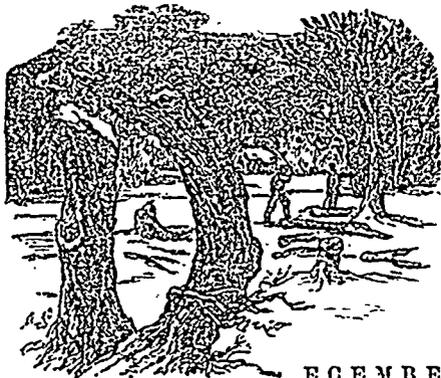


THE CANADIAN FARMER

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The Month.



D E C E M B E R

brings the indubitable winter, as surely as July does the summer. Whatever dreamy expectations we may have had of possible Indian summer, vanish now. Pleasant weather indeed we may have, but it will be pleasant wintry weather, with perhaps now and then a day so fine and warm that it seems to have lost its proper place in the year. Clear, bracing, but chilly, air will quicken the pulse, and send the blood coursing through the veins with unusual vigour. The snow will wrap the earth in its white coverlet, and all things will yield to the sleep of winter, and to the reign of the frost king.

The following are the mean temperatures for December:—

Stratford	22°65'
Hamilton	25°06'
Barrie	23°04'
Toronto	25°06'
Bellefleur	22°85'
Montreal	24°12'
Quebec	21°20'
St. John, N. B.	25°03'
Halifax	28°00'

We are accustomed to think and speak of winter as a season of comparative rest and leisure for the farmer. But how far that is true and applicable to individual cases, depends on a variety of circumstances. Winter affords but little respite to the man who has a large area of wild land to clear, or a numerous herd of cattle to feed. These, however, are exceptional cases, and most farmers, when winter fairly sets in, feel that they are less driven than at any other period of the year. But while "broken weather," as it is often termed, lasts, every one has enough to do. That charming writer on rural affairs, "Iko Marvel," says: "Even into December the work of country improvements may go safely forward; the clearing of new land, the thinning of over-crowded forest growth, the building of walls, the construction of walks and roads,—for these, severally, or together, no better time can be found than that which immediately precedes the locking frosts of winter. And when the dead lock is fairly established,—so far as

treatment of the land goes,—the open sunny weather of December still invites us many a day out of doors. If we have rocks to move, they glide easily over a frosted and stiffened turf, the brambles and waste growth of outlying pastures cut easiest when the earth is locked unyieldingly about their stems, the woods, despoiled of their leaves, give free insight and outlook to their most sequestered nooks." These are but examples of the thousand and one things that may be done just at the setting in of winter, and there are few so beforehand with their work as not to be caught by the "dead lock" with some needful preparations or unfinished undertakings that must needs be postponed until another year. Most people, in regard to work, are like children in respect to tomping food, too greedy. The child's eye is proverbially larger than his stomach, and even so the farmer's eye readily takes in more work than his hand can accomplish. Indeed, generally speaking, plans and achievements too often correspond very poorly. "To will is ours, but not to execute." Happy are those on whom winter does not shut down with a host of half-accomplished schemes of preparation and improvement!

The hints given last month, as to the care of stock, are just as applicable this month, and will become more so as the temperatures go down into mid-winter. In fact, the care of his animals may be put down first on the list of the farmer's winter duties. Whatever arrangement or expedient can be contrived to make this duty easier, and secure its being faithfully performed, should by no means be neglected. Convenience of access to food, well-hinged and securely fastened doors; ventilation without currents of cold air from unstopped cracks and openings; ready means of clearing out manure, are things that should by all means be secured. Manure-making is also a December as well as November job—indeed, it is a job for all the year round. The great want of every farm in the land is more manure, and no opportunity of making it should be let slip. One valuable material for manure-making can on some farms be better got at and hauled in the winter time than at any other season, namely, swamp muck. Any farmer who is fortunate enough to be within a mile or two of any ashery, would find it pay to haul as much as possible of the leached ashes on to his land, in good sleighing. It is heavy material, and far more of it can be hauled in a sleigh, when the winter roads are at their best, than on a waggon, however good the wheeling may be.

Wood-cutting and hauling is another item of winter work on the farm. The year's supply for the family should be thought of now. To burn green wood, and to bring it load by load from the bush as required, are among some of the most disgraceful points of slipshod farming. The wood lot should be prudently managed, and made to last as long as possible. There

are few, if any, parts of the country to which this advice is not applicable, now that the consumption of our forests by increasing population and extending railroads is rendering firewood a valuable market article all over the land. The days of reckless cutting, slashing and burning, it is to be hoped, are over for ever. Lately as some think it, the time is not far distant when we shall find it needful to replant forest trees in localities where but a few years ago there was prodigal waste of timber, while it was abundant. Not only firewood, but fence material, should be got out in winter, for use in early spring, where new fences require to be built, or old ones need repair.

When out-door work cannot be done, in-door jobs may well claim attention. There is what the Irish labourer calls "ridding up," or what Mrs Stowe's "Aunt Chloe" styled "claring up." An air of neatness should characterize the barns and stabling. If there are boys or hired men about, they are apt to display a wonderful faculty for getting things into disorder and out of place. Every now and then the places they haunt will need putting to rights. The law, "a place for everything and everything in its place," will often be more honoured in the breach than in the observance. Nevertheless, every effort should be made to have it obeyed. Farmers who have tools and a shop of some kind, may improve winter leisure by making racks, gates, rollers, drags, and a variety of other articles that will be in request when the busy season comes round again. This, too, is the time for balancing up farm accounts, taking stock of the year, considering the improvements that may be made on past operations, and laying wise plans for the future. The long evenings are favourable for reading, for attending farmers' clubs, for making social visits, and for indulging in home recreation. A moderate amount of time may very properly be given to innocent entertainments by which the spirits are enlivened, and the powers of body and mind freshened for a resumption of the stern business of life. There is no reason why winter should be either a dull or an idle time.

Last, but not least, early winter is the time for renewing subscriptions to Agricultural journals, and making efforts to extend their circulation, and we take the opportunity of urging both these duties on the readers of the CANADIAN FARMER. Prompt renewal of subscriptions is important, that there may be no intermission of its visits to the homes where it is a regular and, we trust, a welcome visitor, while one of the best ways of promoting the advancement of agriculture is to induce as large a number of persons as possible to take a journal whose constant aim is "to improve the soil and the mind." As will be seen by the prospectus which we publish on our last page, a new series will begin on the 1st of January, 1869, when certain changes will be made, which will, we doubt not, be considered as improvements, and help to augment the popularity and usefulness of the CANADIAN FARMER.