

Notes from Devonshire, England.

[FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.]

Exeter, Devonshire, Eng., Sept. 10.

For the past two months I have been roaming about among the farmers of Devonshire, taking notes of their modes of doing business, and admiring the beautiful scenery with which they are surrounded. The farmer hereabouts I have found a whole-souled fellow, brimful of hospitality. The English farmers that I have come in contact with are not slaves (as I have heard them termed in Canada), but are just as free as the air they breathe. They are intelligent, industrious and generally contented.

Of course, just now there is great depression in agriculture, and some of them are "death on Americans" (which includes Canadians) for the way in which they invade the markets here with all kinds of produce. In this connection one of the leading English newspapers observes: "If it be asked whether, in the face of the prevailing gloom and doubts as to the eventual falling off in American competition, farmers may look hopefully to the future, our answer is in the affirmative. There is nothing in the realities as distinguished from the artificialities of the situation to prevent the British farmer from outlasting every competitor. He lives in a land blessed with Free Trade, which means that he can work his business at less cost, both as regards the price of labor and plant, than America. He has the richest and most constant market in the world at his very doors. His transport service is organized so that it does not—as in the case of his American rival—rob him of nearly all his profit. The British farmer has a tilth to deal with which to a great extent is excellent and easily worked. With these natural advantages in his favor, how is he to get a fair chance? The present Government, in introducing the Agricultural Holdings Act, would appear to have approached the solution of the question. The principle of that bill, if made operative, would be the beginning of all schemes for giving the farmer a clear field. The principle is that he should in his operations have what every other producer in the country has—security for his capital."

Americans, however, are not the only ones invading the English markets. Australia bids fair to be at no distant day a very powerful rival to the American continent. Several cargoes of Australian wheat have arrived here and been very favorably received.

Whilst the agricultural situation throughout Great Britain generally is said to be fraught with the gravest alarm, on account of heavy rains, certainly this part of England has no cause of complaint under that head. The most delightful weather I ever experienced has prevailed hereabouts for two or three weeks past. The immediate past week has been what they call here "smoking hot"—weather to me perfectly charming—with no sign of rain, and in consequence most of the grain in Devonshire has been "saved" in a good, healthy condition. The chief complaint in this neighborhood is over the failure of the potato crop. The grain is not put into barns here as in Canada, but is "ricked" and threshed out at leisure.

The mode of carrying grain in some parts of Devonshire is very old-fashioned, and on my seeing it, it struck me as being not only very peculiar but very romantic. As many of your readers are no doubt aware, certain parts of this county are hilly in the extreme, some of the farming lands rising to an extraordinary height, and it is found impossible to work a wagon or other vehicle on the sides of these hills. When harvest time comes, therefore, horses are supplied with a sort of huge

basket or cradle, strapped on to their backs, and the grain is loaded therein and so moved to the "mowey."

In the more remote parts of Devonshire the "great reaps" so popular in all parts of England many years ago are still kept up with all their attendant jollification. The hills before alluded to prevent the use of reaping machines.

In going over certain farms I noticed the ground covered with thousands of good-sized stones, and in one instance inquired of my friends the reason why they did not remove them, for I could not understand how a scythe, &c., could pass over the land and properly perform its work with such obstructions in its path. The answer to my query I will give you in nearly the same words as came to my ears: "Well, you see, the soil in these parts is naturally very wet, but what it would be like after rain if it wasn't for these stones it is difficult to say; after rain the sun strikes these stones (all lime rock) and makes them good and hot, so that their warmth actually dries the ground more than the direct rays of the sun; we therefore let them stop, you see, not only to dry the ground, but to warm it." That, to me, was a novel idea, and I could not forbear there and then making a note of it for the readers of the ADVOCATE.

Enormous quantities of sea weed and sea sand are used as manure by the farmers living any way near to the coast. Inland the staple manure seems to be lime and bone-dust.

Of course this is the county famous for its cream, and I fully bear out all that has been sung in praise thereof. The prevailing mode of scalding the milk is to stand the tins in water, and make the latter hot. The old way that I remember when a boy was to place the tins on live coals, and some follow this plan to-day.

It will perhaps be news to many Canadians to learn that sunflowers and tomatoes are no strangers in England. On a recent ramble in the country near Exeter I saw several groups of sunflowers, in every respect the same as I saw them in Canada. Tomatoes are exposed for sale in every fruit dealer's window.

In a leading seed store of this city I notice unusual prominence given to "American potatoes"—such as the "Early Rose" and "Pride of Ontario"—and I can assure you they make no mean display beside the best English spuds.

The statistical and commercial department of the Board of Trade recently issued a summary of the agricultural returns collected in this kingdom on June 4th. They show that the extent of land under the principal crops was as follows: Wheat, 2,890,136 acres; barley, 2,667,103 acres; oats, 2,656,575 acres; potatoes, 540,842 acres; hops, 67,715 acres. Compared with June 4, 1878, the foregoing shows an increase of 8 per cent. in barley, and of 6-4 in potatoes; a decrease of 10-2 per cent. in the area of wheat, 1-6 in oats, and 5-7 in hops. The total number of live stock in Great Britain on June 4 was: 5,856,599 cattle, 28,154,881 sheep, and 2,091,464 pigs. Sheep are 251,325 fewer than last year, while pigs are less in number by 391,784. Compared with 1878 there is an increase in cattle of 118,471.

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C. G. T. says: "I have made no better butter or cheese from tame grasses than from the wild. The wide leaf and blue joint varieties of the wild grasses, both for pasture and hay, were the most valuable." This may be true, but he forgets to compare the difference in the quantity produced by each. Five acres of wild grass to feed a cow, and one acre of tame grass! The wild strawberry is of fine flavor, yet who would say it is as valuable as one of our improved varieties?

Picking, Packing, Keeping and Marketing Apples.

Before picking is commenced, suitable places should be prepared in the orchard for the temporary storing of the apples. Select a dry spot of ground near the trees. Drive into the ground stakes at proper distances apart, against which set two or three boards on their edges, thus forming a bin with boards on three sides, leaving one side open to carry in the apples. If dry spots of ground cannot be obtained, lay a few old boards for the bottom of the bin, on which spread a little clean straw or hay. Make enough of these bins to hold the apples without mixing varieties. Apples taken from the trees before the commencement of the sharp frosts keep better than if left on until late in the fall.

Apples should be perfectly dry when taken from the trees and kept so until stored away. When picking use oval-shaped half-bushel baskets. Drop all inferior apples; be careful to put none in the basket but sound, smooth fruit, of fair size. When the basket is full carefully pour them in the bin, and when that is full, or at night, cover with boards to keep off the sun and rain. Never cover the apples while in the orchard with straw. It makes them too warm, and there is no danger of the fruit being injured by frost until quite late in the season. They must be kept dry and from the sun.

To keep apples nicely a dry, airy, light, clean cellar is necessary. The sides and ceiling of the cellar should be cemented with plaster to keep an even temperature of cold, and the bottom of the cellar cemented with waterproof cement to keep out the dampness. In such a cellar bins three feet wide may be constructed around the sides and wider ones through the centre. These bins may be filled with apples from the bottom to the height of five or six feet, without danger of injury to the bottom apples by the weight of the upper ones. Make the necessary upright partitions in the bins to keep each variety separate. Apples keep much better when stored in large quantities than if spread out in layers on shelves. When bins cannot be constructed in the cellar the apples may be put into barrels and headed up tightly, and stored away in the cellar. In this way they usually keep tolerably well. Vegetables of no kind should be stored in the cellar with apples. In a temperature suitable for keeping the latter most vegetables will freeze.

On the approach of cold weather the apples in the orchard should be carefully moved to the cellar, putting away none but sound fruit. Leaves or straw should not be put in with the fruit. They draw dampness and speck and rot the apples. Apples put away according to these instructions may be kept until late in the following spring—late keepers until midsummer.

When packing for market new barrels are preferable; old ones will answer provided they are sound and clean. Old or new barrels, the middle hoops must be well nailed to keep them from slipping down, and the nails hammered down on the inside of the barrel. When packing select half a bushel of smooth apples of uniform size. With the hand place a layer in the bottom of the barrel, fitting them closely together and laying them stem down. Now place a row around the side of the barrel with the stem next the stave; then fill up the centre closely like the first layer, stem down, after which the barrel may be filled by pouring them in carefully from the measure. When the barrel is half full shake it a little, and as it is filled continue the shaking, occasionally giving it sharp raps on the floor, which packs the apples closely together. When full level up with smaller apples, making the top row half an inch above the staves of the barrel. Loosen the top hoops, lay on the head, and with a screw or lever-press force it down to its place; tighten the hoops, remove the press, put on the top hoop and nail it fast. Nail cleats on the inside of the staves to keep the head in. Now turn up the bottom end of the barrel and mark it for the top, with the name and quantity of apples, being careful to give good measure. If you wish to ship the apples in the fall or beginning of winter, the packing may be done in the orchard, but the barrels must be kept dry after packing. If the apples are to be shipped during the winter or spring a packing place must be prepared at or near them. When apples are shipped in cold weather the barrels should be lined with paper. If the weather is very cold, two thicknesses of paper being used and the barrels tight, apples may be shipped a considerable distance with safety. Care, however, must be taken that no part of the wood touches the fruit. —[Cor. Germantown Telegraph.