

[FOR THE CRITIC.]
THE BOARDING HOUSE KITTEN.

(FROM AN OLD STORY.)

Mistress Prudence Careful was a woman of renown,
She kept the smartest boarding-house in all the upper town;
Her table was perfection, with luxury o'erlaid,
But oh! what made her famous, was the dainty bread she made.

Mistress Prudence Careful had of boarders full a score,
And every comfort heart could wish, was found within her door.
But what their twenty souls loved more than pipe or downy bed,
Was the large hot loaf for breakfast of Mistress Prue's own bread.

Now this is the story told me, of how it all fell out,
That one fine day these twenty men were put to utter rout,
And fled pell-mell adown the steps, capeling passers-by,
Nor gave their long time cozy lunc, one faint regretful sigh.
But in their haste they wildly dashed along the stirring street,
Blinded with horror at the THING that caused this mad retreat,
The THING, at morning breakfast which petrified their gaze,
And sent them forth with hatless heads, and minds in hopeless daze.

The night before as usual Mistress Prudence made her bread,
And set her large light loaf to rise before she went to bed,
She set it in the kitchen warmth, in its accustomed place,
And then retired with calm content depicted on her face.

But as she slept serenely, unconscious of all harm,
Her small pet kitten prowled about, seeking a bed place warm,
Leaping upon the fresh-made dough, she found her heart's desire,
Soft and warm and yielding, and near the smouldering fire—
She felt the bed a paradise, and overtired with play,
Heaving a sigh of utter bliss, she passed in sleep away.
Slowly the dough engulfed her, closing her form from sight;
By morn to all appearance the bread was very light!

Or so thought Mistress Prudence as she put it in to bake,
And so thought sprightly Bridget as she lifted out the cake,
And so thought all the boarders as the knife plunged downy thro';
But their thoughts were froze with horror at the sight that met their view.
With one wild yell from twenty throats they rose en masse and fled,
Barely leaving Mistress Prue to face that loaf of bread,
And disinter kit's baked remains from out their flow'ry bed!

FLUX DUFF.

OFFICIAL REPORT AS TO THE CROPS, LIVE STOCK, ETC., IN
ALL PARTS OF THE PROVINCE.

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The season of 1886, like its predecessor, has been a very favorable one for the spring operations of ploughing, sowing and planting. Ploughing commenced early in April,—in dry soils in favorable situations as early as the first of the month. Wheat was sown in some places before the middle of April, and potato planting for early crop commenced about the 20th. The season is spoken of by all correspondents as exceptionally favorable for sowing and planting, the weather being dry in April and May, earlier in some districts than others, and again in the first part of June. Seeding and planting were finished about the middle of June, except in case of turnip and other crops that require a summer seed bed. One result of the favorable season is noticed in an Antigonish return that a larger area has been sown to wheat and oats than usual. On the Cumberland shore, as well as in the interior of that County, the June rains prolonged planting longer than usual. In fact, many correspondents speak of the early spring as being particularly dry and warm, whilst later on wet and cool weather retarded operations wherever the soil was heavy or naturally wet. The early part of May is specially noted, the rains then resulting in a heavy freshet, which, in some cases, washed seed out of the fields, and was followed by cold, chilly weather. However, the old farmers in Musquodoboit say they never saw a finer seed time. In one part of Pictou County, the "deluge of the first week in May" stopped all operations, and the sowing and planting previously begun under favorable conditions were considerably retarded.

Ploughing commenced in the month of April in every County,—Queen's County leading off on the 1st of April, Digby following on the tenth, Richmond, C. B., on the 15th, the other Counties from the middle to the end of the month. Returns from particular districts in several of the Counties give the date of first ploughing as late as 1st May, one in Annapolis 6th May, and an exceptionally late one in Pictou County indicates that not much was done on account of interruption from rains till the 19th. Seeding operations and potato planting were being carried on with vigor all over the Province during the month of April and early in May. These facts, furnished by many of the most experienced and intelligent cultivators of the soil, give a decided and most satisfactory answer to the question so often put,—“What kind of season is there for spring work and seeding in Nova Scotia?” It is to be kept in view that the seeding season was unusually fine this year, but not more so than that of the preceding year 1885, when it was reported from Annapolis that “the spring was all that could be desired for getting in crops, and then followed seasonable rains and warm sunshine,” and from Guysboro' that there had “not been so productive a crop of potatoes for twenty years.” Every country has its occasional bad seasons; we seem to be enjoying a run of good ones.

Whilst the weather was thus favorable for early work, it was also well suited, in most parts of the country, for advancing the several crops. The drought experienced over a large area of the Province during the latter part of June and early July had the effect of stunting the growth of roots and grains, but the rains late in July and through August began in time, and were sufficient to revive and strengthen these crops. The hay fields suffered from the same cause, and, whilst Yarmouth County enjoyed continuous growing weather all summer, and had a very full crop of hay, yet most of the other Counties suffered more or less from the drought. The abundant rains of August are swelling the root-crops, and have started vegetables into a most vigorous growth.

ROOT CROPS.

Under this head are included Turnips, Mangel Wurzel, Parsnips, Carrots, and other Roots of less importance,—the returns for Potatoes being kept separate. The seeds of root crops being small, require a carefully prepared seed bed, and favorable conditions for the early stage of growth. The drought of June and first half of July in many places prevented a full germination where the land was hard or poor, and resulted in a stunted as well as irregular crop. In some cases second sowings had to be made, or thinnings planted to fill up blanks; but in the Counties of Yarmouth, Shelburne, Victoria and Inverness, the weather seems to have been exceptionally favorable for Root Crops.

POTATOES.

The Potato Crop when once fairly started can withstand dry weather, in fact a hot dry season favors this crop, whereas either wet or cold is inimical to it. The summer so far has been very favorable. The peculiarity of the season in regard to the Potato is that much of the seed planted did not grow at all. In a few isolated localities some damage was done by night frosts, and in others the Coloradoes made attacks upon the crop, but apparently not of a formidable character, except in Cumberland and Guysboro'. It is evident that care in picking or poisoning will prevent any serious loss.

The remarkable manner in which Potatoes failed to come up this spring should arrest the attention of our agriculturists. The cause of a failure, being once understood, may be avoided in future years. In some cases the crop came away all right; in others a quarter or a half failed; and in some the failure was so complete that fields had to be re-seeded entirely. Some indicate that it was the early plantings that failed; some, the late plantings in the time of drought; others that both failed alike, and that there was no difference observable in the extent of failure on light as compared with heavy soils. There is one probable cause, not referred to in any of the reports, that may have operated in yielding these apparently inexplicable results. We know that a certain degree of warmth, together with moisture, is necessary to start and promote the growth of the shoot from the eye of the potato. Now, if potatoes unstarted are taken out of a cold cellar and planted, or rather buried, in the cold bed of a newly ploughed field in spring-time, they will not find themselves in circumstances favorable for the early stage of growth; a result that may be expected is that the seed potato will die and decay, only the stronger ones, and those so near the surface as to catch the sun's warmth, germinating. This is what will occur in a moist soil. In very dry, sunny weather the seed may get sunburnt before it starts into growth. Both results may be effectually guarded against by keeping the seed potatoes in a warm place for a week or so before planting, so as to give them a chance to start. After they have once sprouted, they can resist a good deal of either cold or drought. Gardeners understand all this very well; they never think of planting their very early crops of potatoes without sprouting, just as they start their Dahlias and Gladiolus bulbs in heat before putting out,—not merely to forward their growth, but to prevent their perishing.

GRAIN.

Grain is not the most important crop in Nova Scotia. Owing to the abundant production of Wheat in the West, and the consequent low price which it brings in market, attention is given to more profitable crops. Many farmers, however, continue to raise Spring Wheat, although not so generally, nor to as large extent, as in former times. Barley, also, appears to be less grown than formerly. In some parts of the country Buckwheat is raised in considerable quantities. The most important grain crop is the Oat, which is more generally grown, and in larger quantity than all others. Oats are raised either on fall-ploughed sod, or on land that has had roots the previous season. In Yarmouth County there is promise of an abundant yield of grain; but the drought of June and the early part of July, which prevailed over a large portion of the rest of the Province, had the effect of stunting the early growth of oats, spring wheat, barley and buckwheat: the July rains were not too late, however, to revive them, and a really good, or over average, grain yield is expected, with rather short straw, in Colchester, Antigonish, Hants, Guysborough, Pictou, Shelburne, Lunenburg, Queen's, Victoria, Cape Breton, Richmond, and, especially, Inverness. Cumberland and King's Counties will yield a little over average, the latest return from the latter (18th August) showing improvement. Halifax shows rather under average. The great deficiency is to be in Annapolis, where the early summer drought appears to have been most severely felt, and where, out of nine returns, four give percentages of from 20 to 35 per cent. below average, and none above. Digby is also under average in grain.

THE HAY CROP.

The returns leave no doubt of there being a substantial deficiency in the quantity of hay made in the Province this year. Lunenburg reports at average. The only County that reports a decided increase is Yarmouth, where the early drought did not prevail, and where 20 per cent over average of hay of an extra quality has been secured. Cape Breton reports an over-average, and Shelburne also has a very good crop. Queen's and Richmond, apparently, rather below average. Halifax rather under average, although the Musquodoboit section and Hammond's Plains report a full average. The great hay-producing Counties all give low reports, viz: King's, from 20 to 25 per cent under average; Pictou, 25; Hants, 20; Cumberland, 35; Colchester 23; Guysborough, 11; Digby, 20; Annapolis, 14; Inverness 10 to 25; Victoria, probably 5; Antigonish, probably 8. The average for the whole Province, calculated from all the returns, allowing of percentage valuation, is close upon 20 per cent deficiency. Taking 100 to represent an average crop, the crop of this season may be represented at 80. Calculating on the basis of last census, which showed the hay crop to amount to nearly 600,000 tons, we find that there is this year a loss of hay to the extent of