

FARM AND FIELD.

FOR THE RURAL CANADIAN.

WALKS AND TALKS AMONG THE FARMERS.—NO. VIII.

I had a whole evening's talk with a gathering of farmers not long since. After addressing them for about an hour, we had a "free and easy" conference, which became so interesting that the meeting was prolonged until quite late. Usually, it is difficult to get farmers to speak freely in a public meeting, but these men took part readily, and discussed things with great intelligence and animation. The reason was that they have a la la grange in operation for some years, which has schooled them into the use of their tongues. Public speaking is an art only to be acquired by practice. It has been said of poets that they are born, not made. The reverse is true in regard to orators. They are a manufactured article. Of course there must be the "raw material" in the shape of brains, and gift of expression, but these are possessed in a greater or less degree by most people, and it is astonishing how rapidly the art of public speaking is acquired when there are opportunities for practice, and advantage is taken of them. A large amount of useful information was elicited in the course of the evening, and all felt that they had enjoyed "a good time."

It is now the season of the year for holding meetings in the country neighbourhoods, and every locality should have its grange or Farmers' Club in active operation. While all other classes of the community are in the habit of banding together in associations of various kinds, farmers are strangely prone to stand aloof from each other as though they had no interests in common, and were in no need of mutual co-operation. Of late years, there has been a growing conviction on the part of intelligent agriculturists that this is an evil demanding correction, and strenuous efforts have been made to induce a better state of things. These efforts have been attended with some success, but the great mass of the farmers has not yet been reached, and, so far, only a small minority have been induced to organize. As a means of counteracting the isolation and loneliness of country life, promoting sociality and friendliness in rural neighbourhoods, and awakening the spirit of improvement, such associations as those referred to are of great value. The Ontario Government has done well in starting Farmers' Institutes the present winter, and, it is to be hoped, that one aim and result of these meetings will be, the multiplication of local organizations among farmers all over the country.

Among the many noteworthy things that were said in the course of the evening to which allusion has been made, I was greatly struck with some remarks that fell from one of the speakers in regard to the long working hours kept by farmers. He said mechanics in towns and cities only worked ten hours a day except there was an extra press of business, while some only worked eight hours per day. Farmers have no regular hours. They work from early in the morning until far on into the night, and that when there is no urgency except their own eagerness to accomplish as much as possible. Over-work is the bane of many farmers, especially in the earlier part of their lives, when they feel strong and vigorous. Excessive labour early in life brings on premature old age, and compels men to retire from their farms long before they would need to do so, if they took proper care of themselves. The speaker said he had long since made up his mind that this was a huge mistake, and had resolved to take life easier, to work less with his

hands, and more with his head. He found that by quitting work before he was "tuckered out," he laboured with more spirit and pleasure, while by taking time to read, think and plan his business, he could get far more into a short day than he used to do into a long one. There is much truth in these observations. Why should a man drive himself like a hard task-master until he becomes dull and spiritless, and loses all zest and pleasure in his daily toil? Nature is a strict accountant-keeper, and will bring us to a reckoning in spite of all our endeavours to cheat her out of her just demands. There are occasionally times when we must "push things," but there is no need to make life a monotonous drudgery from one year's end to another.

There is not the excuse now for over-work that there used to be. Labour saving implements are abundant, and since cattle feeding has become general, the labours of the year can be more evenly distributed. Winter used to be considered a leisure time for the farmer, but, in the altered state of things, it is as busy a season as any other with the exception of seeding and harvest. The great mistake people make on the farm and elsewhere is that of working without a plan. They just rush at the first thing that attracts their attention, though perhaps it is less urgent and important than some other job they overlook for want of reflection. When the more pressing claim looms up, they leave the other half-completed, and so on until their work becomes a confused "mix," and all is chaos. If we learn to systematise our work, we shall do more in a year, and do it better, than if we go at it helter-skelter and haphazard. As a good packer will get more into a trunk and in better condition than one who crams things in without thought, so a wise planner will get more into a given space of time, and have the added satisfaction of feeling that what is done, is done well and thoroughly. We must not try to do everything at once. "Rome was not built in a day." Steady, systematic work is what tells in the long run.

Among the many jobs to be done on the farm that require plan and arrangement, one of the most important is the yearly supply of firewood. What an amount of household inconvenience and domestic misery are caused by neglect in regard to this matter! The slipshod, hand-to-mouth way in which many country families are supplied with fuel is, at once, a disgrace and a lamentation. The stock becomes exhausted—then chips must be picked up, stray boards split to pieces, or mayhap fence rails taken, to provide for present emergencies. Or, perhaps, there is plenty of wood, but it is green, and alas for the sorrows of house-keepers who have to keep up fires with green wood! The true way is to provide a year's stock of wood in advance, cut it with a saw, reduce it to stove-length blocks in the woods, haul it home, split it the proper size for use, and then stack it in the wood-shed. There is no method of seasoning firewood comparable to that just described. It makes a quality of fuel that is A 1, while it is in every respect the most economical plan, for the superfluous moisture goes out of the fibre without decay, leaving the wood hard and solid. How nice it is always to have plenty of wood on hand ready for use! When work presses, or you are all ready to go to market, or start on a journey, it is not pleasant to hear a shrill, pleading voice, entreating not to be left without wood. But it is pleasant to hear that same voice in its most musical accents extolling the careful provider who "never lets his folks get out of wood."

I HAVE been surprised to find how many well-

to-do, intelligent farmers take no agricultural paper. On asking what farm journal they take, the majority say, "O we don't take any;" or "We took the — for a while, but the subscription ran out, and we have not renewed it." I know a very prosperous, thrifty farmer, who takes the daily *Globe*, but has no paper devoted to his own calling. It would be better if he took the weekly *Globe*, for then he would get the benefit of its really good agricultural department. But a mere department of a weekly, however excellent, is not sufficient. In this enlightened age, when investigation and experiment are being directed upon every branch of farm work, a man will fall behind in the race who attempts to earn his livelihood at agriculture, without the aid of a good agricultural journal. It is coming to be more than ever the fact that farming, to pay, must be carried on by cultivated brains as well as industrious hands. I was startled recently by the statement made in the *Canadian Stock Journal* to the effect that there are 300,000 farmers in Canada, who take no agricultural paper! I thought at first it must be an exaggeration, but on sober, second thought, and judging by my own observation of the rarity of such papers in the country homes I have visited, I am disposed to believe the statement is not very wide of the mark. Now is the time to subscribe for these periodicals, and there is no better way of promoting the agricultural advancement of the country at large than by trying to induce others to do likewise.

W. F. C.

THE WASTE OF MANURE.

While manure is the most important adjunct of successful farming, it is the one thing most freely wasted. Farmers build sheds to shelter old wagons, carts, sleighs, hay-rigging, etc., all of which have an uncertain cash value, and can always be readily supplied in case of loss; but how many of them make any provision for protecting their manure from waste by weather during the parts of seasons when it is accumulating and cannot be applied? While some do, the number that do not is far in excess, and one of the most difficult of all farm problems seems to be to convince them that a wise care may be exercised in this matter.

The trouble is due largely to the apparently innate disposition of men to adhere to old customs without any other "why or wherefore" than that they are old.

What is a barnyard for, primarily? Merely as a place of temporary detention, not as a place of shelter nor for feeding, because to feed animals when they are loose is to incur great waste of food. They have no sense of fairness toward each other, little of self-control, and the strong always tyrannize over the weak. They can only be economically fed where each is forced to respect the rights of others, and that is in the stall. Then again, the barnyard, being open to the rain, the sun and winds, the manure wastes immensely. This ought to be plain from observation, but tens of thousands of farmers refuse to heed it, and cling to it, as the Arab does to tent life, because it was the custom of his fathers. To add to their objectionable features, most barns and sheds are without gutters, so that all or most of the rain water from them is discharged into the barnyard, which increases the waste, filth and unsightliness of these cattle pens. Though "cleanliness is next to godliness," these sinks of nastiness are maintained intact summer and winter, with no other excuse than that they are the agricultural fashion, and cost less in cash to establish and maintain than good roomy stalls in cattle-barns, over cellars, where the manure can be sheltered during the periods when it can not