

Agricultural Stock-taking.

As this month is a kind of between seasons with the farmer, as well as the merchant, it is a good time for stock-taking. Stock-taking is as necessary to successful farming as to successful merchandising, and in the comparative leisure of this month it will repay every farmer to calmly review the situation, both retrospectively and prospectively. We live to learn, and no doubt our experience of the past year has some lessons for us. What particular branches of our mixed husbandry have yielded the best returns during the last season? What are the prospects for efforts along the same lines next season? These are questions of great import to the progressive farmer. We must learn from our mistakes as well as from our successes. Let us pass in review our last year's business, and see if there is not a possibility of doing better next year. And as good cultivation is at the foundation of all successful farming, let us see if we attend to this matter right. Did we work our land before it was in proper condition, and have it take in lumps and have a short crop of straw, or did we wait till it became dry, so that it worked to a fine tilth, allowing the plant access to the fertility of the soil, enabling it to start a vigorous growth at once, which it can never do if the soil becomes hardened and crusty? A good vigorous start in the growth of a plant means a good growth all through. A stunted plant means a poor yield, even on good soil. Working stiff clay soils before they are properly dried out is a common and disastrous mistake. How about the seed we used? Was it the best obtainable, or was it only medium—not to say poor? Did we select it from the best-producing field, and then select only the best from that by separating and winnowing out of it all the inferior grains? Had it strong vitality, without which it could not produce a vigorous plant and assert itself to overcome any drawbacks in the season? Good seed in a good seed-bed is a great help in overcoming conditions of the season that are unfavorable to crop production, while poor seed and careless cultivation never gives a paying return. Have we made any mistakes in cultivating and seeding the past season? If we have, likely we can see them now, and profit next season by avoiding such a course again. Again, in looking over our live-stock husbandry, can we see that we have made a fair profit with each animal to which we have fed our raw products? If we have been milking a herd of cows, are we satisfied with the returns from each individual in the herd. Have we taken any pains to find out, by the scales and Babcock tester, if half of the herd are not paying their board, and so eating up the profit the other half might be giving us? If we have not made this investigation, it would surprise many of us to do so; and if dollars are what we are after in dairying, we cannot do it too soon. Weed the boarders out, and give what they were eating to producers, then we will be sure of a profit in dairying.

Another important matter for review is, had we a full supply of succulent feed last season to keep up a full flow of milk when the pastures were drying up? If we had we felt happy, with cheese at over 12 cents a pound; but if we had not, the high price of cheese would not make us rich. Here is where the majority of farmers fail in their dairy business—by not having plenty of good succulent food for milch cows all through the year. Think over this matter now, when you have time, and prepare against the dry time and short pastures that we are liable to encounter again.

Did our pork business yield us a profit last year? If not, why not? The price was good, but remember price is only one item in profit, and not the main one. Cost of production is the important thing. There were lots of hogs marketed this last season that did not pay—hogs that were stunted or starved on improper foods; hogs that were so long in maturing that they "ate their heads off"; hogs that were fed through their growing season on grain entirely, instead of having part of their ration of less expensive and more wholesome foods, such as clover and rape. Can you see where you made any losing mistakes in this matter? If so, now is the time to size them up and prepare to correct them, by giving the young hogs plenty of green peas, clover and rape, along with the by-products of the dairy, and have healthy, growthy pigs on a cheap ration, in which there is not much costly grain.

Are you in the poultry business—the best-paying line on many farms to-day? If so, how many old hens have you in your flock? Poultry experts tell us that a hen that has got into her third year does not pay for her feed. I am satisfied that the average farmer allows his flock to attain the age of four or five years, and that many of them die of old age. How about you? Do you invest in leg-bands with which to mark the pullets each year, so you can keep track of their age? Eggs and poultry pay well even with poor management, but we could almost double the profit from hens if we would keep only young stock for layers. Now, brother farmers, there

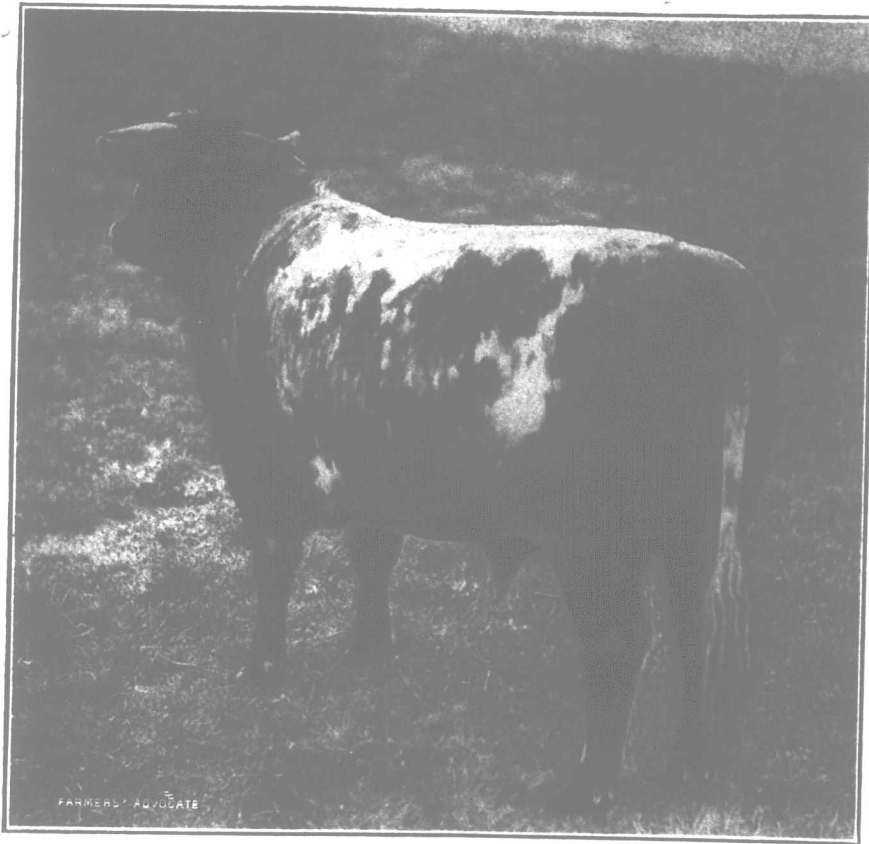
are very many other things besides those mentioned that we would do well to think about and take stock of, but space forbids mention of them now, and I will say, in closing, that time is always well spent in thinking deeply on matters connected with our life-work on the farm, and taking stock, when we have leisure, of our successes and failures and noting them, so as to do better next year than we did last. With the old, reliable "Farmer's Advocate" to help us keep thinking out our agricultural problems, we should ever be improving our methods and reaping larger profits from our business.

Queen's Co., P. E. I. WALTER SIMPSON.

Expert Methods in Road-making.

Editor "The Farmer's Advocate":

I would like to call the attention of the readers of "The Farmer's Advocate" to the necessity for a radical change in the construction and keeping in repair of the roads throughout the Province of Ontario. Many of us do not realize the immense loss we sustain through not having properly-constructed roads, in time lost and in wear and tear of horseflesh and conveyances of all kinds, not to mention the comfort we would enjoy from travelling over level and properly-constructed roads, and the advantage often gained by being able to go greater distances to better markets. Roadmaking requires skilled knowledge and proper material, both of which can without difficulty be obtained throughout Ontario. In this country the skill of the overseer is in the most cases his last qualification for the



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One of the stock bulls at head of the Shorthorn herd of Messrs. T. Douglas & Sons, Strathroy, Ont.

position, popularity with the people on the "road beat" being looked to first, and in most cases, under such conditions, the roads are worse now than they were ten years ago. The chief cause of the above conditions is our system of roadmaking called "Statute Labor," a procedure which might be justified when the road allowances were in process of clearing to allow road-building, and which, for some cause, has been continued to this day. Although it has had a trial of more than fifty years, no skilled road-builders have been developed by it. My opinion is that skilled labor is as necessary for proper road-construction as for any other means of connecting our different communities, and none of us would think of employing unskilled men in superintending railway, canal, electric or telephonic construction.

My remedy, in brief, is: First, that our old, worn-out system of statute labor should be done away with, and a sufficient tax levied annually to keep the roads in their present state of repair, and, in addition, build eight or ten miles of new, properly-constructed road in each county. Second, that a properly-qualified engineer, well informed on road-building, be employed by a group of counties, whose business throughout the year would be to look carefully after the roads. Third, that all contracts for road-building be, if possible, placed in the hands of competent and skillful persons. Fourth, that good solid and permanent roads be aimed at, and that fair prices be given for work done to insure good results.

A. L. WALKER.

Salaries and Education.

Editor "The Farmer's Advocate":

'It is no' a habit o' mine tae be replyin' tae any attacks on mysel', for I weel ken that silence is the maist effectual way o' disposin' o' a troublesome critic, but I'm thinkin' I'll hae to brak' ma rule under the present circumstances an' say a few words mair in behalf o' the school teachers o' oor Province. Oor talented friend, "Vox Populi," wha na doot also conseiders himsel' "Vox Dei," says that I'm ower muckle developed on the side o' love o' learnin' but no' muckle on the side o' business, whereby he maks' it himsel' a discussion o' dollars an' cents against education, an' then he goes on tae say that gin it were about the four or five extra dollars we hae to pay we were kickin', we wad deserve naethin' but contempt. Weel, I'm afraid that the great majority o' the kickers deserve it, then, for I'll pit it tae ye fair, dae ye think for a meenute that we wad hear one word o' complaint aboot the Government takin' awa' oor right tae fix the teacher's salary, if it were gaein' tae pit four or five dollars intae oor pockets? I never heard a discussion o' the matter yet but what the sore spot in the hale thing turned oot tae be juist the rise in taxes. Wha cares for oor "richts" in this matter. If we dae, why dinna' we assert them in the case o' the appointin' an' payin' o' the Meenister o' Education, an' so on down through the list to oor County Inspectors? We hae juist as much richt in a case as the ither, for it's oorsels that pays them a' an' no one else. An, Meester Populi will say that we are robbed o' oor richt as citizens o' tryin' to dae what we can tae pit oor country among the world's greatest nations; an' this, we will hae to infer, is to be done by keepin' doon the wages o' oor teachers, for this is what will be done if the matter is left in the hands o' some o' oor school trustees. Na, na; if we are to become a great nation, it will be by giving education its rightful place, which is na' second to the makin' o' money.

An' oor friend also thinks that we dinna' always get poor teachers gin we pay a small salary. Weel, as a rule, we dae, though I ken weel there are exceptions. Juist tak' the Province o' Quebec, for example. Whaur will ye get a lower standard o' education, and whaur will ye get mair poorly-paid teachers? I hae kenned o' teachers there wha got juist \$13.00 a month, an' had to pay their board oot o' that. Na wonder sic a large percentage o' the rural population there sign their name wi' an X. I tell ye the case in Ontario had come to juist this: something had tae be done tae prevent oor teachers frae gaein' oot West or across the line where they would get a better salary, or we wad sune be wi'oot teachers, gude or bad. The Government took the maist natural way, an' it will, na doot, serve its intended purpose, besides makin' mony o' oor young students think o' teachin' as an end in itself, an' no' as juist a steppin'-stane tae something better.

It seems tae me we hae everything tae gain by this arrangement, an' I canna' mak' oot whaur we hae onything to lose. For the extra siller we pit oot, we are bound, through time, tae get better service, an' as for losin' oor self-respect an' independence by havin' oor elected representatives in Parliament fix the minimum salary for the teacher, I canna' for the life o' me mak' oot where it comes in. Dinna' fash yersel' aboot it, Meester Populi, an' ye will na' ken the difference.

SANDY FRASER.

Automobiles Spoil the Roads.

Another charge is now added to the indictment of the automobile. On the good roads recently constructed in Western New York State, it was noticed last fall, when the rainy season began, that great injury was done by the chains which many motorists use over the tires of their machines, to prevent them from slipping or skidding. Similar damage is occurring in the expensive park drives of cities, and in New York it has reached such a stage as to occasion grave concern to the civic authorities. The same complaint has been raised in England, where it is claimed the centuries-old stone roads of that country, among the best in the world, are being seriously damaged by the suction