

# THE CANADA FARMER

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## The Field.

### Experiments on Pasture Land.

Some people suppose that any "management" of pasture land is quite superfluous; that all there is to do to get what is called a pasture lot is either to sow grass seed of some kind or other, or to allow weeds and natural grasses to grow, and then in future to feed it off to the very heart and below, almost in fact in many cases into the ground itself, and few farmers doubt that this treatment is sufficiently good for pasture land. Nothing can be further from the truth. Pasture land at best, and under the most approved management, is an appropriation of more land, and for less return, than if crops were grown on it and the soiling principle carried fully out. Even under the best and most skilful treatment, it is very questionable whether other descriptions of management would not prove more profitable. This point, however, has long been under discussion, and probably will continue to be so until all circumstances are equal under which the various trials and comparisons are made by the different parties making them.

Such pastures as those above referred to are simply dead waste of land, and usually two to three acres of such feed would be required to keep a cow; whereas many people have kept one cow all the summer (or rather two cows half the summer) on half an acre, by growing the most approved crops and soiling them in the stable.

Many years since, a gentleman in the south of England (Sir John Sinclair) published a most instructive pamphlet on pasture land, beginning with and describing the first sowing the seed, its after management, till the final attainment of sufficient dignity to be worthily ranked amongst "what he and all others in the south of England consider worth the name of pasture land."

Amongst other means of producing such a meadow, Sir John recommended and actually

practised the sowing or planting small pieces of turf of about two inches square all over the field prepared to receive it. These pieces of turf were planted on a very rich and heavily manured piece of land, at about twelve inches square apart, and in one year the turf would completely touch, and the whole space so left be entirely closed up. Of course no cattle were allowed on the land so planted, nor was hay made. The growth was really wonderful, and a meadow of great value was thus obtained.

The great principle evolved was to grow such grasses as were proved by actual experience of an adjoining field to have done the best for a series of years in meadows, and as best suited to such land.

The argument used was, that where a number of various kinds of grass seed were sown, and where after many years some one or more of the grasses throve best, and had succeeded in appropriating the chief part of the soil to itself, this fact was proof positive of such grasses being the best adapted for that particular soil, considering the treatment they had been subject to.

Sir John was not content with these experiments on natural and self-sown grasses, but extended the trials to turf produced by artificially seeded varieties, such as Meadow Fescue, Large Fescue, Cock's-foot or Orchard Grass, Blue Grass, Herd's Grass (which never did well transplanted), Ribbon Grass, and a host of others. The result served to elucidate and confirm his principle; and the practice which he finally adopted was to sow a plot of mixed grasses, and after allowing sufficient time for the hardier and best adapted varieties to establish themselves, at the expense, so to speak, of the weaker and less suitable kinds, to form his permanent meadow by transplanting small pieces of turf from the plot thus previously prepared and tested.

In some old leases in England it is no uncommon clause to have inserted "that the meadows are not to be ploughed up under heavy penalties of money fines or forfeiture

of lease," and that they shall not be allowed to "carry," as it is called, more cattle than will at any time consume the natural "rug" of grass roots within two inches of the earth, and never under any circumstance to cut it bare down. Such treatment as too hard pasturing was supposed injurious, and was most truly so. A friend of mine, a few years since, let a long pasture farm to a grazier; the season was dry at first, but very wet at the latter end of the fall, and the cattle did more mischief by poaching the land with their feet in the last two weeks of October and first week of November than could well be estimated except by the comparative loss of the following year's grass, when shown side by side with that which had not been so poached and eaten down. Nothing tends so much to injure pasture land as the poaching of cattle feet when the fields are insufficiently drained, and the injury is much more apparent where the natural protection of the thick rug of grass roots and tops are destroyed by too close cropping. In England a meadow, when once it attains the true thick sward, so much thought of, is never renewed or ploughed up. Manure is often put on, and unless the land is constantly pastured, manure of some kind is absolutely requisite to preserve the thick mat that characterizes some good meadows at home. Here in Canada too little land, or too much stock, no soiling fodder, and consequently too many cattle for a meadow to support, is the rule and not the exception; consequently a pasture field on Canadian farms is usually a bare, unsightly eaten down object; whilst in England, where all things are well attended to, the meadow is proverbially green, grassy, and beautiful.

C.

A more bountiful crop of fall wheat has not been reaped for years in the county of Huron. Spring crops of every description, especially oats and peas, never looked better, and the hay crop is not much below an average.