CAN BEEF-MAKING PAY.

A sound maxim in farming is to get manure. More manure, more crops, and more crops more stock, and more stock more manure. So that on a good farm well managed, the tendency should be to increased fertility of the soil, by the sinking therein increased capital in the manure annually applied. We must keep stock. The questions then arise, how can we best dispose of it? Shall it be lean or fat, young or old?

These questions require answers differing much under the conditions of the persons making them, as well as the place wherein made. In the peculiar corn growing regions of the Western States, a different answer may be given from what we should expect in our own State, or in the New England States. I purpose, however, to confine the enquiry mainly to our own State; in the outset presuming, however, that where the farm is adapted for the purpose, no business is so uniformly profitable as a well conducted dairy.

The first consideration is, what does it cost to make a pound of beef? In a former number I showed that it had been satisfactorily settled, that it would require, at least, 4½ lbs. of corn meal to make a pound of beef, and it must be fed to the best advantage to do this. It was al o shown that 18 lbs. of good hay would do the same thing, and for the present I shall confine myself to stall-feeding.

The average price of corn in this State is not less than 50 cents for 50 lbs., or a bushel, and $6 per ton for hay. We will allow two tons of hay, or 50 bushels of corn as the product of an acre. An acre of corn will produce, then, 560 lbs. of beef, and an acre of grass, in hay, 222 lbs. The value of the hay would be $12—of the corn $25, so that with hay, it would cost 5 cents and 4 mills per lb., and with corn 4 cents and 4½ mills. But as it would not but be as profitable to feed all hay or all corn, we will feed half hay and half meal, which would make the cost of a pound of beef at 4 cents 9½ mills, or say 5 cents. Allowing a daily consumption equal to the making of 4 lbs. of beef, or rather to the adding of 4 lbs. to the live weight of the animal, the two tons of hay would feed it for 55½ days, and the corn for 140 days. Putting the corn and hay together, and it will furnish feed for two animals for nearly 100 days—about the usual time for stall-feeding.

No allowance has been made in the foregoing for attendance, interest on cost of animal, nor upon the fixtures necessary for its protection—for without warm shelter the quantity of food must be largely increased to produce the required improvement in the animal. Will the manure pay for these items? Let us see. Von Thaler says that it is safe to estimate the dry food and litter as doubled in weight by its transformation into dung, by which is meant the solid as well as the liquid excrements. Assuming that data, we get six tons and a half of manure, which, if applied to half an acre, would give nearly ten ounces to the square foot—a very liberal manuring—and would add to the productive capacity of the land, in the two following crops, at least fifteen bushels of corn, or its equivalent. We get then, for our trouble in feeding, and the use of capital, $7 50, or nearly one cent per pound for the increased live weight. I would be very willing to furnish barn room and all the necessary litter and attendance for the manure made by stall-fed animals, and would even pay the interest on the cost of the animals while feeding.

The actual cost, then, under the most favourable circumstances, of increased weight of stall-fed cattle is five cents per lb., and good animals for feeding, in high condition, can usually be bought about the 1st of December for from three to three and a-half cents per lb., live weight. The sales from the stables are usually made in about three and a-half to four months, or from the 15th of February to the 1st of March—the average being not far from 100 days. During that time 400 lbs. has been added to its live weight at an expense of $20. Supposing the animal when first put up, to weigh 1,200 lbs., costing on an average at 3¼ cents per lb., $40, and at the 100 days the total cost would be $60 for 1,600 lbs. live weight or 3¾ cent per pound.

That these estimates are more or less liable to variation there is no doubt; but it is quite certain that actual experiment would show a cost more likely larger than smaller. To bring it within even these figures will require a skillful managing of the material used, so that none may be wasted, and all made to produce its full measure of increase. Neither too much nor too little must be given. From what is known now in regard to stall-feeding, is it not safe to say, that at least three-quarters of all the farmers who feed, actually lose money, unless the manure be worth much more than the estimate here placed upon it?

But we are told by our Western cousins that they can beat us out of sight in making beef, and that we cannot possibly compete with them, and this idea has induced many to sell their