

Timely Notes for August—No. 1.

THE PLAGUE OF AGENTS.

Will anyone rise and explain a feasible plan for suppressing the horde of travelling agents? Agents for binders, agents for books, agents for insurance, agents for bogus jewellery, etc. An agent came here a little while ago selling watches, with a yarn about the failure of his house in Montreal through the disappearance of their buyer in England with—I am afraid to say how many hundred thousand dollars. His stuff was palpably bogus, with the exception of some cheaper grades which were simply decoys. I bought a clock that was to be paid for on delivery, and after examination; as I signed no promise to pay, nor paid any deposit, it is hardly necessary to say the clock never came. He simply got a dinner at my expense and went on further. Yet this man sold a number of articles in this district which turned out frauds.

Another very learned agent—this time for books—wanted me to subscribe \$15 to some house that was to sell me books at half price, and so on, and so on. I couldn't see it, and I told the man so plainly, and he left. As for implement and insurance agents, what need to speak of them, for are they not always with us? I sometimes wonder if they own a private brass-plating arrangement at home, for they have brass enough in their faces. When I want a new machine I prefer to go to the different warehouses and examine the various makes, and so I can generally depend on getting the best that the market affords.

Again, we are deluged with circulars from pushing firms in the east, who offer us all kinds of goods, from scales down to writing paper, at surprising figures, but it will be usually found that the Winnipeg price for the same article is very little more than the Ontario or Quebec one, and generally less than the eastern price with the freight added.

SELLING OF STOCK.

The embargo on cattle entering England, the Commercial Bank failure, the scarcity of money, etc., are all used this summer in depressing the price of fat stock, and in many instances the butchers, especially the country butchers, will not pay cash, but say they can not buy unless they can buy on credit, etc., etc. But put the boot on the other leg, and then the situation is quite reversed. A neighbor of mine having a fat hog for sale was offered for it four and a-half cents a pound live weight (with a deduction of five per cent.); in return as part payment he was asked seventeen and eighteen cents for cured pork. He didn't "trade." Good steers are worth \$10 a piece less than last year, and in spite of the high price quoted for mutton in Winnipeg, the discriminations of one kind and another, and the superabundance of wolves, keep many good men out of the sheep business. Horses are almost unsaleable, though we have not yet reached the condition of Australian and South American horse raisers of selling our "fine, fat young horses"—for their hides and tallow!

THE CENTRAL INSTITUTE MEETING.

I was unable through press of work to attend the Central Institute meeting at Brandon, but it was unavoidable. I think the motion to discuss all questions bearing on the welfare of the farming community, whether political or not, should have been passed by an unanimous vote. I fail to see why we should not squarely face all drawbacks and try to overcome them, whether created by Tory or Liberal, and I also think that we want more farmers, and less lawyers, land agents and boomers, in parliament. The secretary's salary is surely too small—\$60 a year; why, it is a month's pay of an ordinary clerk.

GENERAL.

The prospect of cheap wheat this fall is so great that we ought to look round us for something to convert it into more than thirty-five or forty cents a bushel, for that is about the price I expect for No. 2 hard. Pigs I consider the most suitable at present prices—grades of Berkshire and Yorkshire on good big sows, for preference.

Don't try to keep too many pigs on one small piece of ground. Keep shifting the pen.

A good combination is wheat and oats for feeding green. I sowed a piece this spring on heavily manured land, and I am feeding a bull and four horses on it, and shall be able to cut two good crops off it—some six tons to the acre.

Weeds are very plentiful this year, and I hope the Central Institute will urge upon the government the enforcement of the penalties for letting weeds grow. If the weed inspectors—where there are any—won't prosecute the lazy, then prosecute the inspector.

A large immigration of Icelanders is expected to arrive in Manitoba during the next few months. There will probably be some 2,000 in all. They are a good, hardy and thrifty class, and do well in this country.

Mixed Farming.

[A paper prepared for late meeting of Manitoba Central Institute, by S. A. Bedford, Superintendent of Experimental Farm, Brandon.]

For years the feeling in this province was largely against diversified farming, but owing to the prevailing low prices of grain, and to the losses during adverse seasons, opinion is rapidly changing, and nearly all progressive farmers are making preparations to increase their herds or flocks. There are, however, too many still dependent on "king" wheat, and to these I would particularly direct my remarks. I would advocate mixed farming for the following reasons:—

1st. It is the most profitable system, permitting as it does the utilization of all the waste products of the farm, and converting them into marketable commodities of a class requiring the least outlay for transportation—a very important consideration to those who live so far from the sea board.

2nd. It brings in money at all seasons of the year, largely doing away with the borrowing of money at high rates of interest. We know that a large proportion of the farmers, solely dependent on grain, have to call the bankers, or what is even worse, the note shavers, to their assistance, before they can realize on their crop, and this means a heavy outlay for interest, which no farmer can afford.

3rd. Mixed farming greatly lessens the risk of total loss through an unfavorable season. All the farmer's eggs are not in the one basket, and should a portion of the grain be injured he has stock to feed it too. In the winter of '91 and '92 we found on the Experimental Farm that badly frozen grain was worth from 45 to 50 cents per bushel for feed, or nearly double its value for export; and, besides, if a portion of an injured crop is fed it reduces the amount on the market, and by this means helps to keep up the price.

4th. This system ensures a plentiful supply of barnyard manure, and the fertility of the farm is kept up. We are already realizing that this is necessary here, as well as in the eastern provinces.

5th. The keeping of stock gives an opportunity for a rotation of crops less exhaustive than the present system or want of system.

6th. And also spreads the farm operations over twelve months, instead of seven months.

7th. Keeps money in the province that is now being sent out of the country for such products as cured or frozen meats, poultry, cheese, butter, etc., for is it not a disgraceful fact that we send a large proportion of our coarse grain to be fed to stock in the eastern provinces, and then purchase the cured meat, etc., at high prices, paying tolls to a host of middlemen, besides freight each way to the railroads?

8th. By keeping stock we could engage most of our hired help by the year at a much lower rate per month than is now paid for a short season, and do away with the constant change of men so vexatious under the present system. The hired men would also remain in the province, and make good settlers, instead of being compelled to return to Ontario in the fall.

9th. The last but not least, mixed farming is in my opinion far more agreeable than mere grain growing. A wheat field breast high waving in the wind is a pleasant sight, but it only lasts for a short time, while farm animals are a source of interest all the year around.

There are other reasons that I might bring forward to show the evils of exclusive wheat growing, but I think I have already proved my position, and we will next consider whether it is possible to follow this system with our soil and the climatic conditions prevailing in this province.

TO SUCCEED WITH STOCK WE REQUIRE:

1st. A healthy climate. In this particular Manitoba rates high; our climate is as healthy as any on the continent, sickness among stock being almost unknown, and animals give the maximum yields of beef, mutton or dairy products.

2nd. Abundance of both summer and winter feed. The area of unbroken prairie throughout the province is still enormous, and should a farmer be located in a section of country where the area of wild prairie is limited the young growing cattle can be herded at a distance at a dollar per head for the season.

The early settlers of the province, having been altogether dependent on hay marshes for winter feed, looked with dismay on their decreasing yield, as if their sole dependence was on this product for winter feed; but of late years necessity has compelled them to look to other sources, and it is found that we can grow and cure a number of excellent substitutes for marsh hay. Realizing the importance of this subject, the Experimental Farms have paid considerable attention to this important subject, and I will briefly give some of the results.

Of the imported hay grasses Timothy and Brome Grass are hardy, and the last-mentioned quite productive. We find about a dozen of our native grasses hardy and productive under cultivation, and most of them of good quality. Field roots of all kinds do well here. German, Hungarian and Common Millets give large returns if properly treated.

Oats and peas or oats alone, cut on the green side, and spring rye all yield well, and if bound in small, loose sheaves can be easily cured. Fodder corn is also prolific here, if the soil and exposure are suitable. We also find that even wheat straw cut as it is on the green side is not to be despised for

cattle feed, and should not be classed with the often badly cured wheat straw of the east.

We now come to the question of winter stabling. Owing to the high price of lumber we are to a certain extent at a disadvantage in respect to buildings, but in districts where stone or gravel can be obtained, excellent buildings can be erected at a reasonable cost, and very fair temporary buildings can with care be built with sod, and in other districts logs are available for the purpose; and it will generally be found that when a settler is determined to find shelter for his stock, building material of some kind suitable to his means can be had.

The next point to consider is whether there is a prospect of a reliable market at paying prices for the products of a mixed farm. The answer to this I think, to a large extent, depends on the quality of the products; if we produce only rank butter, soft badly flavored cheese, runty cattle, sheep or swine, we must not expect to find a ready market at good prices. I know of parties this year who were unable to get three cents per pound for badly fed steers, while their neighbors received from four to four and a-half cents per pound for well-selected and properly fed cattle, and the same thing applies to dairy produce, and all other products of the farm.

If then it is advisable to adopt this system, how is it to be done? Shall we at once abandon our wheat fields and let them run to weeds, sell off our implements at a sacrifice, and go into stock raising on a large scale? This I think would be going to the other extreme, and I would rather advise a gradual reduction of the area in wheat (this can best be done by seeding the older portions down to grass), a steady increase of the herds and flocks, as shelter can be obtained for them. By this means there will be no sudden change, with its resulting loss, and the farmer will gradually adapt himself to the change, and very soon a great improvement will be noticed all over our province. The farmers will not tremble in the fall at the least sign of the thermometer dropping below the frost line; he will to a large extent be independent of the money lender. Our land will produce even better crops of grain than it does at present, and farming will be placed on a more solid basis than at present, and as a natural consequence all our commercial interests will also be benefitted.

Bees in Manitoba.

BY GILBERT GUNN, GONOR, MANITOBA.

During my seven years' experience in bee-keeping in Manitoba, the winter just past has proved the most disastrous. I lost two-thirds of the bees which were put in the cellar last fall. Some of them died from the want of food, but most from the cellar being too damp. I have always kept them in a stone-lined cellar under our dwelling house. It would be better to keep them in a cellar lined with lumber, unless one could get proper ventilation for a stone one; in that case a stone one would be the best, but the great trouble with stone is that it gathers frost or rime on the inside, and the hives get damp and mouldy, the bees dying from the effects of it. Another thing I have taken notice of is, that the hives which only throw off one swarm in the summer winter the best, for the following reasons: On account of the late springs which we have, it is all the way from the tenth of April until the last week in May before the bees are taken out of their winter quarters, and a week or longer before they can gather pollen. I have taken them out of the cellar on the seventh of April, and in about ten days they began to gather pollen, and again I have taken them out on the twenty-fourth of May and they did not get any pollen until three or four days after. Another reason is because we hardly ever get a swarm before the last of June, by the time we would get a second one it would be the middle of July, and, as we always begin to take away the surplus honey about the twenty-fifth of July, they would only have ten days to raise young bees before they would have to begin to put away their store for winter, and by the last of August, when the honey stops coming in, they would not cover more than eight frames in a Jones hive; now, this is too few to winter well, and the old hive is left ten days before the honey season with a virgin queen, whereas, if only one swarm is taken from a hive, it is so much stronger. When the honey begins to be gathered, the queen is laying, and has been so for some time; there is plenty young bees to hatch and take the place of the ones that die from day to day. I got the first swarm of this season on the twenty-seventh of June. It was an artificial one. I have got over one hundred pounds of honey for every hive of bees that I started with in the spring; now I think this is as good as can be done in the Eastern Provinces, and I am sure the prices for both kinds of honey are better than in Ontario. Of course, owing, it is no doubt, to the high express and freight rates on bees and bee supplies, it is more expensive starting in the business than it is in the east. Still I think the difference in the price of honey pays for the greater expense in starting. It is to be regretted that the Industrial Exhibition takes place so early in the summer, as it is too early for the bee-keepers of the Province to make any display of honey, but it is to be hoped that the day is not far distant when we will have an association of our own and an exhibition at a time when it will be more suitable for the advancement of bee-keeping.