

## FARM AND FIELD.

## WALKS AND TALKS AMONG THE FARMERS.—NO. VII.

FOR THE RURAL CANADIAN.

AGAIN we have had the dreary-looking spectacle of men and boys working in bad weather, with mud-belegged boots, and numb-cold fingers getting in a turnip crop, which Jack Frost threatened to make a fixture in the ground all winter. And, again, when their dirty, miserable task was finished, the Indian summer has come out of its retreat and laughed at them.

TURNIP-GROWING is an agricultural hallucination in this country. It was brought here by men who imported it under the influence of a determination to transfer to Canadian soil everything that is good in British farm practice. But the crop is about as well suited to the Canadian climate as Indian corn is to the climate of England and Scotland. We have to put it in laboriously amid the summer heat, and it is either a race or a fight with winter to get it harvested. There is a big job housing it, and when it is wanted for feeding it is a final task to get it out of the pit or cellar in which it has been stored. All this toil and trouble over a product that is, at best, ninety per cent. water. That is to say, if a man grows 500 bushels of turnips to the acre, he handles 30,000 pounds of bulk for the sake of 3,000 pounds of nutriment.

In many talks I have had with farmers on this subject, I find it almost impossible to convince them that out of every 100 pounds of turnips, ninety are only water. They have the idea that it isn't water but turnip juice, which is, of course, a great deal better than water. But, oh! my innocent bucolic friends, this is all delusion. Ninety pounds of water, no better than you find in a common creek, pond, or lake, and then ten pounds of solid food: such is this wonderful bulk that you take so much pains to cultivate.

In Great Britain, turnips are grown and harvested under fewer difficulties than here. The moist climate suits them better. In this country under our burning sun, I positively believe they exhale ammonia, instead of absorbing it. In no other way can I account for the immense consumption of fertilizing material by a turnip crop. In Britain, there is no hazard of the bulbs getting frozen in. You can usually feed them to advantage where they grow. If you pull and pile them, they need no other protection than their own leaves. The whole process, except the preparation of the soil, is attended with far less labour in the old country than here. Yet we, who need to economise labour, must needs throw it away in super-abundance on growing turnips.

You can raise the same quantity of nutriment much easier by growing corn or clover, and escape the annual vexation of getting turnips out of the ground in bad weather. In fact, it is no great trick to raise 3,000 pounds of nutritious matter to the acre in various crops. A big yield of turnips is nothing to brag of, seeing that a farmer whose place is well watered, has nine-tenths of the product ready to hand, without the toil of cultivation.

But how is it, I have been asked many a time, that stock do so well on turnips if the larger proportion of them is nothing but water? Because cattle need a liberal supply of water in winter, and do best when they get it little and often. Give them constant access to water and the same amount of solid food that they get in turnips, and they will do equally well.

Thereon hangs a tale. If there were a Society for the prevention of cruelty to animals whose inspectors went around our concessions and sidelines, a great many farmers would be arrested for not giving their animals a due supply of water. The sufferings of the bovine race from this cause are terrible every winter, and the man who keeps up a lot of stock on dry feed without ample and constant access to water, should just be put on that kind of diet himself for a while. It would be punishment sufficient. In the summer time when cattle are on green, juicy feed, we see them go to drink several times a day if they have the chance of doing so; how much more do they need to slake their thirst often when on dry fodder?

Yes, turnips are a substitute so far, for constant access to water, and we find that animals which have daily a liberal ration of turnips are not punished by thirst, and do not care to drink when they have the opportunity. But, I prefer to water my stock by spring, well or cistern, to growing ninety pounds of water in ten pounds of turnip rind. The days are said to have gone by when farmers take a bag of wheat to mill on the back of a horse, the wheat in one end of the sack and a stone in the other to balance; but there is considerable of the same kind of folly shown in other ways.

What shall we do for a cleaning crop if we do not grow turnips? Raise corn and potatoes instead, that is if you *must* do a lot of hard work with the hoe to make, prove and keep yoni industrious! But if you would have a comparatively easy time, clean your land with clover, which, while it kills weeds, deposits a good coat of manure on the field. How preciously afraid some people are that farming will be made too easy, and that the devil will get them yet, on the principle that—

"Satan finds some mischief still  
For idle hands to do!"

But that catastrophe can be averted without growing turnips.

I BEGAN this talk by referring to the glorious uncertainties of our climate in regard to the setting in of winter, and whether we grow turnips or not, wisdom suggests the policy of being ready in good season, so that if the ice-king makes us an early visit, we may not be taken unawares. There are always a number of things to be done before the cold season sets in, and how few there are who have forethought enough to get these things accomplished so as to be all ready, and waiting for winter to come. Too many are, like the cow's tail, always behind. Instead of driving their work, it drives them. It's a very bad habit, but no bad habit is more common than this.

As to the weather and seasons, every fall brings a host of contradictory predictions. I never knew a year in which both a mild and a severe winter was not prophesied; and each prediction was fortified with proofs in the shape of signs and proverbs, as though people did not know that these things were often very contradictory. Thus on a different subject than the weather, we have the two inharmonious proverbs: "A rolling stone gathers no moss," and "A setting hen never grows fat:" both of which are true and have many illustrations, and yet are contrary to one another. Many weather signs and proverbs are capable of being interpreted either for or against the prospect of a hard winter. The safest prophecy in regard to this matter is the famous one of Josh Billings: "There will be some weather."

It is, however, almost, if not always the case

that a premature snap of winter is succeeded by a longer or shorter pleasant period preparatory to the actual closing in of the hard season. The "oldest inhabitant" can possibly recall exceptions, but they establish the general rule. Winter does not come, any more than death, without sufficient and timely warning. Our last spell of fine weather before winter finally sets in, is that strange, weird, hazy, peaceful, brief period we call Indian summer. It is nature's hectic flush that precedes death. What perfect days and sleepful, dreamy nights we keep up the Indian summer! How soft and enticing is the mellow sunlight! All things are lulled to rest, and there is a universal hush. A sweet silence reigns everywhere, as if the outer world had sunk into a profound slumber.

"O, rare, brief season, thou hast all the charms  
Of summer's gladness blent with thine own peace.  
How like thou art to beautiful old age—  
The restful calm where active labour ceases,  
And, pausing on life's threshold ere he leaves,  
One sees heaven's sunlight smiling on his shaves!"

W. F. C.

## ONTARIO'S CROPS.

The report of the Bureau of Industries for November deals chiefly with the grain and root crops of the Province, and gives tables of produce based on 1,250 returns made to the Bureau on the 25th of October. These tables show that the harvest of grain crops has been even more bountiful than appeared by the estimates of the 1st of August, and form a gratifying contrast to the tables of last year's harvest. The quality of the grain, too, is generally excellent, being plump, hard and heavy. Barley, however, was badly discoloured by the rain of the harvest season, and the bulk of it does not rank higher than second grade. Wheat is remarkably free from defects of any kind. The grain is above the standard weight, and the average yield of the spring and fall varieties is 23.3 bushels per acre, or 9.6 more than last year. Oats also show a large yield, although in the northern and north-western counties, this and other spring grains suffered from the drought of June and July. Compared with the harvest of 1883, the aggregate and average yield of cereals is as follows: Fall wheat aggregate, 1884, 20,722,288 bushels; 1883, 11,626,957 bushels. Average, 1884, 24.9 bushels; 1883, 10.6 bushels. Spring wheat aggregate, 1884, 14,609,663 bushels; 1883, 9,726,063 bushels; average, 1884, 20.2 bushels; 1883, 16.6 bushels. Barley aggregate, 1884, 18,119,041 bushels; 1883, 18,414,837 bushels; average, 1884, 27.3 bushels. Oats aggregate, 1884, 5,733,025 bushels; 1883, 5,573,609 bushels; average, 1884, 38.6 bushels; 1883, 38.6. The total yield of peas is 13,691,607 bushels, or 3,000,000 bushels more than last year; while the average per acre is twenty-four bushels, or three to four bushels more than last year. The quality is of unvarying excellence, little or no damage having been done by the bug. Beans and corn, which were in an unpromising condition toward the end of July, made a surprisingly good recovery in August, and steadily improved to maturity. The yield of the former is 592,044 bushels, and of the latter 12,935,889 bushels, being an average of 23.8 and 74 bushels per acre respectively. Last year both crops were destroyed by the early frost. The root crop is generally an excellent one, especially in potatoes, mangolds and carrots. Turnips suffered to some extent by the August drought, but they are of good quality. The aggregate and average yield for 1883 and 1884 is as follows. Potatoes, aggregate, 1884, 27,546,262 bushels, 1883, 16,400,782 bushels; average, 1884, 153.2, 1883, 98. Mangolds, aggregate, 1884, 8,655,184, 1883, 62,522,015; average,