

TRAINING STEERS TO THE YOKE.

Perhaps, in all agricultural practice, there is nothing in which we differ so far from the dictates of reason, by which we ought to be guided, as in the training of steers for the yoke. The child, with all his reason, is subject to a gradual introduction into the various fields of labor in which he is expected to operate. The man who is to be initiated into the Masons' Lodge, has to be assured over and over again, that he "wont be hurt," before he will venture to tread the halls from which "no tales are told." In fact it is a rule of reason, in every other instance, to train gradually the eye, the ear, and the sense. But when steers are to be trained for the yoke, no heed is given to the dictates of reason. They are broken in some way to draw, and to walk before the ponderous load; but whether according to the teachings of mercy or reason, is a subject of investigation with neither the philanthropist or moralist. The result but gained—the labor performed, and no inquiries are made.

When a pair of animals are to be broken, or more properly trained, to the yoke, the farmer secures the aid of boys and men enough to yard them, catch them, and put upon their necks the yoke, and about their horns the ropes by which they are to be led. The poor beasts, frightened almost beyond the power of moving, stand trembling amid their captors, subdued by naught save brutal force. Once secure with the bows about their necks, they are told to "go." They may start away with all their might, endeavoring by the use of their every power to free themselves from the presence of their captors, but they are fully as apt to stand trembling in mortal fear. If they do not start, the whip is applied, if this does not start them their tails are wrung, clubs are used, and last of all fire, or the approach of some cowardly dog gives them the use of their limbs, and they—go! Two of the ablest youths among their captors, guide their movements on either side and endeavor to hinder their "running away." But on they gallop at their highest speed, urged on by the very presence of their drivers, until perhaps brought up by some fence crossing their route. Here spectators again approach, and remarks upon the probable disposition of each—their ease to break—their appearance, future value, &c.

But I need not describe further this oft repeated scene,—it is familiar, and has had many witnesses. It can, as a system, have no advocates, when the better way which we are about to describe, becomes generally known. And yet it may, unless a certain class—opposed to book-farming—can have the privilege of learning it from some travelling conjuror, at a cost of five or more dollars, instead of from the RURAL for nothing.

The training of cattle for the yoke, may be done as easily as of colts for the harness, and with as little expense to the spirits of the animal. But in order to accomplish this, we must possess ourselves of abundant patience. We must also have a will for the work—it should be a love—coupled with unflagging resolution. Possessing these, we should accustom to be taught (for what is it but teaching) to our presence, and if possible to being handled. But if this is impracticable from lack of time or other cause,—provide a well fenced "prison yard" or "schoolroom," in which to exercise them; in some place where they have been in the habit of running when unrestrained. The yard should be about five or six rods long, and from two to three rods wide—if the cattle are very wild, not so long, so that, with all their efforts, they may not be able to escape but a little way from the presence of their teacher. In getting your animals—not more than four—into the yard, use care that they may not be frightened, and begin by taming, and accustoming them to your presence. Keep them moving about the yard at liberty, making use of the signals common in driving trained cattle. Your first object is to weary them while under your power, and as they have much farther to travel than you, this will soon be done, so that you may manage them considerably; turning them about and perhaps stopping them. Proceed no faster than you can do without whipping or forcing, or what is more important, scaring them. When they are sufficiently trained so that you can handle them without alarm, you may put the yoke on them, but they can be taught as fast for a considerable time without the yoke—until they may be driven about and stopped, and turned round at pleasure. Of course specific directions for action in every case cannot be given, but the system is capable of general adoption, and is better for wild, unmanageable steers, than any other. Its advantages are, that the animal is trained to the yoke with-