

a nuisance, are pretty c'early defined and generally recognised. But no one has yet ever attempted to map out, with equal distinctness, the influences of wind upon the fortunes of the farmer, yet as an agency upon the well being of his stock and crop, its influences are hardly the less potent of the two.

We admit that plants cannot grow, or animals live, without a constant supply of water. Is it too much to say that neither could ever get to the stage of productiveness without the influence of wind—air in motion? The popular conception is that there is no wind unless it is blowing what sailors call a "capfull." Yet, sportmen can tell us of the action of wind carrying scent for hundreds of yards when they are hardly conscious of any stir. Just as water makes itself felt when it is invisible in the dew upon the plants, and in the action of a moist atmosphere upon the skin of the animal, so wind, when we are not aware, stirs the leaf to its invigoration and quickens the pulses of the animals by its freshness. Wind and water are at work for us when we reckon not of them. It is odd that whilst the modern farmer holds the same set of ideas about the action of water that this forefathers held, he seems to act upon almost opposite lines in all that he does with respect to wind.

One of the very earliest tendencies of those who commenced village life in the country was to surround their homesteads with trees, for the purpose of breaking the force of the wind. A belt or at least a high hedge to keep the stacks sheltered was regarded as a necessity. Small inclosures, with high banks and thorns, were deemed to add value to a farm, partly no doubt, because the animals occupying them got shelter from wind in winter and sun in summer, but also because it was honestly thought that some at least of the crops did better too, when sheltered from the wind. In the period, when the late Mr. Mechi was the high priest of farming in England, these high banks were cleared away by miles and dozens of small fields were thrown into one large one. (1)

Nobody questions that thereby the acts of cultivation were more easily and therefore more cheaply performed; but as regards plant and animal life, the verdict was of quite opposite characters. As a rule the crops have thriven the better for giving free course to the wind; but the animals have done the worse. It is now evident enough that as regards the stud, the herd, and

the flock, our forefather's methods—of allowing plenty of out door exercise all the year round, whilst being careful "to break the force of the wind"—were based upon sounder notions of animal life than our own. When the fields were small and sheltered, the mildew and the grown cereals were to be noticed; where the crops were grown in large "breaks" divided only by a slip of grass or low-clipped hedge, the cereals came through the trial almost unhurt. It was the action of the wind that saved a 1000 kernels from being spoiled for every one that it shook out. It is very rarely that wheat "sheds" except under the combination of a hot sun and a fresh breeze.

We need hardly insist on the good work done by the wind in pulverising the surface soil, when it is necessary to make a seed bed; or in drying the mown grass with less deterioration of scent and savour than is caused by the unrestrained direct sun-beams. The wind makes the best of hay, and when it is not too ruffling, is the cheeriest of comrades to the haymakers.

Wind may be bad for cattle and sheep; but what is it in comparison with imprisonment in a foul atmosphere? And this to emaculated creatures whose last source of happiness was the inhaling, leisurely the sweet, soft air, the milder breezes playing round the while.

And the more our farm animals are bred upon the modern system (of close breeding to induce a tendency to fatten and an early ability to become ripe), the more important it becomes that they do have, with plenty of fresh air, some shelter from strong winds. The wind is a farmer's friend, at least more often than not. But then the cases (in which it is not a friend) viz: in its effect upon cattle, are becoming of more consequence. It is odd that domesticated poultry suffer more from wind than do any quadrupeds. When the slower falls they are

"Glad, as birds are,

Which get sweet rain in June,"

and when it downright pelts, they, not being water-fowl, take care to get under cover. But, in wind, they are—except an old market woman with a basket on one arm and an umbrella on the other,—the most ludicrous of objects, and seem conscious that they are so. When people advocate putting movable poultry houses in each field, and post them in the very middle of the field, and suppose they have done all that is necessary for the bird's comfort, they forget birds sensibility to the effects of wind. No fowl, not even the water-fowl, care to encounter wind; and if a fowl is to make itself at home, it must be provided with shelter from it, where it moves and feeds. With this very small "tap-pickle" to the stem of these observations, I will conclude the article with words which are wise in regard to the wind, that it "bloweth where it listeth; and thou canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth."

W. R. GILBERT.

(1) In Devon there were plenty of 3-acre fields, with the roots of crop and elm in the middle! Ed.