

The Farm.

The "Assassin Bug."

The "assassin bug," of which we have heard so much recently, is an old resident, and belongs to the group of true bugs. I have had specimens in my collection for many years. They are not of such ferocious habits as the papers have announced, not at all worthy of the reputation given them, such as is well calculated to frighten nervous people and timid children, and indeed to establish a feverish condition among the people generally.

They are called "assassin bugs" as they are of a predaceous nature, living on the blood of insects, and may occasionally attack higher animals. One of my specimens punctured my finger with its beak when I captured it, some years ago, but the wound was no more severe than a pin prick. *Obasictus personatus* is the scientific name, and it is closely allied to the large bedbug of the South and West, and of the two species the latter is more to be shunned, as those who have travelled in those regions can well testify.

It is safe for the public generally to drop all fear of this much talked of "assassin bug." It has been here since the Declaration of Independence was issued, and it is safe to say that no one has yet been assassinated by it.—(Professor B. F. Koons, of the Connecticut Agricultural College, in The Hartford Courant.

Experimental Farming.

All farms are more or less experimental, but there are several ways of carrying them on.

Some experiment by stocking up with all the hogs that can be found—good, bad or indifferent, just because they have a corn crop; then, when the "scrubs" get diseased or do not respond to the feed as expected, sell off everything of the hog kind and load up with "scrub" cattle, or get chicken fever and run that without knowing how, then into something else, and so on. That is experimenting, but on too large a scale to be profitable.

Others reach out a little at a time, giving each venture a thorough trial. These people enjoy life more than those who risked all on some wild scheme.

Try something new on the farm each year; not the puffed up novelties, but watch your experiment station and see what it recommends, and see if it will work on your farm.

We were interested in raising onions for some years; we tried a packet of various kinds each year, but did not find any that did as well or kept as well for us as the good old Red Withersfield we had been growing for years.

We tried various breeds of chickens, and still have one good old breed, and have added another.

We are still trying forage plants, and discarding more than we keep, but those that are good are worth all the time spent in making trials.—(A. K. Boyer, in Farm, Field and Fireside.

The Gypsy Moth in Massachusetts.

The report of the Gypsy Moth Commission shows this insect still to be one of the most serious evils in Massachusetts, both as to apprehended danger and the cost of averting it. An emergency appropriation in February enabled resumption of work for a month in the worst infested districts, with 150 men. In April, with the season's appropriation available, 340 men were set at work, the most expert destroying eggs or searching for them, the less experienced cutting and burning undergrowth, spraying stone walls with oil and putting insect lime on the trees. From legislative delay and bad weather the earlier work had partially failed, and it required every effort to stop the ascent of the hordes of caterpillars when hatched; fifty-four bales of burlaps were bought, and 1,845,045 trees were burlapped. This has been found the most effective method of checking the moth. A machine has been devised for cutting the burlap in strips, and another for rolling it up.

A cyclone oil burner is used in places that cannot be sprayed, and the great amount of kind this of burning to be done led to the use of a 100 gallon spraying tank and powerful pump supplying six burners. In the fall, inspection of the burlapped trees was made and eggs destroyed. The force reached its maximum of 524 men in December, when a large number of extra men were hired on the brown tail moth work, for which \$10,000 of the appropriation of \$200,000 was set aside, but too late for any service in the spring. In seven of the formerly infested outer towns no gypsy moths were found in 1898. In five others only a few small spots were infested. There are five central towns still generally infested, but greatly benefited by the year's work. The Mystic Valley woods, badly

infested in 1896, are no longer so to any serious extent.

The brown tail moth, discovered in Somerville in 1897, was, through delay of appropriation, allowed to develop and spread, which it does more readily than the gypsy moth, as both sexes fly. It has been found in small numbers in thirty-two towns and cities. With prompt action, this spread might have been prevented.—(Country Gentleman.

The Cost of Fattening.

It is a very easy matter to take a half-starved or a young animal and make it gain in weight very rapidly by liberal feeding, but the amount the animal gains when in this condition is no criterion as to how much fat a given ration, will produce in a day or week. In the first few months the steer will gain so rapidly that every pound of feed given will pay a big profit. Then comes a time when the appetite of the animal seems to stop, and the fat-making process halts. It is not strange that many would consider something wrong with the animal and begin to dose it with medicine. The fact is that it is in the first few months that the animals gain most of their weight; then it takes longer and more labor to make more fat. Every succeeding pound comes slower and costs more. The question is to know just when to stop—when the animal has reached the point when it is losing investment to feed further for fat. There certainly is a point beyond which it will not pay to feed for fat. The cost of the food for each additional pound will be greater than the value of the fat.

Recent experiments have been made which help to show the relative gain of steers on a given ration at different periods of their lives. Thus during the first two months it requires a trifle under 800 pounds to lay on 100 pounds of weight. During the next month it requires a 10 per cent increase of the food to make the same amount of gain. The fourth month shows a still slower gain, and to make the same gain in weight the grain must be increased to 15 per cent, and in the next month the increase must be nearly 25 per cent. In the following month and a half the food has to be increased 37 per cent.

Here we have the steady decline in fat-producing power until the amount of grain fed must get so large that it would be a waste of time to attempt to fatten further. Up to a thousand pounds a steer can be fattened with a profit, but after that the process is doubtful with some and certain enough in others. A good deal depends upon the animal.—(E. P. Smith in American Cultivator.

Pruning the Quince Trees.

One of the reasons why quince trees do not produce more fruit is because they are not pruned properly. Usually there is about every neglected quince tree a number of sprouts that start either from the base of the trunk or from injured roots near the tree. These should be removed, and the work should be done while the tree is in leaf, as there will be less danger of new sprouts starting up. Then, when the tree has been reduced to a single stem, remove the short branches growing up in a thicket in the centre. Some of these may have fruit on, but do not spare them for that. If the quince tree has been long neglected, there will be more or less dead limbs, which have been so long shaded by foliage above them that they have died. All these should be cut out. Air and light are as necessary to the quince as to any tree that grows.—(American Cultivator.

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