

THE ILLUSTRATED Journal of Agriculture

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SPRING

4 Lincoln Avenue, Montreal.

February, 27th, 1893.

Before this number of the Journal reaches our readers, we may fairly hope that the longest and hardest winter known in our province for years will have nearly finished its dreary course. From the 19th of December till the date of the present writing, one almost uninterrupted succession of zero weather has tried the moral and physical health of the people. Fuel, thanks to the good store of coal laid in by the wise foresight of our dealers, has not mounted to such an exorbitant price as might have been expected. Bread and meat have remained at reasonable rates, thanks to the perfection of our means of communication; and, altogether, no great suffering has been apparent among our poorer classes. Payments have been fairly met when due, and we hear from all sides that, with the advent of spring, business may be expected to start again into renewed life, and the trade of the whole Dominion be all that its best friends can wish.

With spring comes work; and in order to carry on that work without any unnecessary delay, every farmer should make such preparations as shall enable him to set to work at once as soon as the combined influence of the sun and the wind shall have dried the land sufficiently. There should be no waiting for the smith to sharpen the harrow-tines, or for the collar maker to repair the harness. The horses, too, should be prepared for their coming work by food and exercise; for it is no joke for an animal to be

taken out of a stable or yard where he has been idling away his time, for weeks perhaps, with his belly ignorant of anything but straw and a little hay, and to be immediately compelled to draw the plough or harrow through a ten hour day. Many a horse has been rendered useless for weeks by this treatment.

Post and rails for fencing should be got ready and laid down where they will be wanted. Manure, where not already drawn out, should be laid up in well built cubic heaps, each load carted on to the preceding one; and, after being carefully trimmed, as soon as the weather permits, a foot thick of earth should be thrown over the top of the mixen.

Cows will be soon dropping their calves; ewes will be lambing; both of these will require attention as to food, and attention to the food of cows and ewes previous and subsequent to parturition is of the highest importance. The Arab woman dismounts from her camel, gives birth to a child, and remounts immediately after, as if nothing had happened. But it is not so with the highly refined females of our modern civilisation. We all know what care a woman of the non-working classes requires before and after her confinement, and it is a similar care that is required by the highly organised constitution of the improved breeds of sheep and cattle, for both of which no food is so serviceable in doing away with the dangers attendant on parturition as linseed, either in the form of cake, or the grain itself ground up with sufficient oats to absorb the oil, and mixed with dampened chaff.

Sows, too, require attention, though they can generally take pretty good care of themselves. Their litter should be scanty and short, when expected to pig—they keep their time almost to the hour—112 days—If any of the litter die, they should be removed at once, as the sow is very likely to eat them, and sows sometimes by this means acquire a taste that seldom leaves them. In the case of a very fat, negligent sow, that seems likely to overlie her young ones, a rail fixed round the sty about 6 inches from the floor affords a refuge for them.

Oatmeal and water, given lukewarm, is about the best food for a sow after pigging. For the young ones barley or corn, and pease, ground together, in the proportion of 4 of corn to one of pease, will bring them along nicely after weaning. Geld the males and spray the females at from 10 to 14 days old, except of course those to be kept for stock. An unsprayed sow-pig is a troublesome beast, and if slaughtered when at heat is, ough! Pigs are too frequently weaned too soon: six weeks at least they should be on the sow.

If the litter is numerous, one or two may be killed for sucking-pigs: delicious indeed, if well dressed, and not over a month old.

The Great Christmas Market at Islington.

What a change the prices of meat in London have undergone since the year 1874. At the Xmas market that year, the best Scots, Devons, and Welsh rants were worth 6s. 10d a stone of 8 lbs., equal to about 21 cents a pound, "sinking the offal," and on the 12th December, 1892, the finest 90 stone beast in the land could have been bought for 16 cents a pound; \$35.00 a head of difference!

Our readers will understand that all cattle are sold at Islington by salesmen. The buyer looks at a beast,

judges its slaughtered weight to be so and so, and offers accordingly; then comes the chaffering between the two: that does not take up much time, as they know each his own business pretty thoroughly; the beast, or the lot of beasts, is sold, the buyer pays his cheque, at one of the banks, to the salesman; the salesman sends his cheque to the owner of the cattle by the night's post, with a statement of sales, condition good or bad of the beasts, faults to be found or perfections to be praised in the cattle; and the affair is finished and done with.

The feeling as to the future was that prices would be better. During the latter fall, multitudes of half-fat beasts were sold, their owners fearing that, owing to the short hay-crop, sheep would be scarce, but the roots have made wonderful progress, and many farmers see a prospect of not turning out their fattening beasts till they are duly ripe.

Sheep, too, as regards the best short-wools, were more saleable. Good Downs, from 60 lbs. to 68 lbs.—whether Southdowns, Hampshires, or Shropshires, makes no difference—fetched from \$10.00 to \$11.30 a head; while great, coarse long-wool ewes weighing 80 lbs. when slaughtered, were only worth \$9.50.

Small, "London pigs"—from 45 lbs. (1) to 50 lbs., the four quarters—brought from 36.75 to \$7.50 each.

English grain-markets—

Average price of wheat

December 10th..... 26s. 10d. a quarter

Average price of barley

December 10th..... 25s. 1d. a quarter.

Average price of oats

December 10th..... 17s. 4d. a quarter

No quotation for Canadian wheat on Mark Lane (where does it go to?), Canadian barley is noted at 18s to 20s a quarter of 400 lbs., while Saale, Moldavian, &c., goes as high as 46s. a quarter of 448 lbs.

Canadian oats are worth 16s. a quarter of 304 lbs., while New-Zealand oats are quoted as high as 28s. a measured quarter.

The Competition of Agricultural Merit.

THE GENERAL REPORT TO THE COMMISSIONER OF AGRICULTURE AND COLONISATION, QUEBEC.

The undersigned have the honour to submit to you the report, as judges of the Provincial Competition of Agricultural Merit, for the year 1892.

This is the third year of the Provincial Competition, inaugurated in 1890, the duration of which is fixed for five years, one year for each of the five agricultural districts into which the province is divided. This summer, the competition took place in district No 3, comprising the following 16 counties:

Arthabaska, Beauce, Bellechasse, Bonaventure, Dorchester, Gaspé, Kamouraska, Lévis, L'Islet, Lotbinière, Mégantic, Montmagny, Nicolet, Rimouski, Témiscouata, Wolfe.

We commenced visiting the farms on the 7th of last June. We have made a special report on each of the 80 competitors, but we thought it useless to print all of them, and we determined only to publish those that are included in the general report.

The district in which the competition was held this year, is much greater in extent, particularly as to length, than the district of last year.

We did our best to place clearly before the farmers the good examples to

(1) The perfect leg a pickled pork, fed on barley-meal and skim-milk, for the "West-end" trade, weighs four pounds. Ed.

be followed, as well as the errors to be avoided; and we tried, especially, to make them all understand that intelligence, an orderly method, economy, and resolution would tend to the prosperity of the farmer, under whatever climate and in whatever circumstances he might find himself.

It will be observed that, as we did last year, we have laid great stress upon the utilisation of manures. However favourable may be the results obtained in a moist climate, where rains are frequent, like England, by spreading manure as a *top-dressing*, we unanimously agree that in a country like this where summers are so dry, there is only one really profitable way of employing manure, namely, *ploughing it in*. Still, in certain cases, according to circumstances, such as a second year's meadow, immediately after the hay has been cut, and during rainy weather, a light coat of well-rotted well-broken up dung, mixed with bog-earth, will do good: for the grass, pushed along rapidly by the manure will guard it from the rays of the sun.

The same effect will be produced on young, growing grain, especially where grass-seeds take with difficulty. The take of new grasses will be ensured by a light top-dressing of dung. But in carting this on, the wheels of the tumbrils must be wide, and the dung thoroughly mixed beforehand. (1)

The accounts, as a rule, leave much to be desired, though this is a matter of great importance to the farmer; for if they are well kept, they will not only show him what his profits for the year are, but also teach him what crops or what operations bring in the greatest remuneration; and, at the same time, he will learn what those are that yield the least return, or perhaps turn out to be a dead loss. We particularly advise farmers to make out, at the close of each year, an inventory, as accurate as possible, of their stock, implements, etc., and to compare these inventories with each other.

We strongly recommend the use of plaster in the stables and cattle-sheds to absorb the gases that render them morbid, and, at the same time, to preserve the most costly element of the manure, i. e., the nitrogen.

A diploma of the *highest merit*, and a silver medal, are granted to each of those who obtain 85 points out of a 100; a diploma of *great merit* and a bronze medal for 75 points, and a diploma *merit* for 65 points.

In making this our third report of the competition of Agricultural merit, we have thought it our duty to add a few remarks on the present state of agriculture in the province of Quebec, and more especially on what it ought to be. These remarks ought perhaps to have been made in the first report of the competition, but the difficulty, then, would have been to make them judiciously. Now, however, that the previous reports have displayed more in detail the state of our province as regards agriculture, it is a much simpler task for the judges who have the honour to send you the present report to express their ideas on this subject.

AGRICULTURE.

As to the general farming of the province of Quebec, our opinion is that the direction towards the dairy-industry, given to it by both the Dominion and the local governments, is founded on correct views.

The greater part of our soil has been ruined by the abuse of grain-cropping. As to meat, it is almost if not quite impossible for us to compute

(1) About all we have ever contended for. Ed.