

## Our Scottish Letter.

September is usually a busy month with Scottish farmers, but this season has been an exception to the general rule. Harvest had in most cases been finished by the middle of the month, or even earlier, and the farmers had more leisure to attend to the other interests which concerned them. Sales of Shorthorn and Aberdeen-Angus cattle, rams of all the breeds of sheep—Black-faced Cheviot, Border Leicester and Shropshire—and Clydesdale and Hackney horses, have been numerous, and prices at all of them have been well sustained. Before referring to these at length, a word must be said on farming prospects in general. The abnormal character of 1893 as an agricultural year has been frequently referred to, and possibly nothing connected with it is more striking than the different stories which would be related of it by farmers in Scotland and the north of England, and those in the west and south of England. A dry season like 1893 fits the northern part of the island to a nicety, but this year at least it has meant disaster and famine in the southern part of the kingdom. There, there is neither grass nor fodder, and many of the farmers who in recent years have gone from Scotland to England are earnestly wishing they were back again north of the Tweed. The tables are turned, and the north is the land of Goshen, while the south is like the region round about Gaza—desert. Our crops have all harvested well. There is not the bulk of grain in the stack yard which is desirable from the foddering point of view; and now that foreign countries send us such supplies of grain, this is of greater importance than it once was. The hay crop in general was an average, and in some localities it was more than an average. Those who have good supplies of it will do well, although prices—thanks to foreign friends—are less buoyant than was to be anticipated from the scarcity in the south. It is selling at present at from £5 to £8 per ton. Oats are a good crop, and the quality of the grain is excellent. Barley, curious to say, is not well colored, and to some extent disappointing. Wheat used to be the crop of the year, but this is altered now, and while many continue to grow it, less attention is paid to its price and quality than once was the case. You send such quantities of it to us from the Northwest that it scarcely pays to grow it here, except in the vicinity of large towns, where there is a good demand for wheat straw and farmers find it profitable to grow the crop for the sake of the straw alone. Beans are only grown on what we call carse land—heavy, stiff clay—which requires a great amount of hard work to get it into order. The past season has been a very favorable one for them, and the crop is better than an average. The position of the Scottish farmer at the present time is much more favorable than it was a year ago; at the same time seasons of plenty and scarcity do not affect his financial position nearly so much as they once did, because the amount of foodstuffs which are imported serves to equalize the markets so that prices maintain a wonderful uniformity. Live stock is more and more coming to be regarded as the sheet anchor of agriculture here, and recent sales have tended to illustrate this in a marked degree. The ram sales are great events, and crowds of breeders attend them from all parts of the country. So far the highest individual price has been paid for a Border Leicester ram, namely, £110, but Black-faced rams have made such prices as £87, £65 and £50. Shropshire rams are in England commanding much higher prices—making, indeed, record prices; but even in Scotland, at Mr. Buttar's sale at Corston, £30 was paid for one by an English buyer. The highest price realized for a Cheviot ram this season has been £11. This breed is not nearly so popular as it once was. It excels all the northern breeds in quality of wool, but the poor price which this commodity is now making does not warrant farmers in continuing to breed Cheviots, when breeds which, although not to be compared to the Cheviot for wool, surpass them in mutton properties can be bred to better advantage. The Black-faced ewe has much stronger maternal instincts than the female of any of the other breeds, and hence is very popular for crossing with the Border Leicester ram to produce strong, early matured lambs. Border Leicester mutton is not the first quality; the value of the breed lies in the merit of the ram for crossing with Black-faced or Cheviot ewes. The produce of the former cross are called cross-breeds, of the latter half-breeds a tacit acknowledgment of the distinct character of the Border Leicester and Black-faced breeds, and the possible intermingling of the blood of the other two breeds at an earlier period of their history.

SCOTLAND YET.

Some dairymen allow their heifers to go till two years old without breeding, thinking that it is essential to have a large, well-developed cow before the time for calving. This idea seems all right at first sight, but when we know of heifers calving at two years old, and producing in the neighborhood of two hundred and thirty pounds of butter the first season, it is worthy of consideration at what age they should be bred. No doubt some of the breeds have suffered in size by early breeding, but when the milking qualities are improved and the constitution not weakened, surely early coupling is an advantage.

## Sheep Breeding in Alberta.

A VISIT TO MR. F. WHITE'S MERINO RANCH, MITTFORD, ALBERTA.

BY A FARMER'S DAUGHTER.

Sheep breeding is one of the important industries which is yet in its infancy in the Northwest. It is receiving considerable attention from a few breeders throughout Alberta now, but as yet has not aroused anything like the interest the importance of the industry merits. In the Calgary district there are thousands of acres of undulating prairie lands which seem especially adapted for pastures, the grasses being those which sheep most delight in and thrive on, and they are not afflicted with the diseases so common in other countries. On the different farms of the C. A. C. and C. Company, extending from Gleichen to Swift-Current, there are something like forty thousand sheep. Next to them, and the largest individual breeder in Alberta, is Mr. Francis White, of Mitford. Besides these, there are a few ranches breeding on a much smaller scale, but in a country which can support its hundreds of thousands of sheep this may be considered only a beginning, and for a settler who has given any attention to the industry, and has sufficient capital to give him a good start, no better opening can possibly present itself. Merino Ranch, the property of Messrs. F. White & Co., is situated on the south side of the Bow River, thirty-two miles west of Calgary. It contains thirty-four thousand acres of splendid pasture land, well watered by the Bow River in front, the pumping pond at the back, besides numerous creeks and springs which intersect the ranch, making it an ideal place for sheep farming. Mr. White's first importation was made seven years ago, with twenty-one hundred Merino sheep from Montana. Since then, finding the additional price for wool did not make up for the loss in mutton, he has crossed with Shropshires, thus securing a larger sheep, getting almost the same price for wool, and finding them better mothers. The band at present numbers 4,300 sheep and 1,750 lambs, and is always kept at much the same size. In the summer the sheep are divided into flocks of from 1,500 to 2,000 each, a shepherd and three or four dogs taking care of them as they wander over the prairie. At night they are brought under shelter, and are held by portable corrals of wire netting or hurdles, the shepherds occupying tents or log huts which are erected at intervals. Their pastures are changed as often as possible, so as not to allow any distastes for the grass over which they have frequently trodden. In winter they are held in four camps; two are called the home camps, two and a-half miles apart, where all the lambs and weaker sheep are kept and fed hay two or three times a day, in the outcamps being all the strong sheep, which are only fed during very stormy or cold weather. Each of these camps consists of sheds large enough to hold 2,500 sheep, stable for horses, and cabin for shepherds. Until last winter the dry sheep were not fed, but since then Mr. White recognizes the advantages of feeding all once a day during the very cold weather. This necessitates the putting up of from 350 to 400 tons of hay for the winter supply, but the difference is more than made up by the condition in which the flocks come out in the spring. The lambing season begins about May 12th, and lasts for about five weeks, the crop generally averaging about ninety per cent. Strange to say, Mr. White informed me they had very few twins in the band, nor do they care for them, owing to the difficulty in large bands of keeping the mother and lambs together. The market for mutton is yet purely local, the dealers doing whatever shipping is done, but as it is the demand is sometimes greater than the supply. The wethers are sold off at two years old, and at that age average, dressed, from fifty to sixty lbs. At the time of your correspondent's visit shearing operations were in progress, one of the finest sights in connection with the business. The sheep are driven into a long shed which is divided into pens, the front part, on which the shearing is done, being floored. Two shearers take up their position in each pen, and they catch the sheep, shear it and tie up the fleece, some of them being so expert that they average a hundred fleeces a day. The wool is not washed, but turned into a powerful press from which it is turned out somewhat similar to a bale of hay. These bales are sowed in canvas, sold to eastern buyers, and by them shipped to Montreal, Toronto and Hamilton. The clip this year, notwithstanding the unusual severity of last winter, averaged about 5½ lbs. Unfortunately for the Northwest sheep farmer, the price of their wool has declined during the last five years, wool which then sold for sixteen cents bringing now only twelve and a-half. Mr. White, however, considers the outlook for successful sheep farming in Alberta very bright. He has had considerable experience as a breeder and manager of live stock, and is well versed in everything pertaining to sheep husbandry, so that under his efficient management the future success of the ranch seems most assured.

## FARM.

## Plan for Piggery.

In our July 1st issue, we offered \$5.00 as a prize for the most satisfactory plan for a piggery for the farmer. The successful competitor is Mr. Walter Cowie, Valens. Among the many essays which we have received, none have given what we would consider an ideal piggery, although by taking ideas from different papers we will endeavor to give a few plans from which farmers can select their choice and make changes to suit their conditions and ideas. The essayists favor two general styles, viz., one having pens on either side of feeding passage, or on one side only. Another plan given by D. F. Wilson, Brandon, is the octagon or eight-sided figure, which has some good points.

The important qualifications of a piggery are a good, dry location, convenient to the other farm buildings, to be substantially and cheaply built of material of a lasting nature, the building having convenience in feeding and shifting pigs, in cleaning out and saving the manure, also rat-proof and free from draught. For a building with pens on either side of the passage, a very economical width is about twenty-five feet, which allows for a five foot passage, lengthwise, between the pens, and ten feet deep for the pens, including the partitions. The length must depend on the number of pigs that are kept, which will be decided by the builder.

The material used in building will depend somewhat on condition. A frame building will answer very well, but should under all circumstances have a stone or brick foundation which should rise to two or three feet above the surface of the ground, says Wm. Thompson, Blenheim, so that when wood is used it will be up high and dry. It is necessary to have a wall that will ensure warmth, also one that will not become damp or frosty in very cold weather. A very satisfactory wall is made of fairly good lumber, nailed on the outside of studding and batoned; the inside should be covered with rough lumber, then a layer of tar paper, which should be covered with boards up to where the pigs can reach. Above that, strips of lathing answer well for holding paper in position. As will be seen, this wall has an air space which renders it frost-proof; also is not easily affected by sudden changes of weather. Recommended by D. Wylie, Cardinal, to have two thicknesses of lumber outside, tar paper between, lined inside, and stuffed with sawdust or grout if necessary.

There is a great difference of opinion as to which is the best floor to use, some claiming a great deal for cement, while others talk up the block pavement, or a plank floor. The superior qualifications claimed for the cement floor are its lasting and easy cleaning qualities, but they are considered by others as being too cold in winter, which produces rheumatism and death of young stock. Block pavements are recommended by very few. They are objected to on the strength of their being disagreeable to clean, always damp and foul smelling. The plank surface floor has, however, no fault finders, and appears to be the best yet. It is made in the same manner as the cement floor, all but the surface. In building it, the surface soil must be removed until a solid foundation is reached, which should be filled in with small stones or gravel, then a layer of mortar, then two inches of Portland cement, in which cedar scantlings are embedded, making a plain surface. The planks can be nailed to the scantlings, making a firm floor, which will be rat-proof and healthy. It has also been recommended not to spike the floor down, but to slide the planks in under the trough from the alley without nailing, so that they can be easily removed in order to thoroughly clean and ventilate the floor, which is certainly a very important matter. It is necessary to have a gutter running lengthwise of the pen into which moisture will drain. There are three situations recommended for the gutter, one being just beneath the feeding trough, arranged so as to be cleaned out from the feeding alley and covered with a plank which is easily removed. The objection to this situation would be the disagreeable smell in the passage and near the pigs while feeding. A more favored place would be at the side of the pen farthest from the feeding passage, where all the filth will the more readily accumulate and be cleaned out every day or two. When pigs are being fed on refuse from the cheese factory or creamery, the forces will be quite liquid. The centre situation has commendable features, says John Holborn, Belmont; it should lead through the entire building to a manure shed, where it should be thrown on long manure or muck. A slight fall should be given to the gutter, which will render it very easily cleaned with an old broom. The floor should also incline to the gutter wherever it is placed. The gutter should be flat bottomed, and wide enough to admit of a shovel or fork to be used in cleaning it.

Thos. Grayson, Moosomin, claims that the floor of the feed-room and alley requires no plank covering, but a cement or concrete surface gives best satisfaction. Cement troughs have been recommended, and we see no reason why they will not give satisfaction.

Each pen should open into a roomy yard. T. W. Smith, Scotland, recommends manure alleys. The partition dividing the yard should have gates whose ends meet the side of the pen, and when all the gates are opened an alleyway will be formed through which the manure is wheeled or drawn away.