

# THE CANADA FARMER

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NEW SERIES.

## The Field.

### Late Autumn Work.

The seeding of winter wheat, fall ploughing of stubbles and fallows, and gathering of the fruit and roots, having been properly attended to, there often remains a period of comparative leisure to the farmer during the latter part of autumn, which can be profitably employed in many ways.

**THATCHING AND TRIMMING STACKS.**—If this work is not done early in autumn, it should be at once proceeded with. It is a practice not followed in this country as much as it should be, and for want of it much of the outstanding crops, on farms where the barn room is insufficient, are seriously damaged by the late fall rains. Haystacks, especially, should be well thatched, otherwise several tons may be so much damaged by wet as to be practically worthless for fodder. It is a mistake often made to suppose that the cost of thatching is greater than the loss of what hay may become damaged by wet. There is no occasion for either expense being incurred or loss being suffered. Every farmer should learn and practice the art of thatching as part of the knowledge of his profession, and as being as great a necessity as to know how to perform any other operation on the farm. Thousands of stacks of hay are put up in the field where they are cut, in an easy, careless manner, and stand neglected till the winter is nearly over, when the hay comes out smelling with mould and dampness, and with half its value as fodder gone to the winds, simply from sheer carelessness. The stacks having been properly thatched, the next operation is to trim the sides all around so as to leave a close solid surface below the roof to the exposure of the weather. This can be done by using an old scythe blade, well sharpened, and fixed to a long straight handle. With this shave the sides of the stacks till they look smooth and solid, after-

wards raking up and carrying to the barn or hayloft all the loose material shaved off. Stacks left unshaved often have a great quantity of loose stalks of hay hanging about them, which get soaked with and retain moisture after every storm, thus helping to injure the quality of the fodder for some distance into the stack.

Grain stacks seldom suffer from want of thatching, as besides being much more closely and neatly built than haystacks, they are usually threshed out as soon as the machine can be got to work, and the grain stored away in the barn, leaving only the straw to become a prey to the eccentricities of our changeable climate.

**PASTURES AND MEADOWS.**—These should not be allowed to be too closely fed down by stock, and as soon as they are shut up from them, the farmer should take his spade in hand and carefully go over them, breaking to pieces and scattering every little heap of cattle or horse-droppings he may see. If there is any fine well decomposed manure or compost to be had about the premises, it should be carefully scraped together, hauled out to the meadows, and scattered over the poorest spots as far as it will go. All bunches of grass that have been rejected by the stock should be cut with a sharp scythe, or bill-hook, and all roots of large perennial weeds dug out and carried to the compost heap.

**DITCHES AND WATERCOURSES** should all be cleared out before the heavy rains set in. Outlets must be made at such points in the meadows and fallows where the water is likely to accumulate and freeze up at the approach of winter into solid sheets of ice, should it find no means of egress. The cheapest and quickest way to do this is with the plough and scraper. In connection with this matter, we may ask if some one cannot invent a good, cheap, portable machine that will enable the work of scraping out the bulk of the earth from a ploughed ditch to be roughly, but cheaply done by horse-power, to be afterwards finished up neatly with the spade. The road scrapers in ordi-

nary use are too wide for this purpose, where the saving of land is an object. Something that would neatly clean out the furrows at one operation in newly sown fields of gram, and yet leave no ridges of earth at the side, would also be desirable, and better than the plough for that purpose.

**BARN-YARDS** ought to be thoroughly cleaned out, and all the manure in them carried to the fields, either to be spread, or else composted in a large heap to be ready for application in spring. This done, the yard should be well covered with a good litter of straw, before the stock are turned into it to pass the winter season. Stables, byres, pig-styes and poultry-houses will be the better and healthier of a thorough washing and cleaning out, and a fumigation with burning sulphur to destroy insects, before the stock are to be housed in them for the winter.

**FENCES** should be put in good repair. This is easier and better done in the fall than during the busy and pushing season of spring. Begin with those that are in tolerable repair, needing only a few stones, a rail, or a board here and there; fix them up tight, and the stakes firm. Where rail fences are much out of repair and need re-laying, the work of pulling down the old fence and laying the bottom portion of it anew can be done now, and as soon as the first tolerable fall of snow enables a sleigh to run, the additional rails required can be drawn from the woods, the fence made to its full height, and if the ground be then frozen too hard to put in the stakes, they can be used to lock the corners, and so be ready on hand in spring as soon as the frost is out sufficiently to allow of stakes and riders being put on. On well managed farms, where the saving of land and keeping out weeds and briars from the fence corners is an object, straight fences, with the ends of the rails morticed into posts, or set between upright stakes, driven into the earth and tied together at the top with wire, on which the top rail rests, are much preferred to the ordinary zigzag style of the country, and as fewer rails are