

## HOME AND FARM.

The care of sheep exerts an important influence upon the quantity and quality of wool. The influence upon quantity has only been determined within limits. It is much easier to see the defects in quality. The attention of shepherds has not been called to this matter often enough, although it lowers the price of their wool. The way wool is purchased in many parts of the country rather sets a premium on carelessness.

Undoubtedly that animal produces the most and best wool that is in the most perfect health. No one will deny this. Within certain limits sickness can not be said to affect seriously the quantity of wool. A chronic disease may and usually will reduce the total yield considerably. But those slight attacks of colds, fevers, etc., exert no apparent influence on the yield.

Not so, however, with their effect upon the quality of the wool. Every cold however slight is registered indelibly on every fibre. The wool naturally grows a certain size when the sheep is well, but when anything is wrong it becomes weaker and of a smaller diameter. No matter whether the illness was a chill simply, or a severe sickness, it will leave its mark. If the animal is only sick for a short time the change can scarcely be detected by the eye, but if the fibre is pulled slightly it will give way at that point long before it will anywhere else. The whole fleece may often be parted in this way, and this part would show to where the wool had grown when the animal was taken sick. If the sheep were sick constantly the fibre would have an even strength throughout, but would in most cases be inferior to the fibre when in good health.

The manufacturer wishes the fibre not only as long as he can get it, but as strong as possible. When there is a weak point in the fibre it often renders it unfit for any but the cheapest goods. A poorer fibre but even in strength throughout, is much to be preferred to a finer one with weak spots in it.

To produce the best wool, the sheep should be kept in good health, not too fat, nor too lean. But especially they should not be exposed to storms nor sudden changes of weather. Every effort should be made to keep them under as favorable conditions as possible. Rains, cold rains especially, should be avoided. The large fleeces of the sheep absorb an immense amount of water, and this is held there a long time after the storm is over. In order to appreciate the injurious effects of this it is only necessary to realize what it means and how it would be if any other of our domestic animals had to endure it. Hence, instead of leaving the sheep out in all kinds of weather, and to shift for itself, it is economy to give good housing and proper care.

## FENCE POSTS—THEIR DECAY AND PRESERVATION.

No subject is so difficult for the average farmer to solve as that of cheap durable permanent fences, of all those outside of his regular work in connection with his crops. They are expensive and belong entirely to his expense account. They bring in no income but annually or semi-annually require attention and repairs. The less there are of them upon the farm the better, for not only are they a constant source of expense, as has been mentioned, but they occupy valuable land, are in the way in tillage operations, and detract from the beauty of the landscape where there is any.

Where stock are pastured some such permanent fences seem necessary, but they should be few. Most of the fences upon the farm should be temporary, easily moved and set up, and of course durable and effectual. As long as the law remains as it is, so long as farmers have to fence against other people's stock and not simply to keep their own in, so long will it be necessary in most neighborhoods to have a permanent fence around the farm.

Most of the permanent fences require posts. One of the weak points of all these fences is that the posts will rot. This is due to the growth of minute plants in them. Strange as it may seem it is nevertheless true, that the universal cause of the decay of these posts is the growth of these little plants, so small that the highest power of the microscope is required to distinguish their parts. They belong to the fungi. It is to this class of plants that smut, rust and a host of other injurious diseases appertain. Some of them feed on the living, while others obtain their food from the dead plants. Others again get all they require from the air.

In order to grow, there are certain conditions which these plants must fulfil. The most important of these are that the material on which they feed shall be moist and not too cold. They do not grow during the winter, but as soon as warm weather comes on, they begin their work and do not cease as long as a proper amount of moisture remains in the material.

It must not be inferred that these plants are altogether injurious. A plant that is injurious in one situation, or under certain conditions, may be beneficial in other circumstances. This is the case with these fungi. They are very valuable in hastening the decay of stumps, roots, old logs, etc., but when they come to attacking posts in their indiscriminate manner, they become a nuisance.

If any one notices carefully, he will see that the post begins to rot from a few inches above to a few inches below the ground. That invariably it commences here and extends both ways, but that most of its work is under the ground. That at times the post may be rotted completely off, even with or just under the surface of the ground. That when old sticks are placed just below the surface they readily decay, but when placed deeper they will last a long time. If these facts are taken into consideration along with the remarks in a previous paragraph on the conditions most favorable for the growth of these plants, it will be seen that these conditions are best supplied just at the surface of the ground. If the decay can be stopped at this point the post can be preserved indefinitely.

Three methods present themselves by which this may be accomplished:

The first is to remove all moisture either by drains or by raising a ridge, a "dike", and placing the posts on it. Both these methods are practiced throughout the country, and are valuable as far as they go, but the soil will always retain enough moisture to supply those plants for some considerable time so that, while they tend to obviate, they do not entirely remedy, the difficulty. The second method is by excluding the water from the post at this point. This may be accomplished by thoroughly oiling the *dry* posts for six inches above and six below the surface of the earth when they are set. This method is effectual, and when combined with the preceding it will preserve ordinarily sound posts a life time. Material may also be used for posts in this way that would not be suitable ordinarily. It is to be observed that the oil is not necessarily applied to the top nor bottom of the posts, for if properly made they do not usually need it. They should be so made that there are no holes, cracks nor knots for water to settle in. If these occur it will be necessary to remove them as far as possible and then oil the posts thoroughly. The third method is by the use of some substance that will kill the plants which cause the trouble. This is only partially successful at the best.

Where the ground is stony, a very good way to get rid of the stone, and at the same time to place the posts in the very best possible condition to be preserved, is to dig a trench deeper than it is proposed to set the posts. Lay a drain, then fill the trench with the stones and set the posts at the same time in the trench of stones. As no earth is in contact with them to retain the moisture, they will last a long time.

## JOHN CHALMERS MORTON.

John Chalmers Morton was born in the year 1821, in Gloucestershire, Eng. He was the son of John Morton and his mother was the sister of the celebrated Dr. Chalmers. He was educated at the Murchiston Castle School, Edinburgh, and received instruction in agriculture under Prof. Law. At nineteen, he was called home to superintend the Whitfield Model farm, which he did for the next four years. In 1844, the *Agricultural Gazette* was established and he was chosen editor. This position he occupied during the remainder of his life. He died very suddenly May 3rd, 1888. For the above facts we are indebted to the *Agricultural Gazette*.

Besides editing the *Gazette*, he also collected and edited the "*Encyclopedia of Agriculture*," and was the actual editor of the *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society*. It would be impossible in this short space, however, to enumerate all the useful works in which he engaged.

He will be best known as editor of the *Gazette*, to every reader of which he has endeared himself by the strongest ties. He seemed a personal friend to every one, and all looked to him for encouragement in their work. "It will all come right" were the words most often on his lips. How often he had to use them in these times of depression in agricultural matters in England. They fitly represent his nature, which was always hopeful. Agriculture has suffered a serious loss in his death.

## NOTES.

There is no time so well adapted for the killing of weeds as when they are small. If the small weeds are killed there will be no large ones to give trouble. This is too often lost sight of, and the weeds are allowed to grow until they shade the ground and choke the growing crop, then all hands turn in and eradicate them. What is the consequence? It takes ten times as long to remove them as when they were small. They have also done a serious injury to the crop in that they have shaded the ground and the growing stems, and used plant food that was needed by the crop.

Plan to do as much weeding by horse power, and as little by hand labor, as possible. The cultivator will remove weeds a great deal cheaper than the hoe. A bright boy with a horse and cultivator will remove more weeds in a day than ten men with hoes. Will it not pay that farmer who has none, to get a cultivator instead of hiring men to hoe?

The following was seen lately: A man leading a horse, the horse drawing the plow and another man holding this. Here is economy for you! Two men and one horse to plow one acre per day at the outside, and probably not that. How much better would it have been to have had two horses and one man and have plowed two acres that day! But if it had been mentioned to these men, they would have said that they could not afford it. But could they really afford to do as they were doing? The account would stand about this way:—

For plowing two acres.

Two men two days at one dollar per day.....\$4 00  
One horse for two days at 75 cts per day..... 1 50

Total \$5 50

The other account would stand:

One man one day at one dollar per day.....\$1 00  
Two horses one day at 75 cents per day..... 1 50

Total \$2 50

Or, in other words, it would cost over twice as much to plow the two acres in the one case as in the other. A rich man could not afford this, yet a comparatively poor man who owned only a few acres was trying it. That he complains that farming don't pay. Such farming does not.

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