

year, and consequently associated with the more prominent points and duties of the deeply cherished faith of those early ages. It is true that in a ruder age such observances were too frequently marked by noisy and intemperate gratification, which unhappily has not departed either in form or spirit, from society in these modern days. In the present age, and on this North American continent in particular, the great social want among the masses is steadily recurring periods of leisure and recreation, so essential to the mental, moral and physical health of the countless number of workers in the crowded hive of this needy and busy world. It is only the consciousness of the Divine command, and the expediency, or rather perhaps, the physical necessity of a weekly cessation from daily toil, that the observance and hallowing influences of the Sabbath are perpetuated; a day too frequently recurring for avarice and cupidity, *willingly* to spare from the service of mammon. Manly and healthful sports and pastimes, while expressive of national character are intimately connected with the rational enjoyment and social and moral progress of a people. The frequent periodical fairs and markets of England are to the farmers and commercial men not merely scenes or opportunities for transacting business, but also occasions of friendly greetings and social intercourse. And it is much to be desired, both in a purely business as well as social point of view, that such opportunities should be made available to the people of this country. A beginning in some places has already commenced; and it is gratifying to observe any signs of a change, when the movement is in the right direction.

Although in England, February is more or less distinguished by unmistakable signs of the advent of Spring, in this country it is essentially a winter month, allowing of but little out-of-door occupation, and it is usually attended by heavy snow-storms and severe cold. The domesticated animals require all the attention which the farmer can bestow; warm housing, ample and regular feeding, with strict attention to ventilation and cleanliness, constitute the principal desiderata of this very important and not less interesting department of rural economy. Tusser who farmed and wrote near 300 years ago, observes in his February's husbandry:—

Good provender laboring horses would have,
Good hay and good plenty plough oxen do crave,
To haul out thy muck, and to plough up thy ground,
Or else it may hinder thee many a pound.

Who abuseth his cattle and starves them for meat,
By eating or ploughing his gain is not great;
When he that with labor can use them aright,
Hath gain to his comfort and cattle in plight.

The threshing and marketing of grain forms a principal employment of the farmer at this season; and much mechanical ingenuity has been displayed in constructing machines for separating the grain thoroughly and economically. A really good threshing mill, built on approved mechanical principles is among the most valuable machines of modern agriculture, affording one among many instances that might be happily adduced, of the important aid rendered by mechanical philosophy to the pursuits of the Husbandman. Still in a poetical point of view, we cannot afford wholly to lose the employment of the flail. The appearance and sound of the thresher is peculiarly characteristic of rustic life at this season; and the use of that primitive implement, even among ourselves, may yet be occasionally and economically continued during the inclement months of our protracted winters. Cattle eat more readily newly threshed straw, and by threshing smaller quantities by hand, the chaff and offal may be thoroughly consumed. How expressive are the words of Bloomfield, in his *Farmer's Boy*:—

Though, night approaching, birds for rest prepare,
Still the flail echoes through the frosty air,
Nor stops till deepened shades of darkness come,
Sending at length, the weary laborer home.

Winter has been denominated *the Sleep of Nature*, and its characteristic phenomena well accord with this expressive figure of speech. It is the termination of the past and the hopeful precursor of the future; in fact a sort of transition period, for restoring strength and devising new achievements to be won on the wide field of human thought and enterprise. Nature is now indeed in a state of tranquil repose. Most of the feathered tribe have left us for more genial climes; a profound silence reigns in the woods, and the landscape is enveloped in a pure covering of white. Insects and many animals are close and safe in their winter quarters, in a state of torpidity, and consequently insensible to the cold and pitiless storm raging around. How admirable are the arrangements of the wise and beneficent Creator, all tending to the safety and enjoyment of his innumerable creatures!

"Tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep."

Operates not merely as a passive agent in recruiting strength, mental and physical, after care-worn. The vital organs continue the action of their usual functions, asleep as well as