

The Farm.

Our North-west Letter.

In accordance with the promise contained in my last, I now continue my remarks about this district. I cannot, I think, do better than finish up the town of Virden. The quantity of wheat marketed at this point up to the end of March, was about 175,000 bushels, and the price ranged from 85 cents to \$1.13. The quality, generally, has been very good. In this connection much might be done in the way of improvement, by selecting only seed of the best quality, and growing that on land in which nitrogen and the phosphates of lime and magnesia are present in abundance. Here, again, will soon be a field for the exhibition of intelligence. Still, in the face of such facts, many farmers continue to ridicule and trample under foot the very means (our agricultural press) that are to improve their minds, lands and worldly condition.

The influx of people into Manitoba so far this spring has been something surprising. Virden receives a fair quota. On the express, recently, 27 were ticketed to Winnipeg, 59 to Brandon and 64 to Virden. Judging by appearances, the majority seem a very desirable class. If other parts of the province have to chronicle as large a stock, etc., as arrived in this county, Manitoba must certainly be a great deal richer in that line. Virden, I am sorry to say, is saddled (like, I presume, many other new towns) with an incubus known as the genus Biped, species Homo; habits, nocturnal and migratory; recognized by the large amount of starched linen on that portion of his body just above his shoulders—he is simply here to wear out his old clothes, or spend his or other people's money, generally the latter, in revolutionizing the methods of farming and manners of the people. Generally speaking, he does not stay long; and his departure is usually regretted by sundry hotel-keepers and tradesmen. It certainly is a mistaken idea for parents or guardians to send their "ne'er-do-wells" and black sheep to a new country. No doubt it is an effectual way of getting rid of them, as the individuals seldom make money enough by their own exertions to carry them back. This, to my mind, is not the worst feature of the case. Those given to the use of strong drink—and their name is legion—being away from all restraining influences, get care'ess, and go from bad to worse; the very opposite, no doubt, of the condition of things their advent in this country was expected to produce. The class, however, who do well—and I think they are in the majority—are agriculturists, tradesmen, mechanics and laborers—men who are not afraid to take their coats off and work, and, being in Rome, do as Rome does; to all such, Manitoba and the North-west certainly offers every prospect, if not of independence, of a competence. One very great drawback we have to contend with is the lack of real good farm hands who can be depended on. Such men only work out a few seasons, as they become themselves proprietors and useful citizens. A good man always commands good wages, and need not be out of employment a day.

At the last farmers' meeting an excellent paper was read by a Mr. Chisp, on "The best means of improving our Cattle and Sheep," but dealing principally with the latter. Space pre-

vents me speaking further than just to say that the perspicuity with which the essayist handled his subject, proved him to be a thoroughly qualified flockmaster. Another paper, on "Cattle Improvement," was postponed till the next meeting; as was also, to my mind, a very sensible motion to form the meetings on a more permanent basis. However, as the president, a very estimable gentleman, whose opinions seem to govern the majority, proposed that the next meeting be held next November, both are practically shelved. I will try and give your readers a copy of this motion in my next letter. It is one that might with benefit be acted upon by the farmers in other districts.

Farming operations started earlier this year than ever. Seeding generally commences about the 6th of April; last year it was the 12th or 15th before work was started in earnest. This year a lot of wheat was sown early in March. Many had finished by the 25th of the month. Others, again, did not care to sow so early, and deferred till the beginning of April.

Smut.

The report of Mr. Jensen's extensive experiments on the propagation and prevention of smut in oats and barley, has been published by the Royal Agricultural Society of England. His conclusions are so much at variance with those arrived at by other experimenters that we repeat them. The chief ones are:—

1. That the spores of smut falling on the ground in one season do not appreciably affect the grain sown on the same field in the next season.
2. That spores of smut adhering externally to the seed grain do not affect its smuttness.
3. That oat smut and barley smut, if not two different species, are at least two well-differentiated varieties and it is not likely that a barley field will smut from an oat field, or vice-versa.
4. That although the smuttness is not appreciably affected by applying smut spores externally to the seed grain, yet it is undoubted that no smut is reproduced in the plant except from a spore.

Mr. Jensen believes that the spores which reproduce the smut fungus in any given plant of oats or barley, gained admission *within* the husk of the seed while it was growing or ripening, and lay there dormant until the germination of the grain.

If this theory be true, it is of great importance in the investigation of remedies. The usual preventive is washing or dressing with sulphate of copper (bluestone). Weak solutions (one part in 400) are not very effective, while strong solutions (one part in 100) injure the seed so that it has to be sown considerably thicker, and it does not ripen so quickly as undressed seed. To use the words of the report: "Dressing cereals in the usual manner against smut and bunt causes, as a rule, a waste of seed. It is moreover injurious to the plants and is unnecessary. Treating the seed with water, heated to a temperature of 127 degrees Fahr. for five minutes prevents these diseases equally well, and protects barley much better, while it has the advantage of not injuring the seed or the resulting crops."

Do not turn your calves out to graze this summer. Keep them in and supply them with plenty of suitable green food, supplemented with a little bran and meal.

The Desirability of Discontinuing Township Shows.

(Continued from last issue.)

I cannot omit to mention here some figures presented to the public in the February number of the FARMER'S ADVOCATE. In reply to a circular said to have been sent to some of the leading farmers in each county asking for an expression of opinion as to the desirability of continuing the township show as at present constituted, answers had been received from nearly 200 persons. Of these 137 are in favor of continuance, and 57 against, showing so far as the answers have been received a very large majority in favor of the township exhibition. One is naturally curious to know just who composes the two classes. Personal interest, or what is believed to be such, becomes the guide with many persons. The gathering together of a crowd, however small, is considered the essential thing with some who live in the village or town where the show is held. The opportunity for gain in whatever trade may accrue is too valuable to be lost, and so both hands will be held up for its continuance. Now it is not personal interest merely that we should consider in dealing with this matter, but the public interest. Whatever will bring the greatest good to the greatest number should receive our approbation.

May I suggest that in the main all our efforts have been directed towards the production of better live stock. A wide field is still open in this regard. But is it not worth while to encourage and stimulate more than in the past a better system of general husbandry. I know we have given prizes for bags of grain, samples of roots, etc., but it is a lamentable fact, that two bushels of prize grain may be, and is sometimes, picked kernel by kernel from among the veriest filth and rubbish. Is it not true that the finest exhibits in small quantities are sometimes presented by the most slovenly farmers, whom no one would care to copy. Twelve prize-winning roots may be shown by a man who would be ashamed to exhibit his acres. Some favored spot heavily manured and constantly watered produces in excess of merit the average field crops of his less favored neighbor, who may after all deserve more to be copied than the former. In a word, what I wish to say is, that our present plan is not the best to educate and encourage a better general production.

Suppose then that the public money now used by the township shows should be devoted through the county organization to giving prizes to be confined to each township, for not the best bushel merely, but for the best field of grain; not for the best dozen roots, but for the best acre; compelling each man in making entry to give the manner of preparation for his crop, for the purpose of publication in connection with the award of prizes.

Suppose in addition, prizes were given in each township, and to be confined to each for the best managed farm, not allowing the *winner* to compete in his township a second time, until after a fixed period, but allowing him to come into competition with the various townships of his county or groups of counties as the case may be, at stated periods. Would not the effect be marvelous in improving the general product of the farm. Would not the different farmers in each township vie with each other for this honor, and so be stimulated to thoroughness in cultivation, and carefulness in management. And would not the townships