

Send us Your Opinion.

We went to Toronto to be present at the meeting of the Board of Agriculture and Arts, also the meeting of the Breeders of Shorthorns. When in the Queen's Hotel we were accidentally thrown into the company of the Hon. S. L. Tilley. We informed him that we failed to see any advantage to Canadians by imposing a duty on corn, and said that the Western States could produce corn much cheaper than we could, and that we required it too as raw material to make our beef, mutton, wool, butter and cheese, and to aid us in enriching our land. Mr. Tilley informed us that the duty was put on at the direct request of numerous farmers in Ontario, and for their benefit only, and that it would give his constituents in the eastern part of the Dominion great pleasure if it were removed. But he had informed them that as a duty was put on coal for their benefit, they should be willing to allow the duty on corn for the benefit of Ontario farmers. We informed Mr. Tilley that we believed we could convince him that it was not advantageous to us. Now we wish every one of our readers to aid us in convincing Mr. Tilley that we are right, that is, if you believe we are. But if you consider we are wrong, we wish you to let us know. The answering of this question is not in any way intended to act as a party or political one, as you know we have tried to avoid broaching on that ground in this journal; but we deem this of interest and importance to every farmer. Send us a postal card, and when you write we wish you to add either of the following lines:

TAKE THE DUTY OFF CORN,
OR
KEEP THE DUTY ON CORN.

We will keep a correct account and forward the result to Mr. Tilley. You will oblige by replying.

"Mr. Richard Gibson, stock-breeder, of Ilderton, Ont., speaking about his recent large importations of stock from England, spoke strongly against the vexatious quarantine laws which at present exist. It appears that after the steamship arrives at Halifax the stock is put aboard the cars and taken to Quebec, where they are kept in the quarantine yards for three months. During all this time they are at the expense of the owner, and in case they are found to have the foot and mouth disease, are slaughtered at once. Mr. Gibson says that in the opinion of leading veterinary surgeons three weeks instead of months is quite sufficient to disinfect cattle, and he thinks the Government should enquire further into the matter and see if a change could not be effected."

We extract the above from a political paper.

Although Mr. Gibson may be a large stock importer and breeder, member of the late Ontario Commission of Agriculture, and is now Vice-President of the B. A. Shorthorn Ass'n, we feel it our duty to condemn the reduction of the time for cattle to lay in quarantine, which we believe has been very properly fixed at three months. The best authority that we know of recommends the necessity of retaining them for three months, as that most dangerous disease Pleuro-pneumonia may remain in an animal, before showing the symptoms, nearly that length of time. It is that disease we have to guard against, and we are liable to import it either from the States or England. We have used our influence to try and prevent the introduction of the diseases to which stock are liable, and also to check the spread of diseases when any have been imported, and trust that no steps may be taken to shorten the time now fixed (three months) until we hear that the diseases are entirely eradicated from the countries from which we import. In fact we would rather commend the prohibition of importing live stock of any kind than to open the channel so that Canadian stock in general might become infected. We believe we are now free from any contagious disease, and let us try and keep so by every legitimate means. We are much surprised at such an opinion coming from Mr. Gibson.

Agricultural.

Suggestions for Drouthy Seasons.

The incalculable loss to farmers caused by the great drouth of last summer and fall has directed their enquiry to the opportune query: How shall we guard against the effect of such seasons on their recurrence? In Ontario the drouth has not been so long or so permanent as in the United States; but even here the question is an important one. When the pasture is scorched and the plains that have been wont to be covered with luxuriant grasses were bare as the great desert, what would be in such circumstances the best forage plant is naturally the query.

A writer in the New York Tribune is in favor of lucerne. He says: "It was very evident in passing over the drouthy districts that a good forage plant that could flourish in a dry season would be a great boon. These two years' experience may encourage a more general and thorough trial of lucerne. This plant seems to possess more valuable qualities for a forage plant than any other with which we are acquainted, more desirable even than clover, for the following reasons: It is perennial, it furnishes pasturage later in the season, it grows more rapidly, and stands drouth much better. Flint, in his 'Grasses and Forage Plants,' says of it: 'In a mellow or sandy soil lucerne has been known to send its long tap-roots down to a depth of thirteen feet; I am convinced that many of the failures in growing lucerne come from an improper selection and preparation of the soil.'

As drowning men catch at straws, so the above writer turns in the emergency to weeds. It is rather shocking to the ideas of good farming to have what has been considered as troublesome weeds recommended for cultivation, but, says he, the way in which pig-weed, purslane and plantain stood up green and succulent in the dusty earth and under the scorching sun of the past summer, when grass and clover were as brown and crisp as at mid-winter, suggests that prejudice be laid aside and these heretofore despised weeds be fairly judged as to their qualifications for forage plants. All of them are relished by stock. The plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), the only perennial of the three, has been cultivated to some extent for sheep pasturage, to which it seems better adapted than for other stock, on account of its low habit of growth. The *Amaranthus retroflexus*, or pig-weed, is an annual and seems to be endowed with a most vigorous constitution. When the main stalk is bitten off the little stump will send out a surprising number of thrifty branches in a short time. This plant, too, has been cultivated for forage, and it is certainly capable of yielding a large quantity. "That miserable pursley," purslane (*Portulaca oleracea*) is so well known that it needs but little mention. It is an annual, and was formerly used as a pot-herb. Every owner of a pig and garden patch is acquainted with the fattening qualities of its fleshy, nutritious leaves. It would not be well to experiment largely with these plants till well tested, but till lucerne becomes a success is there anything better offered for a drouthy season?"

Aside from clover, lucerne and what are more commonly called the grasses, let there be rye and wheat sown the preceding autumn, oats and barley early in the spring, followed by corn as soon as the ground is warm enough. Add to these sorghum, and Hungarian grass as required. If the grain crops mentioned are not wanted for soiling, they can be suffered as the season advances to ripen and then threshed; the same with corn to shell; thus there would be neither waste nor loss although the variety is so great.

The melilot, sweet clover, has its advocates as a forage plant. There can be no doubt of its great vitality, being able to stand any extreme of temperature. It grows luxuriantly on a sandy soil so barren as to support no other vegetation. Once sown it propagates itself annually by self-sown seed, if the seed be allowed to ripen. Though we have known the plant for many years, we know nothing of its value as a forage plant, so we give the testimony of Prof. C. S. Thorne, of the Ohio State University:—

"Sweet clover will grow quite luxuriantly in hard, poor clay, where even white clover will scarcely live at all, and grows much more rapidly than red clover in any soil, while in the soils that are, as is said, 'clover-sick,' it thrives as well as anywhere. It is a good forage plant for bees and for cattle, and is well adapted for soiling, as it makes a growth of four to six feet

during the season, and is said to bear two or three cuttings. A German analysis gives its hay a feeding value of \$15 per ton as against \$16.28 for very good red clover hay. While red clover, upon which our farming in many sections, and especially in clay lands, depends so essentially for crops of grain, is becoming more and more uncertain, it would seem to be worth while to try this 'fast weed' as a resource for recuperative green manuring, in heavy soils especially.

"To sum up, it is worth more to the farmer for soiling than red clover, because of its thrifty growth; it is a more reliable pasture for cattle, sheep, etc., than red clover, because it will thrive on soils where red clover sickens; it will yield equally as much fodder as red clover, because it will stand two or three cuttings; and it lacks but seven per cent. of the nutritious properties of red clover. We can add, we believe it is worth the cost of cultivation to the bee-keeper for honey alone, even though he is not the possessor of a four-footed animal, because its flow of nectar is not affected by atmospheric changes, as is the case with many plants, notably white clover and linden."

It may be well to give it a trial, sowing a small plot of it for soiling. An experiment with melilot may lead to good results. The mere consideration of the subject must be beneficial. Farmers will be brought more than heretofore to see the value of forage crops for soiling. There is every year a dry spell when some addition to the pasturage is a matter of necessity.

Notes for December.

The work of the farmer during this month may be summarized under these headings, preservation and utilization of the products of the past season; care of his stock; preparing for another year.

The grain crops are all in the barn and granary, or turned into hard cash, and the farmer has had another lesson on the important fact that the thorough cleaning and preparing of wheat or other grain for the market, is well paid for by the increased price. The inferior grain should be fed in the stock yard; in this way only does it pay. The root crops also stored for the winter, in the cellar, or root-house, or in the pit. We must bear in mind that frost is not the only state we have to guard against. Too high a temperature as well as too low must be avoided; in order to preserve roots in good condition we must keep them from growing. The cooler we can keep them without exposing them to the risk of freezing, the less liable they are to sprout; if the temperature is too high roots are liable to injury from sprouting; if it be too low their is the certainty of their being frozen; if too dry they are liable to be wilted, while too much moisture rots any roots.

The due care of live stock implies perfect cleanliness, good ventilation with sufficient warmth, good wholesome food, and (for horses especially) moderate exercise. This care farmers cannot afford to neglect.

Prepare your plans for your spring work; each year's experience should make you a better farmer. Be guided by this experience in your programme of work for the ensuing year. Experience is by no means the least important educator of the farmer.

Vegetation is now dormant in our climate; there is therefore little outdoor work this month. There is however in gardening as well as farming much of preparation for the coming spring, as well as care of the garden products for the winter supply. If there are any days of open dry weather, vacant ground not yet turned up to the frost, should be dug, and when necessary, for deepening the soil and renewing it, trenches from twelve to twenty inches deep. Trenching, it is true, is expensive, but there is no labor more remunerative. Manure can be brought by sleigh or wheeled carriage with greater ease than at any other season; it should be put in large heaps on the plots to which it is to be applied. A mixture of plaster will prevent its being fire-fanged and a covering with plaster and earth will save it from being frozen. None of our various root crops will bear the frost so well as parsnips and horseradish, and if any of these have been left in the ground they would keep there in better condition by being mulched with litter or earth; they will there keep uninjured till spring. The vegetables in the cellar or root-house should be carefully hand picked occasionally and decaying ones, if there be any such, removed.