is being performed by the female, the male bird becomes very fierce and warlike, attacking every other bird that appears in the vicinity of the nest, not fearing to exhibit its pugnacity to the crow and the different species of hawks. In these contests, he often finds allies in the king bird and the oriole. Though jealous of other members of their own species, black-birds like to nest near each other, and two nests may sometimes be seen in the same tree. Should a common enemy intrude, all the black-birds will unite in endeavouring to expel it. In fact, during the breeding season, and until the young are able to fly, the vicinity of the black-bird's home is a scene of daily noise and contention. It is a very affectionate bird, and strongly attached to its nest, eggs, and young. When the latter emerge from the shell, both parents supply them with food, and when they show signs of leaving the nest, the old birds appear in great distress. This species sometimes feeds on various kinds of seeds and grain, but its principal food is insects, worms, crabs, clams, and small fish. It also devours the eggs and young of other birds. In order to procure its aquatic prey, it will often wade into shallow water, and turn over stones. These birds are numerous, and appear to frequent all parts of the country.

THE SONG BLACK-BIRD.

This species is smaller in size than the last mentioned bird, but its shape, plumage and common notes are similar. In its migratory and gregarious habits it also acts like the

larger species, but its *habitat* and its musical notes differ much.

It is the first on our list of song birds, as it begins to sing very early in spring, often before the ice and snow have vanished from the marshy willow-covered bottoms, where it spends the summer season. For about ten weeks it sings during the greater part of the day, but its song is most noticeable in the evening, or early morning hours. Both sexes are endowed with the powers of melody, but the male is the most constant songster. While the female is constructing her nest, and, during incubation, perched on the branches of the budding willows, his pleasing mellow notes are constantly warbled, and are all the more heartsome when contrasted with the monotonous croaking of the frogs in the stagnant waters beneath. Its chief places of resort are the margins of willow-sheltered brooks, low marshy ground, and beaver meadows. Its nest is placed in the thick branches of willows, or in a low balsam, and is composed of stalks of dry weeds, brambles, and mud, and lined with fine dry grass. The eggs, five or six in number, are of a blue colour mottled with dark spots; incubation occupies fourteen days. Both birds assist in providing the young with food, and no creature can show more affection for its young, or evince deeper distress if they are in danger. The great enemies of this species are the blue jay and cuckoo, who, in its absence, or in spite of its efforts to protect it, often discover and destroy its eggs. It feeds occasionally on seeds and berries, but its chief food consists of various kinds of insects which it finds in the vicinity of its *habitat*. It does not appear to nest more than once in the year. In autumn these birds collect in vast flocks, and the noise which they make when several hundred of them are collected among the willows, or in some tree-top, is like the sound of a distant storm. In October they take their final departure for the Southern States, where they remain during the winter season.

THE RED-WING BLACK-BIRD.

The musical powers of this dweller in the marsh claim little attention, but the beautiful vermilion or crimson patch with which the wings of the male are adorned, excites general admiration. In size it is smaller than the song black-bird, but its common notes and general habits are much the same, and in their migratory movements they are often seen in company. It arrives in April at its summer resort, and disappears again in October. When uttering its notes, its wings rise and fall in unison with its voice. This movement of the wings seems to be caused by some internal impulse over which it appears to have little control, but it evidently does not detract from its happiness, for during its summer stay, when flirting among the willows, hovering over the moist grass, or perching on the water-lilies, no bird appears to enjoy life more. With the exception of the mark upon its wings, the general colour of the male is black; that of the female has a dusty hue. Its nest is formed in a low bush, or tuft of marsh grass, and is constructed of dry grass, wool, and other fine materials. The eggs, three or four in number, are light blue, marked with brown blotches.

"The peaches are all right yet," says the *St. Catharines News*.