

THE MONTH.

The winter with all its severity is upon us, and while the leading idea during the summer months was how we should lay up stores for this unproductive portion of the year, the great question should now be how to expend it with a view to the largest return. There are many farmers who use good judgment in making every acre produce its full strength, yet when it comes to feeding the same out, seem to be governed by no system. The distinction between the successful and unsuccessful farmer consists, not in the difference of yield as much as upon the disposition of the same. A man can throw out of his granary faster than he can gather in from the field. A farmer should view every particle of feed as the capitalist does money, and ask how can I gain the greatest return from it. Every bushel of feed has the elements of profit in it, and if it does not answer this end the fault lies with the owner. Keep your stock well housed, so that your cattle will not manifest their pride by "getting their backs up." Some farmers try to force the heat in grain to do the duty of lumber. Lumber is the cheapest. Do not feed all your grain to your fat hogs, and starve your stock hogs. At least keep enough life in them to crawl out of their pens to take the benefit of the Spring sun. A "helping hand" don't mean that you must starve your stock all winter for the sake of helping them up in the Spring.

Sheep are very grateful creatures and will thank you for a small quantity of grain now and then, just for the sake of keeping in mind what it looks like. True you will have to pay more for bagging in the Spring, for putting your wool in, and your pockets will be heavier as you come from market, but run the risk. The "milk of human kindness" will not flow forever, unless cheered by an encouraging smile; neither will milch cows scorn a little inducement in the shape of chopped feed. Hay is not the best of food for calves, and they are perfectly willing and capable to eat something better. Do not neglect to give a little salt to your stock. Have a lump of clay in your horses mangers, and see that all your stock has access to plenty of good water. Do not neglect the fowls, and keep a little sand, lime and gravel within their reach. Secure your supply of cordwood. Collect the barnyard manure, and do not pile it under the eaves of the roof, where the rain will wash its most valuable portion away. Attend to your stock, carefully remembering that in many instances more flesh is lost during this month, than from now till Spring can restore.

SHOULD FARMERS HIBERNATE.

Naturalists say that bears in the temperate and frigid zones, after having

labored hard all the summer and fall, in their legitimate callings of taking up beehives, and harvesting corn-fields, are wont to retire from their active pursuits of life, and betake themselves to their dens, where they spend the winter in ignominious repose, a sort of half sleep, during which their dull faculties lie dormant, and they are nearly oblivious to the affairs that are passing around them. The blood of their bodies at such times, is, in a manner stagnant, they live but their lives profit them nothing, for when the long sleep is over, they come forth from their dark abodes leaner, and duller than when they went in. Like the bees about their dens, they thaw out by the action of the returning sun, commence life over again, and repeat the things they did the year before. Winter with them has only resulted in depriving them of the superfluous fat, that they added to their bodies, during the busy months, that preceded their going into winter quarters.

Now it is a matter of regret that many farmers imitate but too closely the practice of bears, in the manner in which they spend the time that elapses between the harvest and the subsequent seed sowing. Like the ground they till, they freeze up, only to thaw out when the clods of the field open to new life and activity.

Now, there are reasons why farmers should cease manual labor, for the most part during the winter. With the exception of taking care of the stock, and preparing the fuel, there is little labor to be done with the hands. If then manual labor was the only kind of work that the farmer needed to do, there is no reason why he should not settle down, into a sort of inglorious ease from the coming to the disappearance of the frost.

But, with the intelligent farmer, the labor of the hands is but half the battle. Farming should be an intellectual pursuit as much as the practice of any profession. The mind should precede the hand in every operation on the farm. Everything relating to the management of a landed estate requires mind labor. Brain work changed the crab-apple into the sweet bough; the nauseous little pear into the Seckel. It gave the Green Gage in the place of the wild plum, the Catawba grape for the wild cluster on the native vine. It has made the cultivated variety as much better than the wild plum, as civilized man is better than the savage.

Mind, too, has transformed the animal creation almost as much as it has the vegetable world. Contrast the Devon and Alderney cattle with remnants of the native breeds, still to be found in parts of England; compare the Suffolk and Chester swine with the wild boar of Southern Europe; place in distinction the Merino and Cotswolds of to-day with the native sheep that once fed on the hills of Pal-

estine. Thinking men have wrought these changes.

No class of men have the time and opportunities for study that farmers have. The entire winter seems designed for this purpose. The artisan of every craft, the practitioner of every profession, is compelled to labor the live-long year. If they get time to study, they steal it from the hours which should be devoted to rest or sleep, and yet these men do study. They peruse more books in a week, than the same number of farmers do in a year—they seem to realize the fact that if there is not progress, there is retrogression.

This is not the case with the majority of farmers. They seem to be content if they do as well one year, as they did the season before. Study is for book-farmers, to which class they do not belong. Now every field on a farm requires to be studied, its adaptation to every kind of crop wants to be tested, and a hundred other questions are to be settled, about the management of stock, and the care of crops. Winter is the time to think of all these things, and to trace out the cause of the failures that have been experienced in other seasons. It is the time, too, in which to perfect a detailed plan of all the farm operations for the following year.

But the winter has claims upon the farmer for grander work than this. It lies in the power of every farmer to gain a very complete knowledge of some important branch of husbandry each winter. Let him select stock breeding this season, and thoroughly read the best works on the subject. This scientific investigation, combined with the practical knowledge he has acquired, ought to make him a successful breeder of stock. Next winter let the subject of sheep husbandry be taken up in the same way, then orcharding, small fruit culture, vine growing, and poultry breeding. As the years roll on, and the taste for study increases, as it invariably will, the pursuit of those branches of science may be taken up that have a particular bearing on agriculture, such as Botany, Entomology, Geology, general and agricultural Chemistry. A few winters spent in this manner, and the farmer will become the peer of the members of the so-called learned professions. Labor will be less irksome than before, for the mind will be employed on more pleasurable and profitable subjects of thought.

Now, if the farmer can induce a few of his neighbors to take a like subject to study, during the same winter, and they can meet occasionally and talk over the question they are reading about, comparing their experience with each other, and with the statements in the works they are reading, the result would be still better. Greater interest would be excited, and the facts gained would be immediately productive of much good.

It is estimated there are about 225,000 threshing machines in operation in the United States.