



Reaping Machine manufactured by Messrs. Frost & Wood

CORRESPONDENCE.

Dear Sir,

Volumes have been written of the best methods of improving the soil; and the ways and means of improving our meadows, and increasing our yield of cereals, have been discussed through our Agricultural Journals; but our pastures have been almost wholly neglected; and, so far as neglect is concerned, we may apply the complaint literally to both theory and practice. Who will deny, that our old pastures have deteriorated twenty-five per cent in the past twenty years? By some it may be considered a bold assertion, but I shall make no assertion that I cannot prove, at least to my own satisfaction. Let me define my position, so that I may run no risk of being misunderstood; when I say our old pastures have deteriorated, I do not mean to say they have grown poorer in the elements of plant food, (for they are certainly far richer in that respect); but in their capability of furnishing nutritious food for our dairy and beef herds is where the deterioration comes in.

In cases of sickness we summon the physician, and, before writing his prescription, he makes his diagnosis, and seeks for the cause, before he can successfully combat the disease. We must do the same; we must seek for the cause of this deterioration, and then we shall be in a position to apply the remedy. Bad diseases require desperate remedies, and some of my brother farmers may think it beyond their skill, and I am ready to admit that the case looks serious, but "nil desperandum" is my motto. We must do something, and the quicker we set about it the better, for it is not a matter that will right itself: on the contrary, it will grow worse.

The first cause of this running down of our pastures is the too common practice of allowing our herds to range over them in the early spring, while the ground is still soft; they not only poach the surface badly, but they bite it, and, worse than that, pick for the best as they naturally will, and pull it up by the roots. Who has not noticed this, in crossing pasture land, or even riding past a pasture, in the spring. Perhaps we had better go on the principle, of applying the remedy, as fast as we can find out what is really the matter, and not wait for any complication of diseases. The remedy for this is certainly simple: we must keep the cattle off our pastures until the ground is dry and firm. We had much better go over it with a team and a sharp harrow, and re-seed, than allow our stock to poach it, and then let it dry down in hummocks while the re-seeding is done by the volunteer process, and weeds are sure to be to the fore. There is a continual warfare between the different species of plants for the mastery, and, though this struggle is not apparent to the sense of sight, the result is glaring, so in our old pastures, and we have unthinkingly aided the stronger in the contest.

I have characterized our treatment of pastures, as neglectful: I will go still farther, and say it is positively abusive. We have been, and are still going on the principle that anything is good enough for pasture; some of us even going so far as to plow up a piece of old pasture, crop it as long as it will bear anything, and then turn it out to pasture to recuperate.

We may invest in Jersey, Ayrshire, Durham, or any other choice breed of stock, and with our pastures as they now are and still growing worse, in a decade our stock will have deteriorated into scrubs. It is feed that makes fat, juicy beef, and also our butter and cheese. Blood may tell, but feed will tell more.

Another phase of this disease we are attempting to treat is too much dairying. In my article on "mixed farming," in your May issue, I made the statement that a herd of milk cows drew more largely on the phosphates in the soil, than a herd of young stock, and I repeat it. The cow instinctively chooses such food as will soonest build up the bone formation of her progeny, and we dairymen sell this element (Phosphate) in our butter and cheese, when the young stock would return it to our pastures.

There is any amount of old pasture in my vicinity that has lain in pasture from 40 to 60 years, and no doubt it contains all the elements of plant food: I will not say, no doubt it does, but rather say, I know it does, from actual test; but at the same time, in its present bound out state it is worthless; there is plenty of it, that, though as rich as a manure heap,

yet it will not keep a sheep to the acre. What can we do in the matter? If we look at it all at once, we are apt to be discouraged because it is a hard job, and do nothing. If we turn over but one acre each year, summer fallow, and re-seed, we shall soon find we are accomplishing something. If he who causes two blades of grass to grow where but one grew before is a public benefactor, what shall we call ourselves if we cause a hundred blades to grow where none grew before.

We may write line upon line, and precept upon precept, but it is deeds and not words, or practice rather than preaching, that counts most. To prove to you that I do (sometimes) practice what I preach, I will say, that for three days past I have followed the plow after a strong team of three horses abreast, on a piece of old pasture that was completely bound out with brakes and bull rushes, and, thank kind Providence, and our own good selves, it is bottom side up. I am ready to admit, that it requires nerve to take hold of such a job, and I might as well say, too, that it takes back-bone to carry it out. Yours truly

Frelighsburg, June 5th 1880.

C. A. DEMING.

My dear Sir,

You will have observed in the public press of late that an event of some importance to stock breeders is to take place in August next, — the dispersion of the famous herd of Angus or Aberdeen polled cattle, the property of the late Wm. McCombie, of Tillyfour, Aberdeen, Scotland. There never has been, nor can there be, for many years, such another sale, in numbers and merit of cattle that have done so much in the past history of improvements. Next to the Shorthorns, these Polls have filled the world's pages during the last quarter of a century, and having myself been born among them, educated to them, and knowing this herd well personally, I feel justified in calling your attention to their sale. Many on this continent are more convinced of the decided value of this breed both for early maturing, hardiness particularly, superior graziers, and with the power to improve others for beefing purposes. They are remarkably docile, and are looked upon as possessing a big advantage for shippers in the fact of having no horns. Altogether then, and building upon our own five years experience with a small herd of them here, there is no doubt about the propriety of a new country taking advantage of such an unusual sale.

It has been suggested to me by several of our people that a number of these cattle should be bought for Canada for the following purposes:

- 1st. The Dominion Government, 1 bull and 3 cows for Manitoba.
- 2nd The Ontario Government, 1 bull and 3 cows, as an addition to their present herd, or for public sale.
- 3rd The Quebec Government, 1 bull, and 3 cows, for public sale.

I think these could be delivered at Quebec as follows:

9 Cows.....	\$3,800
3 Bulls.....	1,500
Expenses of purchase, &c....	450

\$5,750

hire room of six at a 1s. per room

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