Agricultural Department.

FEEDING INSTEAD OF KILLING CROWS.

Probably ninety-nine out of every hundred farmer boys have been taught that it was an imperative duty to shoot, trap, or in some way kill every crow possible. This slaughter of the crow did not originate with the present generation; but was first practiced by the Puritans, when they discovered that a mother crow liked softened or water-soaked corn with which to feed her young in spring. Consequently the average Yankee boy comes honestly to this hatred of a useful bird, or at least through hereditary descent. Of course, we have no idea that anything that can be said in these columns in favor of the crow can make an inbred hater of this bird believe that the owner of such glossy black feathers is not created expressly to torment the farmer by pulling up his newly planted corn in spring.

The thousands of cutworms, white grubs, crickets, grasshoppers, and other noxious insects devoured by crows during the year reckon for nothing in the estimation of the ordinary farmer toward compensating him for the few hills of corn occasionally destroyed in spring. Then how many farmers ever give the crow credit for preventing pestilence in neighborhoods where it is the general practice of those whose cattle die in winter to haul the carcass out into the back lot or woods, and leave it there to decay and pollute the air for miles around? The half-starved crows, when let alone, will take what little meat is left upon the bones of the dead animals, thereby becoming very useful scavengers, and counteracting the results which are likely to follow the neglect of the farmer to bury his dead stock.

But, as we have said, it is difficult to eradicate the hereditary hatred of the crow, and it break out continually and frequently where we would least expect it. The flock of crows that follow the plowman all the day long, picking up grubs from the newly-turned furrow, may lose some of their number at night in consequence of a suggestion from a neighbor that crows have been known to rob birds' nests, which may be true occasionally; but certainly cannot be a common trait, or else the small birds would have long since disappeared from our fields and forests. We have known localities where there were enough crows living and nesting, within an area of fifty acres, to have killed all the small birds within twenty miles square, and still the latter seemed to be as abundant and brought forth as many young during the season as if there were no crows in the country. Too many birds of any kind may, under certain circumstances, become a nuisance; but we have never known an instance of insectivorous kinds reaching that point, consequently it is bad policy to destroy them, especially while noxious insects are on the increase, as they undoubtedly are.

In defiance of what we were taught in our boyhood regarding the villanous character of the crow, and the almost universal belief that he is an enemy of the husbandman, we treat him with kindness whenever he chooses to visit our grounds. When the time arrives for putting in corn, we put up no "scarecrows," but scatter soaked corn over the field, allowing them to take all they want. A few quarts of soft corn, scattered every few days, until the growing crop is too large for the crows to pull, is a better and cheaper protection than any scarecrow, and it encourages the crows to visit the field to hunt for worms, grubs, and noxious insects later in the season. If all of our insectiverous birds were encouraged to visit the grain-fields and orchards, there would be less occasion to fight insect pests by more expensive methods.—*Weekly Sun.*

CURRANT GROWING.

The currant is, next to the strawberry, the most popular of our small fruits. The sale far exceeds that of the raspberry, the blackberry, or even the grape, and there is rarely if ever a full supply in the market. Since the advent and general spread of the currant worm very few currants are grown in private gardens. Though there is no real difficulty in preventing their ravages, the matter is almost always neglected until the worms have spread themselves over the bushes and done so much damage to the foliage as to destroy the crop and so injure the plant as to prevent a good crop the next season. Then one more onset of the worms, not promptly met, finishes the bush, and the cultivator votes it cheaper to buy than to grow currants.

We have grown currants for the last twelve years on a large scale for a country neighborhood, our crop ranging from twenty to forty bushels, and we have never been able to meet the calls of all our customers. Orders come to us for this fruit from forty, fifty and even one hundred miles away. It is the only small fruit the price of which has not had to be reduced since the hard times, and last year it brought us as much money per bushel as strawberries, at half the cost. We believe that there is not a village of any size in Vermont that will not furnish a market for the product of five hundred currant bushes, say fifteen to twenty bushels, at twelve and one-half cents a quart. Yet we get so few orders for currant bushes that we have ceased to grow them in our nursery, except to supply our own wants, which call for about one hundred plants a year.

The currant comes into full bearing about three years after the setting of yearling plants grown from cuttings, and if well taken care of they will continue to give improving crops for five or six years longer, with careful pruning they will last much longer, but we prefer to replant after eight years. The average product will be from two to four quarts per bush, though bushes of some varieties, such as the Red Gondonin, will frequently yield a peck each. But there is "an out in everything," and this very productive kind has the habit of rotting almost before they are ripe.

The only kind we would ever plant for profit is the Red Dutch. There is very little demand for the white varieties, though they make as nice and almost as high colored jelly as the red; but it is difficult to make purchasers believe it. The White Grape is even more productive than the Red Dutch, but the branches are not sufficiently erect to keep the fruit clean. The Versailles and Cherry Currants are very large, and it might pay to grow them near large cities, but we cannot get a cent more a quart for them, and not often more than a quart to the bush. On heavy soil they would probably do better than with us, but so would the other kinds.

Our currants are planted between trees in our young apple orchard. The land is kept in condition to grow fair crops of corn. In rich garden soil much better results could be obtained. We grow the black-cap raspberry in the same way, and can make large crops, but the sale is limited. Occasionally we plant a bed of strawberries between two rows of apple trees. This fruit has to be highly manured to do anything, and we notice that the adjoining currant bushes show the benefit of the enrichment in their neighborhood. We do not often do this, however, as our orchard ground is not our best strawberry land. The crops there are oftener peas, beans or corn. The strawberry not only requires rich but moist land for profitable growth. If we could get enough manure we could double our currant crop on the same number of bushes, but then we could not grow them in the orchard, for it does not answer to force the growth of a young orchard in our climate.

The worst foe of the currant is not the currant worm, but the robin. These birds have so multiplied in our grounds, that last season they destroyed half our currants, and utterly ruined our raspberry crop. They pick off and drop ten berries to every one they swallow, so that the ground under the bushes is covered with them. Perhaps they do this out of revenge for our killing the worms, which ornithologists say they are so fond of. We leave that question to those of our readers who have depended on the birds to keep their currant bushes clear of worms.—*Vermont Chronicle.*

NECESSARY REFORMS IN THE CONDUCT OF FAIRS.

As it is about the time of the year when arrangements are made by the various boards of agriculture for holding their annual fairs and considering the moral teachings prevalent among them for the past few years, it might be well to remind them that the statute of Indiana says: "That if any person shall erect, bring, keep, continue or maintain any booth, tent, waggon, huckster shop or other place for the sale of intoxicating liquors, cider, beer or other drinks, any article whatever, or shall keep or exhibit any gaming table, roulette, shuffle-board, faro bank, nine-pin or ten-pin alley or billiard table or any other gaming or wagering apparatus whereby any money or articles of value can be lost or won, or any persons who may be the owner or proprietor of any real property who shall rent or permit the same to be used for any such purpose, within one mile of any * * * agricultural fair or exhibition * * * * shall be fined in any sum not more than $25 nor less than $5." And as the utility of agricultural societies consists in the morals they inculcate, they should make an honest and faithful resolve to enforce the rules they make, which are amply backed by the above statute, and relieve themselves from the hypocrisy they manifest before the world, when their by-laws read that "No species of spirituous or malt liquors shall be sold or drank on the grounds, or adjoining the same, nor shall gambling of any species be allowed on or near the grounds during the days of the fair." And at the same time, while visitors at the fair read this regulation, they can readily observe all manner of gambling devices running on the grounds. And ask any of the officers of the society what it means, and the reply is generally as well stereotyped as the by-laws: "Oh! they take the risk of the law themselves, and pay high for the privilege. The society is not to blame; we must have money." Upon the very ground of the society from whose rules this identical by-law was clipped could be found at the identical fair at which this by-law was in force, a ten-pin alley, numerous lottery schemes, a roulette, a gift enterprise, and six booths selling intoxicating liquors, as boldly as it is done in licensed saloons. And the common practice that respectable men, directors and officers of agricultural societies, have of prevaricating, or absolutely lying, about such things, is a most pernicious example to set before the young and rising generation. Such men are trustworthy and exemplary in an individual capacity, but their zeal to serve a public trust profitably over-balances their prudence. Now let the directors and managers of agricultural societies resolve to act honestly and manifest good faith toward their professions, and their organizations will accomplish the purpose for which they were originally designed. It will be well enough though for the citizens, in vicinities where agricultural societies have heretofore practiced such perfidy, to form citizen committees and be on the alert, claiming the protection offered to the community by the above-quoted statutes, for it is not putting language too strong when we say, many of the so-called agricultural fairs are intolerable schools of vice, and if not reformed, should be abated by law.—*M. B. K., in Indiana Farmer.*

A Summer Fern Bed.—A lady writing to the New York weekly *Tribune* gives these directions for a fern bed: If there is a wet or unsightly place under the tree that never can be made to look well, all the better; choose that spot for your ferns. An airy place, shaded by the house, will do nearly as well. Choose a bundle of stakes two and a half feet long, an inch and a half in diameter, and which still tightly retain the bark; drive these into the ground in a circular or oblong form, as you may wish the bed to be; the stakes may stand from twelve to eighteen inches above the ground; now weave in and out about the stakes, basket fashion, grape vine until the top of the stakes is reached. You then have what appears to be a rustic basket. Fill in the bottom with sod, or earth rubbish of various sorts, but leave room enough in the top for a good layer of forest mould, in which plant the ferns, which may be taken from the woods as soon as the fronds begin to peep above the ground. It is better to choose the ferns from a plot where they grow thickly, and take them up so that they may be as little divided as possible, and with plenty of soil unbroken about the roots. Fill your basket full of them, and if you water them well in a few weeks you will have a thing of beauty to gladden your eyes for many a week to come. The basket may be further ornamented by slipping seeds of the cypress vine or morning glory between the interstices of the grape vine into the soil. They will sometimes grow right merrily, and if trained about the basket beautify and illuminate it in a very dainty and exquisite fashion. In lieu of the stakes and grape vine (wild grape vine can nearly always be procured in abundance) a basket which has lost its bottom may be used, which if not already browned by exposure, may be painted any desirable color. If the fern basket is sufficiently protected in the fall with leaves it may be relied upon for a thrifty crop of ferns the following summer.

Encouragment for Farmers' Boys.—It is a good sign for the future of farming that boys are to be encouraged as well as horses. Stilman B. Allen, of Boston, offers a set of premiums, through the *N. E. Farmer* to the boys of York Co., Me., for the best crops of Indian corn raised during 1879. The boys are to be sixteen years old and under; the land one-eighth of an acre, to be measured by a person appointed by the president of the County Agricultural Society; the contestant to do all the labor, but may have assistance in driving their teams; amount of manure and hoeing to be optional; each contestant to make out a full report of every detail of labor, estimate of cost exclusive of husking, for which he may have all the help he wants from the boys and girls of the neighborhood. The first prize will be $100, the second $50, and there will be five other prizes of $10 each. We shall look with interest for the report next fall from York Co., Me.—*Ex.*

Mind Your Own Business.—Nothing but ultimate ruin stares that farmer in the face who does not pay personal attention to the minute details of his farm. There are a thousand small leaks about the management of an ordinary farm, that, if not closely attended to, will surely bring the most hard-working farmer to ruin and bankruptcy. A large portion of the farmers can attribute their present condition to no other cause than a lack of close attention to the small details of the farm. Close supervision of the machinery, tools, stock and their feed, a place for everything and everything in its place. No hired help is as much interested in attending to these duties as the farmer himself. Such a course would in a few months, or years at most, enable many farmers who are now on a down-hill grade to again begin to ascend, and if persevered in will surely make headway against what would otherwise look doubtful.—*Maine Farmer.*

DOMESTIC.

Living and sleeping in a room in which the sun never enters is a slow form of suicide. A sun bath is the most refreshing and invigorating bath that can possibly be taken.

Eggs Broth.—Beat an egg until it froths; stir into it a pint of boiling-hot broth free from fat; season it with a saltspoonful of salt, and serve it with thin slices of dry toast. This broth abounds in flesh-forming elements.

Iceland Moss Chocolate.—Soak one ounce of Iceland moss in one pint of boling water, keeping it hot until it is dissolved. Then grate an ounce of sweet chocolate, and boil it in a pint of boling water until it is dissolved. Mix the moss and chocolate together, and sweeten so that the drink will be palatable. It may be heated and given to the invalid night and morning in such quantities as will not overtax the digestive organs. It is very nutritious.

Barley Water.—Wash two ounces of pearl barley in cold water until it does not cloud the water; then put it into half a pint of cold water over the fire and boil it for five minutes; next drain off this water, put the barley into two quarts of cold water, set it over the fire, and let it boil until it is reduced to one quart. Strain, cool, and sweeten slightly, if desirable. Pearl barley contains starch and mucilage, and makes an exceedingly soothing and refreshing draught in cases of fever and of inflammation of the membranes of the stomach and bowels.

Taking Cold.—It is a matter of general observation, that a person may at one time be exposed to changes of temperature, pass suddenly from a heated lecture-room or church, into a cold, windy atmosphere, or even be exposed to a draft of air without taking cold, while, at another time, a severe cold will be contracted with apparently no exposure. Hundreds may be equally exposed, and yet only a few out of the number will suffer in consequence of it. The condition of the health, and the state of digestion of the person exposed, it will be found, if one is sufficiently observant, determines to a great degree, the susceptibility to taking cold. When a person's digestive system is in good condition, there is comparitively little danger of taking cold from any ordinary exposure. One who is continually taking cold and suffering in consequence, will find upon trial that a simple diet, moderately partaken of, is the best means of guarding against taking cold. All such persons will find that attention to the diet will prove a much more reliable safeguard, than remaining shut up in the house on all except the pleasantest days.—*Morning Star.*

Cooking For The Sick.—Few things have been more talked about, more written about and less understood than this, so perhaps our few words will not be superfluous. Of course, when people are very ill, their food is of the simplest, often (in fevers) consisting of milk only, for days, yet even the simplest and plainest things may be made agreeable or repulsive by the way of serving. Be sure that the invalid has the prettiest dishes, cups, etc., that you can procure. A chipped saucer, a cracked cup, is often a source of annoyance to the sick. Don't offer too much food at once, as an appearance of profusion often disgusts a capricious appetite. If your patient is taking broth, for instance, pour out a small portion into your daintiest cup or bowl, and serve it on a small tray, with a little napkin under it. If toast is desired, see that the slice offered is cut evenly, not browned too much in one place, or pale in another, and above all, carefully covered during its progress from the kitchen to the sick-room, so that the warmth on which so much of its palatableness depends may not be lost. With the convalescent equal nicety in the preparation of food is essential. And just here let us say what should have been said first, that cooking for the sick can *never* be delegated entirely to servants, no matter how efficient they may be. The personal supervision of some member of the family is really indispensable to the success of this duty, as we all must have found at some time. The best trained and most capable cook cannot give to the preparation of food for the sick, those little finishing touches on which so much depends—artistic touches, born of superior culture, and above all, of true affection.—*Intelligencer.*