The Shepherd's Care.

A sheep flock at this season in the hands of a shepherd who enjoys his charge, and has for them suitable shelter and provender, is a source of pleasure to every lover of animal life who comes in contact with it. The spacious yard comfortably littered with straw is the favored quarters when the sheep are given their choice, but in a climate like ours, a shelter is found congenial to their instincts and favorable to their well-doing. It is not well to accustom sheep to a warm house, even at nights, but their pen should be roomy and draft-proof, and have a wide door, open constantly, except in case of storms. The south side is best for the door, and it is the better protected by a porch, and should at least be six feet wide to avoid crowding of the sheep when passing in or out.

Sheep appear to better advantage and do better grouped according to strength and size. By having them thus divided, the older ewes, or young ones that need extra care, can receive a little special attention as they require it. It is often well to divide ewe lambs into even more than two lots—that is, if one has a pure-bred flock. Those desired to be fitted for the shows next autumn cannot be commenced too early in the good way. Their foretops (in the case of the short-wooled breeds) should be cropped early, and not more than lightly trimmed when their fleeces are removed in spring. The remaining lambs may well be divided into two flocks, according to size and strength, in order to be able to do better for those that need it and prevent them from unjust competition at the feed trough. Sheep or lambs that are being fattened for the mutton market need not necessarily have a large outdoor run, although fresh air and exercise will tend to increase the vigor and keep up the appetite. Sheep dipping has become so general that most flocks of any note were dipped in the fall before cold weather set in, and at this season are fairly free of vermin, but flocks not so treated should be examined, and if ticks are found the sheep should be gone over with dip in a watering can, pouring it along the back and down the sides, neck and breast, at intervals of about three inches, dividing the wool with the hands. Instead of dip, Parisian insect powder, or helebore, may be used if one cannot make their house comfortably warm, but if a mild time is chosen there is very little risk in pouring, and the dip helps the growth of the wool and the health of the sheep.

In feeding sheep, a careful man will not allow litter or chaff to fall into the fleece, which often occurs, especially in the neck wool. When pea straw is fed in the yard, the flock may be shut in the house while the straw is being distributed; or, when hay is given in the house, the sheep may be left outside during its distribution, if the racks are not arranged along the feed alley and close in front so as to prevent them getting their heads inside. It is worth considerable effort to have the sheep present a neat appearance.

The practice of going over the flock occasionally with the shears, removing the loose locks about the head, neck and breast, sides, back and hind quarters, is well worth the trouble in the improved appearance of the sheep it gives, and if a buyer happens to call it will add dollars to his appreciation of the flock. It amounts to the difference between being well and poorly dressed. To be a successful shepherd one must enjoy the association of his flock, when he will see all their needs and exert himself to provide them.

FARM.

Can Fertilizers be Profitably Used?

SIR,—In your issue of Jan. 2nd, Mr. J. L., of Grey Co., asks, Can commercial fertilizers be used with profit in growing crops in Ontario? For the information of the readers of your valuable paper I give you my experience in the use of concentrated manures. In the spring of 1897, as an experiment, I bought two tons of fertilizer, paying $30 per ton for it, delivered at my depot. I had a 22-acre field which I wished to seed down, and as I had cropped it for three years previous without any manure, I considered it in very poor condition to seed. On about eighteen acres of this field I sowed by hand 200 pounds of the fertilizer to the acre, leaving three strips of land in different parts of the field without any fertilizer, so that I could form an opinion as to the result of the experiment. One half of the field was sown to barley and the other half to oats. The result surprised me, the fertilized portions of the field taking the lead early in the season, and at harvest time a very marked difference was apparent in favor of the fertilizer. And that was not all. Early in October the clover was about a foot high on the parts fertilized, while on the portion that received no manure the young clover was in a very weak condition and not more than two or three inches high. A friend of mine, who visited me in the fall of 1897, when I took him over my farm declared I had missed seeding three pieces in the field, and it could be seen about 80 rods away, so great was the difference. To follow the experiment further, during 1898 I cut one of the heaviest crops of hay I ever harvested on the eighteen acres that was fertilized, while the four acres receiving no dressing was hardly a half crop. I also experimented on corn the same season, with remarkable results, and am convinced that 200 pounds of fertilizer can be used to the acre with profit in the growing of crops in Ontario

Huron Co., Ont. JOHN JOYNT.

Maritime Notes.

The Farmer's Bank.—So far this winter must have been hard upon the weather profits. It has certainly given them plenty of chance to exercise their peculiar knowledge. We have had cold weather and warm, snow and rain all mixed up together, with several very heavy winds to make a greater variety. The new year came in cold, with heavy wind and snow, blocking up the roads, but a mild, wet spell following took most of it off again. Then came freezing weather again, with some very cold days, but not enough snow for sledding until the 15th, when we had about three inches. It has been fine weather for working in the woods, and unless logs are to be cut most of the chopping is done, and if the hauling only continues the teams will be kept busy for a time getting the wood home.

The manure pile is said to be the farmer's bank, and as in all other banking institutions, no more can be drawn out than is put in. As a badly managed bank is an unsafe place in which to make deposits, so also is a carelessly managed manure pile a bad place to collect that which is to furnish the fertility for next season's crops. Farmers, as a rule, are careful to save money when they get it. Why, then, are most of them so careless in properly saving that which is to produce their money or money's worth for them? It is very easy to collect the manure from the stables, but it is not so easy to preserve it so that all the elements of fertility which it contains may reach the land without loss. The principle loss is due to the waste of the liquid manure, due to the lack of sufficient absorbent material with which to retain it. Except when large quantities of grain are grown, straw for bedding is scarce and can be but sparingly used, and as a general thing no attempt is made to provide other material. Yet it can be done by a little forethought. Black muck, broken up sods or earth, leaves or sawdust, are all good and some one of them can always be got. The manure from the horse stables makes an excellent absorbent and is itself benefited by being so used. A double benefit is obtained by the use of these absorbents, as not only do they help to retain the original fertility of the manure, but they add to it that which they themselves contain. Great loss is also occasioned by the heating of the manure and by its careless exposure to the weather. These are best overcome by applying the manure to the land as it is made. When this can not be done and the manure has to be collected at the barn, a covered yard or shed is the best place in which to keep it, but if plenty of the litter has been used it can be well saved in the open yard. In this last case the mistake generally made is in spreading the manure out in too thin a pile, thereby exposing a large surface to the weather and rendering it more subject to leaching. It should be kept up in a good square pile, and if plaster is used in the stables or frequently sprinkled on the pile it can be kept without loss.

Poultry Improvement.—As a lover of poultry, I am very much interested in the Dominion Government's scheme of giving instruction in poultry fattening, mention of which I have several times seen. I believe there is a large undeveloped trade in eggs and poultry awaiting us, but until the general impression among farmers that poultry don't pay is dissipated and they are taught better methods of management, we will be unable to take advantage of it. I have proved to my own satisfaction that poultry does pay well, even in our own small local market, but I am also well aware that they would pay much better if I only had more skill in fattening them. Even the very best fowls to be found in our markets could be greatly improved. Fattening is easy when you know how to do it, but it is both hard and expensive when you do not. As ordinarily fed they soon seem to lose their appetite, and lose rather than gain in flesh—at least, that has been my experience. If it is through lack of knowledge on my part, I am anxious to receive instruction. From what I can learn by reading it seems to me that the cramming system of fattening is both the quickest and cheapest, but it would require a larger outlay for machinery than the ordinary farmer would feel justified in making. AGRICOLA.

Antigonishe Co., N. S.

Scalding Pigs.

To the Editor FARMER'S ADVOCATE:

SIR,—I see in your last paper a man wants to know how hot water should be to scald pigs. Well, if he would get a thermometer he would soon find out, as most thermometers are marked scalding at 150. Now, we have scalded lots of pigs, and we find that 145 will take the hair off young pigs six or eight months old, while an old sow or coarse pig will stand more—160 or so; but if the water was up to 185 or 195, I don't think there would be much of the skin on by the time the hair was off. The wooden box, with sheet-iron bottom, is the finest thing out for scalding pigs in.

Wellington Co., Ont. JOHN R. DILLON.

[NOTE.—We have found it a good rule to use five to six pails of boiling water to one pail of cold water, according to the age of the pigs to be dressed.—ED. F. A.]

Agriculture in New Brunswick.

To the great mass of our Ontario people the Maritime Provinces are unknown territory. They appreciate the fact that they are units in our great Confederation and revenue producers for our treasury. Further than this their interest begins to weaken. After a few weeks' touring of the Province, your correspondent has become convinced from the common tokens of things so generally evident that her agricultural possibilities are not so limited as we have supposed.

While it would be incorrect to say that Ontario farmers are not further advanced in many lines than their brethren by the sea, we must remember that conditions of soil, climate, and trade relations differ so widely that comparisons must be very carefully drawn. The N. B. farmer, because he has not been dependent entirely upon his farm, has not been compelled of necessity to develop its resources. In our Province farmers are *farmers*. Down here, in addition, many of them have been and some still are lumbermen and fishermen. So long as the great forests and the fisheries yielded large and quick returns for labor employed, the rural population was safe financially. The forests are rapidly disappearing, the fisheries are becoming increasingly less profitable. Something must be done if the present population is to be retained. As a last resource, strange as it may sound, the farmers are turning to their long-neglected homesteads. Down along the Bay of Fundy coast there are to be found what are held to be the largest hay-growing marshes on this continent. All told, they total up over seventy-five thousand acres. The yield of hay varies from two to three and a half tons per acre. I saw one tract of the great Tantramare Marsh, from which hay had been cut continuously for one hundred and twenty-five years, which this year yielded at the rate of two tons. So long as there was an open market across the line for this hay, at prices netting the farmer seven or eight dollars per ton, there was large profit in handling it. A few days ago the writer saw a quantity of this hay sold for $5.25 per ton, pressed and delivered on cars. At this figure it can easily be seen that there is but a small margin left after expenses are paid. The "hay farmers" are now looking for the proper live-stock medium through which they may be able to market their immense hay crops at a profit. While a few of them are into dairying in a small way, the majority are going in for beef production. Having been accustomed to the easily-obtained returns from their hay business, they seem to think there is too much labor involved in dairy farming. Taking the Province as a whole, a steady advance has been made in the cheese business. From a production of 63 tons in 1891, the amount has steadily increased, until last year saw the respectable output of 825 tons.

Concerning the beef production before referred to, those in the business in several sections are sadly handicapped by being unable to obtain steers of a beef type. Unlike Ontario, this Province at large supports but one type of animal, which, as might be expected, is not especially well suited to bring success in either the beef or dairy business. It is a fact that the leading butchers of St. John and Halifax are still compelled to send to Ontario for their high-class beef. It is to be feared that our feeders are soon to lose the greater part of this trade, for N. B. farmers are bringing in pure-bred sires of beef strains, which must in the near future result in a great improvement along this line. Since coming down to this Province I have had a good many enquiries as to the number of good young Durham bulls to be had in Ontario. Here is a chance for some of our breeders to work up a good trade.

So far as sheep husbandry is concerned, apparently it is sadly neglected. For several days we drove across country without seeing a solitary sheep In working over the south-eastern part of the Province we have seen a few very small flocks of inferior quality and nondescript breeding. They were simply sheep, and poor ones at that. In certain sections swine breeding is well advanced. There are several breeders who have worked up more than a local reputation. Among the farmers in general Berkshires and their crosses seem most in favor. Nothing has been done in producing the hog of the day—the bacon pig. So much is this the case that a firm of bacon-curers in St. John are unable to get sufficient numbers of the kind of hog their business demands, hence they are compelled to pay freight on carloads from our Province. No export trade has yet been worked up in pork products. Farmers in many cases market their hogs at eighteen to twenty months, in most cases giving them to the local trader "on account."

Just now a strong movement in on foot among St. John capitalists for the erection of a packing house in that city So soon as this is an accomplished fact a great impetus will be given to the hog-raising industry in this Province. Lacking this, much improvement cannot be expected for some time to come. J. J FERGUSON.

Moncton, N. B., Jan. 24, '99.

ED. BROWN, Boissevain, Man.:—"I would not be without your paper for twice its cost." Dec. 20, '98.

C. D. STEWART, Marquette:—"I must express my admiration for your Christmas number."