

Farmers' Clubs.

HOW ORGANIZED AND MANAGED.

The following remarks by Mr. Alexander Hyde to the *Country Gentleman* are deserving of attention:—When men associate for any purpose, the first thing is to draw up articles of agreement—that is, a constitution—by which they consent to be governed. In case of a farmers' club, these articles should state, simply and concisely, the object of the association, its officers, and a few rules—the fewer the better—for the guidance of its affairs. The constitution of an animal is an important and complicated matter. Life and energy are dependent upon it. Not so in an association. The life of a club depends upon its members, and its vitality is measured, not by the length of its constitution, but by their ability and zeal. A long and complicated constitution, going into all the petty details of club management, is nothing but a botheration. It is a positive hindrance to progress and success. When farmers associate for mutual benefit, it is not expected that party, or ism, or personal condition will put in an appearance, and they want a constitution, which, while holding them together, is so elastic as to give free play to thought and action.

The officers should be few. A president, secretary and treasurer are quite sufficient, and these should constitute the executive, and have the general management of affairs. The more responsibility is divided, the less it presses upon the individual. If the president is absent at any meeting, his place can be supplied, *pro tem.*, by nomination. The government of one man is the best government, provided the monarch is capable and faithful. If there are no vice-presidents, the president feels that he must be on hand at each meeting, and if the head is punctually present, the body is likely to be there. It does not require more than half a dozen men to give success to a club. If these—three officers and three privates—make it a matter of duty to be present at every regular muster, and come armed and equipped with the ammunition of fact and thought, the club will conquer a success, and no mistake; it will make an impression on the agriculture and social culture of the community in which it is located. There is great power in an oligarchy, but these few must work with a will.

Officers should be elected annually. Some clubs elect monthly, and others quarterly, but these frequent elections occupy valuable time, and what is more, cheapen the office. There is little dignity and less honor in an office which holds only for a month. If the president is elected for a year, he feels more responsibility than when his term expires with the old moon. I have heard many a president-elect say:—"Well, I shall try not to have the club run down this year." It is a maxim in politics that the office should seek the man, and not the man the office, but in a club it is desirable that the office should be considered so honorable as at least to be gratefully received by every member who may be thought worthy of it. At the same time the presidency should not be continuous in one person. If there is honor and advantage in the position, it is right that others should share, and if there is responsibility and labor, certainly these should be distributed. A society run by one man continuously is apt to get in the ruts and require a good deal of "blowing" to make it run well. We might specify a noted agricultural society as an example of this, but the principle is obvious without examples.

MEETINGS OF THE CLUB.

As to the frequency of the meetings of a club, no general rule can be laid down adapted to all localities. If other social gatherings are not abundant, it may be well to hold the club meeting each week during the winter, and once a month in the summer. It is desirable that they should be held so often as not to be forgotten, and not so frequently as to be a tax on the time of members. The club with which I am connected, and which has been in successful operation for nearly a score of years, meets once a fortnight from October to April, and as occasion may demand, at other times.

A more important matter is the place of meeting, whether at the houses of members, or at some fixed and convenient place. Our club has tried both

ways, and we are satisfied that the latter is the better method. If the meetings are held at private houses they are apt to become too social and festival in their character, the refreshments occupy too much time, and as the hostess is ambitious to do as well as her neighbors, the festivities finally become burdensome. Besides, some members are so situated that they cannot well entertain the club, and then feel delicately about partaking of hospitality and not reciprocating it; and so fall out of the society. It is more democratic, and on the whole more profitable, that the regular meetings should be held in some central place, and if any member desires a more social gathering, let him invite the club to an extra meeting at his house. In these extra meetings the ladies are always expected to be present—for we thoroughly believe in the co-education of the sexes—and some subject should be selected for discussion in which they feel a special interest. At other times some questions may be before the club, to a free discussion of which the presence of ladies would be a hindrance.

In the busy season of summer the meetings may be wholly intermitted, or held occasionally as field meetings or picnics on some farm for the inspection of crops and stock, and a good time generally. These field meetings of farmers take the place of what the gentry call lawn parties, and can be made occasions of great enjoyment and profit, not only socially, but agriculturally. There is nothing like object-teaching to impress ideas on the mind, and when we visit a neighbor who has good Durhams or Jerseys, South-Downs or Cotswolds, Yorkshires or Suffolks, a good strawberry-bed, or a fine crop of any sort, the sight of the eyes affects the mind more than much talk. The effect is stimulating both to the host and his guests. A slovenly farmer never invites his neighbors to inspect his premises, and if any sloven comes to a field meeting, he goes home a convert to thorough farming.

One other little point in club management, and it is not so little either. Let no sharp personalities or rough behavior disturb the peace and propriety of the meetings. Farmers have sometimes been sneeringly called "men in the the rough," "cowhide gentry," and other similar appellations. They are as gentle at heart as any other class of men, though sometimes a little rough in speech and manners. The club is the place to show that they can be gentlemen.

Pickly Comfrey—Failure and Success.

Having been the first in this country to describe and figure prickly comfrey, we should have been glad to record its complete success. Our first knowledge of failure came from our own experience. As already stated, the plant grew and reproduced abundantly, but the cows would not eat it at all, and the horses, which accepted it at first, refused it after they had been once or twice at pasture. Similar complaints came from others, while some correspondents wrote of it in high terms. The case seems to stand at present thus: The plant, so far as heard from, is hardy, produces abundantly, starts early in spring, and soon gives a cutting, withstands the droughts, and is not injured by moderate frosts, but gives fresh feed quite late in the season. On the other hand, animals, in the case of cows, probably the majority, will not eat it, but by taking a little pains to make them acquainted with it, they soon acquire a taste for, and consume it readily, and it appears to be a nutritious food. The question seems to be: are its good qualities sufficiently marked to make it worth while to be at the trouble of teaching animals to eat it? As an aid to a decision we give the experience of two correspondents, both of whom at first met with failure:—

Mr. Frank Spencer, Oakland county, Michigan, some two months ago wrote complaining of the Comfrey as a humbug; he has since written that he has decided too hastily, "having had better experience since then." At first, not having an abundance, he would "occasionally place a handful of leaves on the ground in the yard, the cows would drag it around, the pigs eating it all (as I supposed); but since it got more plentiful, I one evening placed a good armful on a high platform, where the cows could reach it, but the pigs could not. The first night I could not see that any had been eaten, but it was dragged about the yard; the next evening another armful was given, and nearly all eaten. The third night another lot was eaten entirely; since then we have been feeding regularly, each evening, about 50 lbs. per cow, the cows being in pasture during the day."

Mr. G. A. Wilcox, Gasport, N. Y., experimented with a quarter of an acre, and while the plants were a fine sight none of his animals, save pigs, would eat it. Being determined to ascertain whether the plant was an-out-and-out humbug, or if it were not the strangeness of appearance and smell that caused them to refuse it, Mr. W. went systematically to work, and met with most gratifying success. As there are no doubt others who have the plant and cannot utilize it, we give Mr. W.'s method:—

"To teach stock to eat it they should be confined, and after they have fasted over night, give them the comfrey prepared as follows: Run some leaves through a cutting machine, or cut them up with a butcher-knife; wet the cut leaves and mix bran or meal and a little salt with them; feed this, and when it is eaten, give hay, then again some of the comfrey and so on, but gradually increase the comfrey and decrease the ground feed and hay. In three or four days comfrey may be fed exclusively, and stock will become more fond of it daily. Cows will take to it readily in the spring before going to grass; when they once acquire a taste for it they do not forget it. It will improve the yield and flavor of milk very much. Comfrey and water will grow pigs fast. Sheep will fill themselves so full that they look bloated, but not the first time it is offered to them. I have 2,000 plants in a ravine, fenced in; they were making a rapid growth, and when they were three months old the cattle broke in, and before they were discovered had eaten every leaf and spear; as they left good pasture for this it does not look much like forcing."

Mr. Wilcox sends us testimonials from the President of the Niagara County Farmer's Club, and other citizens, to the effect that they selected three plants of comfrey in his field, cut the tops, and weighed them; on the 1st of July following they cut the same plants again; total amount of the two cuttings 61½ lbs. They also testify to the readiness with which it was eaten by his animals. At this rate the yield up to July 1st was more than 49 tons of green fodder to the acre.

Mr. Ashburner, of Va., writes that the leaves should be treated in the same manner as clover; but that, if very succulent, they will take a few hours longer to cure. He suggests sprinkling a little salt over it when stacking the cured leaves.—[American Agriculturist.

Straw Culture of Potatoes.

We made an experiment this year, trying to "kill two birds with one stone." The baby's nut grove was a mass of tough sod and grass. It was a big job to spade it all over and keep it clean. The young trees needed to have the grass subdued, and we wanted to get rid of so much manual labor. An old mow of straw had been a refuge for rats long enough, so putting this and that together, we got an idea to plant potatoes on the grass and cover them with straw. The potatoes were cut into small pieces and dropped right into the grass about a foot apart. The straw was carted out and spread all over the patch as near six inches deep as we could get. In due time the potatoes came up and rapidly spread out until the vines covered the surface. Here and there a tuft of grass would show itself early in the season, but that spot was easily hoed by placing on it a small forkful of new straw. A few thistles forced themselves up through the straw, and they were pulled up by the roots. This was all the care the crop had, except to sprinkle it twice with Paris-green. We had the nicest crop of potatoes in the neighborhood. It was fun to rake off the straw and uncover the little bunches of potatoes all in a heap and as clean as if washed. The sod is all dead and the ground is as clean as if it had been summer-fallowed. We used mostly oat straw, but on a portion buckwheat straw was put. The potatoes came up equally well through both and yielded as well under one as the other. We shall raise another crop with straw culture on the same ground next year, but it will not require more than half the thickness of straw, as the grass is all dead. Rye straw is the best, and can be evenly distributed. It will pack down more readily than oat, and need not be placed so thickly. We have several stubborn places around the grounds we shall treat with potatoes and straw. The quince orchard is very weedy and grassy, and this treatment will cure both effectually. We shall surely try it. It is the best purgative we know of.—[F. D. Curtis, N. Y. Tribune.