

FARM AND FIELD.

FOR THE RURAL CANADIAN.

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

"CAN we milk a couple more cows?" asked a farmer of his wife the other day in my hearing. He then went on to say that one of his neighbours had offered to sell two of his cows at a low figure because he was running short of fodder. A great many cattle of all sorts and sizes have been forced into the market, and sold at unremunerative prices within the past few weeks, owing to scarcity of food. In some sections of the country, much of the stock has been on short commons, and will come through the winter very poorly. Many young creatures have received a stunt in their growth which they will never get over, for growing animals must be kept steadily on the gain or they will not do their best. It is rumoured that in some of the poorer sections of the country many cattle are dying of starvation, and that some have been slaughtered to prevent their starving to death. Of course, all this is attributed to the remarkably severe and long winter through which we have just passed.

Such a state of things furnishes much food for reflection. At the first blush it starts the question whether the country is over-stocked with farm animals. To this question a prompt and emphatic negative reply must be given. It is safe to say the country could carry twice the live stock it has, to the advantage of all concerned, under a proper system of management. The keen competition we now have in the grain market, and the large demand for well-fatted stock, are pretty clear indications that a wise policy dictates the multiplication of the live-stock up to the full capacity of our farms. The impoverishment of the soil consequent on excessive grain-growing is another pointer in the same direction. A stern logic is teaching us the necessity of making the production of stock the chief feature of our agriculture, and it cannot be too deeply engraven on the mind and in the memory of our people that we must sell the products of our lands less in grain bags and flour barrels, and more in living hides and pelts. Let the crops we raise go to market on all fours. "No stock, no manure; no manure, no crops."

It is undeniable that many farmers marketed hay early in the winter at ridiculously low prices, and having miscalculated the length and severity of the season, have had to buy at twice the price for which they sold. They will tell you no man could foresee what a winter we were going to have. But did not some of them believe the weather prophets, who for three years past have been predicting a mild winter, and if they only stuck to that prediction long enough, will make a correct guess at last? A prudent man will calculate in view of possibilities, and not sell himself down to the lowest quantity of fodder that will carry his live stock through a moderate season, when he knows that we are at any time liable to have a long and extreme season. The good old book which has a lesson for every wrong tendency in human nature contains this wise remark applicable to the case in hand: "A prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself, but the simple pass on and are punished."

The worst feature of the thing is that unoffending, dependent, dumb creatures have been punished, many of them very severely. A man must have a hard heart who does not feel mean and miserable when he sees poor, helpless animals

which it is his duty to provide. It is enough to bring tears to one's eyes to witness the mute, patient behaviour of cattle under these circumstances. There has been in our locality a neglected cow going up and down the road all winter, waiting and watching for a bite or a sup, and of all the samples of meek and quiet suffering I ever saw, hers has been the most affecting. If human law fails to punish such instances of cruelty to animals, it is hardly likely the benevolent Creator will hold them guiltless. Some people will have a serious account to face one day because of their treatment of the lower tribes of animals which have been committed, not to their irresponsible control, but to their responsible care, by Him who is Maker both of man and beast. "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast," is the true reading of that text which is usually quoted: "A merciful man is merciful to his beast." It is not mercy, but justice, to give them enough to eat.

But to come back to the business aspects of the case. I insist upon it that any farmer is foolish to sell hay at \$6 or \$8 per ton, no matter how abundant it may be, or however sure he may feel that he has plenty to suffice for his own use. It is worth more money than that to feed, and if he has not stock enough to consume it, it will pay the owner of it to buy more, even if he has to do so on credit, for which there are usually opportunities enough at farm auctions, though it is not at these places that the best bargains may be looked for. Better borrow a little cash and buy up some additional stock than sell hay at such prices as hundreds of tons were sold for at the beginning of the past winter. Better indeed to keep the hay for a higher market, which is pretty sure to come before very long. It would have been quite a bonanza to many farmers, if they had held on to the hay they sold last fall, for if they had only done so, they would have doubled their money.

I STARTED this topic, however, chiefly for the purpose of referring to the feeding value of straw, and the enormous waste of this product which is going on all over the country. It would be too long a task to recount the calculations and estimates which have been made in regard to the nutritious properties of straw: suffice it to say, that all competent authorities condemn the practice of using good, bright, clean straw merely for bedding. Only the refuse ought to be employed for this purpose, and material not available for stock food should be collected to prevent consumption of straw for bedding purposes. "Doctors differ" as to the precise food value of straw, as well they may, but all agree that it is too valuable for that purpose to be consigned directly to the manure heap. On most Canadian farms there is no thought of its use for any other purpose, though it is well known that with the addition of roots, cattle can not only be sustained, but fattened on this much neglected and greatly wasted fodder. "Wifful waste makes woful want," as the experience of the past winter has proved in the case of multitudes.

THE only way to make the most and the best of the straw supply in this country is to have sufficient barn-room to accommodate it. There is no method of out-door stacking by which it can be properly kept so as to render daily and economical feeding of it practicable. Of all wasteful methods of treating it, a barn-yard straw stack is the most objectionable. It will pay to provide shelter for it, and those who are planning for the erection of new barns during the coming summer, as no doubt many are, cannot be too earnestly advised to think of the straw and plan for having

it always under cover—treating it in fact in the same manner as hay. Some authorities consider it preferable to swale hay, and others rate it as within twenty-five per cent. of good meadow hay, i.e., 2,500 lbs. of oat straw is regarded as the equivalent of a ton of hay. If these ratings are anywhere near the mark, it is certainly wise policy to provide barn room for straw, and to protect it from needless and wanton waste.

WHILE referring to barns, a word or two may be added, suggested by the recent inspection of a barn. In building a barn do not stint the stone basement storey. Give it head room, and have the doorways well up from the level of the barn-yard. I was in a basement lately where full-sized cattle could not throw up their heads without striking the floor above, and where at the close of winter, the manure accumulation just outside the doors was so high up that not the cattle merely, but their attendants, could not go out and in without running the risk of dangerous falls. Yet another point, why are basement and other stables—even horse stables—nearly, if not quite destitute of windows? If there is any light in them, it is usually only just enough to make darkness visible, and people go groping about among their creatures, or else, the coldest day in winter, the door must be wide open, to the discomfort of man and beast. How would we like to be immured in darkness all day long? It is bad for the eyesight of animals, and many horses learn to shy for no other reason than that they are kept in dark stables.

WE have had a long wearisome winter, and some farmers' families have been hard put to it to while away the time. To spend from eight or nine o'clock at night to six or perhaps seven o'clock "i' the mornin'" under the blankets and quilts, is to consume more time in bed than health requires. Seven hours for men and eight for women—a sufficient difference for the husband to rise, make the fire, and get the house warm in readiness for the "weaker vessel" to prepare breakfast—are what physiology and hygiene prescribe. So there needs employment for some evening hours. Reading alone will not do, for you soon get sleepy. I was at a farmer's house lately where the father and mother play draughts—or did until the Mrs. beat the Mr. so uniformly that there was no fun in it, the eldest girl played the organ-melodeon, the eldest boy the violin, a younger daughter performed on an instrument the name of which I have forgotten, while a younger son blew the piccolo. Then there were carpet balls, parlour quoits, parlour croquet, and I suppose dominoes, and possibly other games. Young people are fond of what they call "fun," and a little of it now and then is not bad for old folks. An hour or two of some laughter-provoking amusement is a better preparation for a good night's rest than a drowse beside the fire. "Work" and "play" should alternate in some form. "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," it also makes his relations dull. "All play and no work," is not to be commended either. There is a provision in our nature for both, and neither can be neglected without detriment. To wisely apportion the two should be the aim of all. W. F. C.

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PERMANENT PASTURE.

THE prevailing practice in this country is to seed down with timothy and clover only, and, under favourable circumstances, large crops of these are often raised. But the average obtained is no more than a ton and a-half or two tons per acre, while with the same culture and by sowing a greater variety of grasses there should be