

FARM AND FIELD.

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

I HAVE attended a great many farmers' meetings of one kind and another in the course of my life, but it was my privilege to be present at one held in Exeter, Ont., February 1 and 2, which, to use an agricultural phrase, was "the cap-sheaf" of them all. It was a meeting of the South Huron Farmers' Institute, organized by a deputation of professors from the Ontario Agricultural College, about a year ago. This Institute was born so strong that it found itself able to run alone at about the age when a robust and thriving baby takes to its feet. On the occasion I refer to there were no professors in attendance. All the papers and addresses were given by actual and practical farmers. Mr. Shaw, editor of the *Canadian Live Stock Journal*, Mr. McA. Allen, "the apple king" of Goderich, and myself, were present, but we only claim to be plain toilers in the fields of husbandry. We had no official dignity to uphold, and were "hail fellows well met" in a good sense, on that memorable occasion, for such it was. Memorable for social fellowship, and for unusually interesting discussions, and for a certain air of sprightly intellectual vigour, not often characteristic of such gatherings, was the meeting in question.

ONE of its most pleasing features was the extent to which local farmers took part in the proceedings. I have lost the few notes I took, and my memory of names is very treacherous; hence I cannot mention all who were prominent speakers, which I should much like to do. One of the first to take the floor was Mr. McQuade, one of the oldest settlers in the neighbourhood, who found himself at an early day located on a farm composed of good soil, but requiring to be drained in order to make it productive. Not having capital to drain the place properly, he at first thought of selling out, and getting a drier farm somewhere. But being unable to find a purchaser, he concluded to grapple with the drainage problem, and master it little by little. His account of his first attempts, failures and successes, was about as instructive a bit of agricultural experience as one could wish to hear. Suffice it to say, he persevered until he became "master of the situation," and what he does not know about underdraining a farm is hardly worth knowing. After his interesting talk on the subject, for he spoke without manuscript, he was subjected to a running fire of questions, all of which he answered in a most satisfactory manner. I noticed in the last number of *THE RURAL CANADIAN* a statement to the effect that the recent meeting of the North York Farmers' Institute was not a brilliant success, owing to the paucity of speakers able to give interesting practical instruction. I beg to suggest that next winter they send for Mr. McQuade to talk to them about his hobby, for such it is and he rides it well.

THE upshot of the drainage portion of the proceedings was that this "betterment" lengthens out the working

and growing season, enabling the farmer to get on his land early in spring, and put his crops in so as to take time by the forelock; that heavy summer showers do not wash the surface, but sink speedily into the porous soil; that fall rains do not interfere with fall ploughing; that the crop average is increased so as to pay for the cost of drainage, and a profit over; that open drains, drains of loose stone, and wooden drains are not comparable with tile drains; and that the ordinary farmer, if he will only study up the subject and "make haste slowly," can carry out this improvement in a thoroughly satisfactory manner.

My paper on "Exhaustion of the Soil, and its Remedies," was well received, thoroughly discussed, and its suggestions as to the means of land enrichment, especially by the judicious use of clovering, responded to in a way that showed the farmers present to be awake and alive to this important matter. The subject of manuring, the question how best to procure, husband and apply the manurial resources of the farm, and kindred topics, received a large measure of attention. Stock-raising and cattle feeding were gone into very fully. Papers by Mr. Symons and another practical stockman whose name I unfortunately forgot, relating to this important branch of rural economy, attracted much attention, and were well discussed. Questions directly to the point were asked and answered promptly, and a deep impression made as to the importance of improving the beef-producing qualities of cattle by the use of high class bulls exclusively.

MR. SHAW read a capital paper on "Permanent Pastures," in the course of which he fell foul of Prof. Brown, and objected to his recipe for seeding down, as including grasses not fitted to this country, also prescribing too large quantities of seed, involving needless cost and considerable waste. While eulogizing the stress laid by the Professor on the necessity of improving our grass lands, he was of the opinion that meadows and pastures could only be permanent to a limited extent in this country, the comparatively small size of most farms rendering it indispensable that grass should chiefly come in the course of regular crop rotations. It would have added zest to the occasion if Prof. Brown had been present to answer for himself. He is no slouch in this or any other branch of practical farming, and it would have been "just fun" for editor and professor to have crossed lances in relation to the matter.

MR. ALLEN gave us a most valuable talk on "Fruit-growing," and laid down the rules of orchard management in a very clear and forcible way. He had just returned from the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, where he had charge of the Canadian fruit display. The apples from South Huron were a conspicuous feature in the exhibit, and Mr. Allen strongly urged those present to maintain and improve their orchards. He told them what kinds of apples and pears brought the best price in the English market, and gave ample directions how best to grow, pack and sell them. The importance of manuring orchards, the principles of pruning, the way