

The Field.

"Eight Dollars an Acre."

A WRITER in the June number of the *American Journal of Horticulture*.—a periodical, by the way, of great excellence,—mentions the case of a Vermonter who, reporting his management of his farm of 125 acres, finds a balance for profit of \$732.68 on the year's operations, and seems quite content in view of the result, complacently remarking: "This, I think, is better than money at six per cent., and answers the question as to whether farming is profitable." Allowing for the woodland, this is about eight dollars an acre. This case is used to point a contrast between the said Vermont farmer and the New Jersey market gardeners, one of whom, a fair average specimen, is reported to have made \$711.50 from less than four acres of extremely light land, or within a trifle of the gain upon thirty times the same number of acres devoted to grass and grain, in the case first instanced. Of course, near access to a market like New York or Philadelphia goes far to explain the difference, for the four acres of "truck" side by side with the farm crops on some White Mountain slope, would have been worth little more than the average profit per acre of the farm. Our object in referring to the Vermont example is to make it the occasion of putting three questions, which we beg our readers attentively and seriously to ponder.

1. How many farmers know what they make per acre annually? In other words, how many farmers are there who keep a set of accounts? We fear there are very few who have data on which to frame an answer to the enquiry, "what are your profits per acre?" Beyond vague general impressions on the subject scarcely any can go. When the crops are short they have an indefinite idea that they are not doing much and when there is an abundant harvest they have a similarly indefinite idea that they are not doing so very badly; but, generally speaking, farmers "shoot in the dark," and "go it blind." Now, surely, this is discredit and undesirable. Why should a large farm be carried on in a way that would be disgraceful in connection with a little huckster's business? No commercial concern could be reasonably expected to prosper, if carried on after the fashion on which too many farms are conducted. Confusion and loss would be the sure result. We conjure all and sundry to keep note of expenditure and income, so as to know how much per acre they are making year by year.

2. Is there good reason to think that farmers generally, take one year with another, clear "eight dollars per acre?" We apprehend that a negative reply must be given to this question. There are, doubtless, those who are making far more than the figure above mentioned, assuredly there are those who make much less, while we fear the majority cannot flatter themselves that they reach the average named. We know a better-than-ordinary farmer, cultivating over a hundred acres, who stoutly maintains that, taking one year with another, he is not so well off as a book keeper or salesman who has a salary of six hundred dollars a year, and who would be glad to sell his farm, and take a situation of the kind just named. We have no objection to be contradicted, and to stand corrected by "stubborn facts,"—indeed, we should rather like it than otherwise—but our present conviction is, that it is by no means the majority of our farmers who make a yearly profit of "eight dollars an acre."

3. We have yet another enquiry to put, and it is this, ought a nineteenth century farmer to be contented to make only "eight dollars an acre?" We answer, decidedly, *very decidedly*, no! That sum implies less than twenty bushels of wheat per acre; less than three hundred bushels of turnips per acre; not much more than a ton of hay per acre. A good system of rotation, a well-balanced quantity of stock and produce, liberal manuring, good tillage, a wise

mixed husbandry, ought to accomplish more than this. Capital wisely invested, and labour well directed, should assuredly yield a better return. Such a balance sheet can hardly be said to exhibit successful farming. It does not satisfactorily meet the question, "Is farming profitable?" Contentment is a virtue only when we are doing our best. Let every effort be made to bring out the innate capabilities of the soil, and the recompense is certain. To till a smaller quantity of land, and do it better, would be the part of wisdom with many. Our counsel to every Canadian farmer is this: Keep exact accounts, work up your land to the highest point of fertility practicable, and set for yourself a higher mark than "Eight dollars an acre."

Clover versus Fallow.

To the Editor of THE CANADA FARMER.

STR,—More than four months having passed away since you published my remarks on the subject of the Canada Thistle, and of an inexpensive way of getting rid of them, I had concluded that the thistle-growers of Canada saw no reason to trouble themselves further about it, but your number for May 15th has agreeably disappointed me. My outspoken, but friendly opponent, Peter Shisler, has done his best, in reviewing my letter, published in the first two numbers of this year's issue, to support a plan which I think thoroughly detrimental to the farmers' interest, and as such seriously affecting the welfare of the whole Province. We, as a family, are constantly in the habit of reading your paper, which has become quite a household necessity, and sometimes there is a little grumbling that the *two weeks* seem a long time, and sometimes I have heard remarks as follows: "Well, now, that is well worth knowing," "Yes, that is worth the year's subscription." But there are articles now and then make their appearance which cannot fail to puzzle, the opinions expressed being nearly as opposite as the poles. Last year a writer appeared on the stage, recommending his *eighty* bushels of potatoes to the acre, for seed, and this curiosity excited no reply. In your April number you quote from a States paper a plan requiring (as I understand it) about eight bushels an acre, which is a considerable difference. These extremes, while they puzzle, set men thinking, and from thinking; to experimenting for themselves, and then they are on the right track, and will not fail in the end to benefit themselves. The question as to which is the best mode of subjugating the thistle (as subjugated they must be) is a subject fit for the philanthropist, as well as the philosopher, and whoever shall accomplish the task will be entitled to the grateful acknowledgments of the people of the Province. In submitting this for your consideration, (as a rejoinder to Peter Shisler's last letter, published in the CANADA FARMER, 15th May) you will please remember that my remarks applied to the two writers, (and the only two of the year) namely, the steam-plough advocate and to P. S. The first has remained silent, and the second has come out square on the mystic fallow as the great remedy for the great evil.

I quite agree with the substance of the first paragraph of the letter of P. S., namely, "The theory or practice that cannot stand a scrutinizing investigation should go down." He also informs us that "too many false systems and humbugs have been imposed on the farmer causing him to spend time and money to no purpose," and yet he only mentions one, namely, 'cutting (thistles) in the moon.' In this paragraph P. S. has dipped his pen in vinegar, and approved of a mild mixture of *inveective*, in defence of the misguided and abused farmer.

In the second place, he becomes jubilant, if not eloquent, in declaring "that my arguments show most conclusively, and ought to convince the most sceptical, that his method is the right one." I have heard that Irishmen are allowed to speak three times, Scotchmen twice, but an Englishman is expected to say what he means. I had no idea that his "method

as set forth in his November letter," and what I suggested, were the same. If "method" made summer-fallowing superior to everything else, I entirely repudiate the utility of the plan, while neither himself, nor the advocate of steam ploughs, even so much as hinted at the smothering-out system. Therefore I must contend there is as much difference between the two methods as there is between the two methods used by the dog and cat in catching a mouse. The canine goes to work in a most resolute and laborious manner, and sometimes will continue for days successively, using the different tools at his command, such as teeth and claws, but more frequently gives up the hard job as a bad case, and so fails in his undertaking. The feline goes about the business just the very opposite of the canine, and, by waiting only a short time, the prey comes out from sheer necessity, and the feline pounces on it without spending any labour at all. I hope, by being allowed to speak twice, I shall be better understood.

I think my system might commend itself to all, on the score of economy at least, so far as to induce a trial, because, no one can lose by it; and, permit me to say, no one will fail in accomplishing the object sought by the trial. But I fail to see anything new in P. S.'s "method" of fallowing, as set forth in his November letter; and why is it now put forth as a panacea for the evil? The simple routine of farmers in this locality for the past thirty or forty years (as I learn) is to sow peas, wheat, oats, (and of late years) barley, seed with timothy or a mixture of clover and grass; and every year it is held essential to good farming to cultivate a fallow. This routine does not differ, as I can see, from the "method" set forth by P. S. in the November letter. Then in favour of the plan recommended by myself are the aged and grey-headed, while the disastrous consequences of careless or bad farming would afford additional evidence on my side. I have seen the seed grain that was to precede the timothy crop mixed with not less than from twenty-five to one hundred thistle-heads, and plenty there are who seem so thoroughly ignorant about thistle-seeds growing, and consequently give themselves no concern about the mixture of thistle-heads with such seed grain. Such parties may, perhaps, fortify themselves in this careless practice by quoting our friend's dictum, that "not one in a million of thistle seeds ever grows." This class of farmers are "neither few nor far between." They have long since cut down their last stick of timber, and have not another fresh field to break up; their whole farms are being "run out," and the "plaguey" thistles are overrunning everything. As a very general rule, we see such farmers' stocks thrust out on the highways, "to pick about and get a little" of what they can find even before the snow is gone, because, we are told, "hay runs short, straw is run out (too much has been sold, perhaps), and roots didn't grow any last year, or it pays better to sell than to feed them." Yet, talk to these men about doing away with the fallow system, and you touch them in a tender place. If any were to ask me, what they could do with their land without fallowing, my answer would be, give it to some one (and four dollars per acre with it) to take it off your hands for the year, who would use it properly, rather than abuse it yourself by cultivating a fallow. Or, secondly, why not have a field of a clover lay to plough down after the first or second crop? or, thirdly, as a last and desperate recourse, why not have ten acres of roots? If it produced only two hundred tons it would pay better than cultivating a fallow; it would furnish abundance of food for their half-starved cows in the spring, and do away with the necessity of selling their *baby* calves at from twelve to twenty days old. They might then feed and fatten them to the age of eight or ten weeks, when the meat would have passed a transition state to something wholesome and nutritious. Then one-fourth of the calves that are now slaughtered would suffice, and the farmer might raise not less than four times the stock that he now does, and the Province of Ontario might become a great emporium either for live or dead stock; its soil and sunny seasons being so pre-eminently suited for the growth of all the roots, as well as cereals, that any farming community can need or wish for. The practice of growing roots instead of cultivating fallows would enable the farmer of one hundred acres to keep an extra man and boy, and (in many cases