

Correspondence.

Disease Amongst Horses in Goderich.

We have lately had a communication from Mr. J. F. Duncan, Veterinary Surgeon, Goderich, in regard to a fatal disease which has again appeared amongst the horses belonging to an establishment in Goderich. We have no doubt but it is the result of some local influence, acting as a blood poison, and producing the very alarming results which characterize the disease. Possibly the same causes are operating now which were suspected as the exciting causes two years ago.

Birds and Balsams.

(To the Editor of the CANADA FARMER.)

FRIEND FARMER.—If you have no objection I will trouble you with a few thoughts on two different subjects mentioned in your very instructive periodical. First with regard to the "Bird question." I think I have mentioned before that I have been very successful in the matter of plantations on a small scale. The result is that I have lots of birds. I may say all the year round, for the little Tom Tits can be heard in winter among the evergreens, and last winter grosbeaks, and jays, and a grey bird, about the size of a robin, whose name I don't know, paid visits all through winter. In summer, at early morning, there is a full chorus of cherry songsters, and one and another, by himself, through almost the whole of the day. But, sir, here is the rub, I can't keep a strawberry or cherry, and even the green peas were shelled out this summer in a wholesale manner by the blackbirds (grackles). Then the red currants suffered severely, so that it comes to be a question whether you are to preserve the birds or the small fruit. I don't think, after a good deal of experience, you can have both, but I would like your opinion on the matter. For myself I prefer the birds and so patiently let the cherries and strawberries go, although I do grudge the green peas and the red currants. I caught one of the blackbirds in a rat-trap and hung him up as a warning, but the rogues got over their fright in a few days and came back and made another raid on the peas under the very shadow of a fierce-looking scare crow to boot. The most valuable fruits I know are rhubarb and black currants, for no animal seem to injure them, and with a very little trouble they yield large and wholesome crops.

The other subject I would allude to is the cultivation of balsams, double ones, of course. I presume, I noticed an article in your last number on this subject, but the requirements mentioned in it are so numerous, it is enough to frighten one from trying to grow them. Well, sir, the first and main item is to get good seed, I got "Smith's Prize Balsam," and they are very beautiful this season, and have been as good many times before. I take no extra trouble. I sow the seeds in a small hot-bed about the last week of April, and plant them out in the open border close to a picket fence as soon as they are about six inches high. If the weather is dry I protect them with shingles, and water them till they have fairly recovered the shock of transplanting. I never use anything but rolled manure and the house ashes in my garden, except for cabbage, cauliflower, &c., and even then I give the horse dung a heating on the ground before spreading; and I just heat my balsams like other flowers, keep the ground loose and clean. I may say, however, my garden is a light loam over a coarse sort of gravel bottom. I never had any trouble with balsams except from old "Jack Frost" and those villainous cockchafers that eat off the roots underground, and one season I experimented with them. I lifted out two firm plants, in bloom, which showed, by their drooping state, that the enemy was there, found and killed the villains, and then replanted the balsams, and with a little watering and protecting from the sun for a day or two they both came round. When I want to have them late I plant one or two in soap or candle boxes, and they will last till the end of October. My balsams, this year, are from two to three feet high and about two feet in diameter across the main branches, and the flowers as large as small roses. Six or eight blossoms taken and put in a soup plate or a large saucer with a little water or wet moss make a beautiful ornament in a room and have a delicate sweet smell also.

Yours faithfully,

Fergus, 21st August, 1873.

BELVEDERE.

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The Canada Farmer.

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Book-Farming.

Notwithstanding the wide circulation of agricultural publications, considerable prejudice exists against what is known as book-farming. There are in the world not a few strange and unfounded prejudices, and there are others which have some foundation. The prejudice against book-farming, is of the latter sort. It is not wholly without cause. Many writers on agriculture have dealt largely in mere theory, if not in fanciful speculation. They have suggested untried methods, and spoken confidently of un-made experiments. Just as many a patented model fails to work through some unforeseen difficulty, so multitudes of farming-made-easy expedients have proved, on trial to be utterly useless. Moreover, allowance needs to be made for diversities of climate and circumstances. What succeeds in one latitude, and one set of circumstances, may fail in another locality, and amidst a different state of things. Mere theoretical writers are prone to overlook these facts, and unthinking readers are equally prone to take no account of them. Want of success in a course of action suitable enough elsewhere, has led to a sort of intolerance in published statements and printed advices. More knowledge, reflection and common sense would have prevented unsuitable directions being either given or followed, and would have prevented, also, the consequent prejudice against book-farming.

Again, many men, who never did a hand's turn of farm-work, or indeed of any hard manual toil in their lives,—professional and business men, tired of town and city life, and envious of the country, have bought farms, and with much flourish of trumpets, have undertaken to work them scientifically, so as to eclipse their old-fashioned neighbors. They have long dreamt of

"A little farm well tilled
A little barn well filled,"

and have supposed it was the easiest thing imaginable to turn the vision into reality. Their idea has been that anybody who is "posted" in agricultural facts and principles, can be a successful farmer. And so they have read up very greedily all the papers and books treating of rural affairs, they could lay hands on. The result is, a great mass of crude notions, and an immense deal of conceit. A bad trial of the rough and tumble of life on a farm, suffices to prove

that in this as in many other matters, "tis distance lends enchantment to the view." The theories don't work, the methods are unsuccessful, the magnificent crops fail to come to time, the exemplary farming is not apparent. What is wrong? Why this. There is total ignorance of the practical department of agriculture. Farming is a business, that requires to be learnt like any other. No man becomes a merchant simply by reading commercial treatises, or a lawyer simply by reading law books, or a physician simply by reading medical books. There must be actual work in the counting-house or shop, in the courts, and in the hospitals. Equally necessary is familiarity with the actual work of the farm. So when the theoretical farmer and the practical farmer are brought side by side in competition, the practical man is pretty certain to come out winner. And, ten to one, the result will be, prejudice against the book-farming.

An enumeration of the causes of the prejudice under consideration would be incomplete without mention of an inferior and superficial class of rural publications which has done much to create and foster it. Of course any one who chooses can start a so-called agricultural paper. But it cannot live without public support, and that support is not always discriminating and wise. It is no libel to say that there are journals not calculated to enlighten the farming community, or to elevate the standard of our agriculture. A perusal of these has occasioned, at least, some of the prejudice against book-farming.

But after all that can be said in its excuse, this prejudice, like most others, is very unreasoning and very unreasonable. Granted that any quantity of barren and possibly fanciful theories have been put in print,—that any number of lily-handed farmers have failed,—or that any particular journal is not worth reading,—does it follow that it will not pay any man whose vocation is agriculture, to be a diligent student of publications devoted to the exposition of those principles which underlie his calling? A servile assent to any and everybody's say-so, is unworthy a thoughtful, sensible person. Theories are to be sifted, and suggestions tested. Is it not well to have schemes and methods put down in black and white, so that they may be subjected to proof? As to the failures of men who enter on untried undertakings confident of success; what is more common than such things in all the walks of life? And in regard to worthless publications that issue from the press, if people cannot have the sense to "prove all things and hold fast that which is good," they make but poor use of their reason, and must either go without reading altogether, or suffer imposition.

There are multitudes of intelligent, skilful, and successful farmers, whom the most rabid opponents of book-farming have no objection to talk with, and by word of mouth obtain the rich and ripe results of their observation and experience. We fail to see why these results are not just as valuable and useful when conveyed to the eye by means of the printed page, as when conveyed to the ear by the living voice. To gather up these things, and give them permanence and wide publicity by publishing them, is the object of agricultural publications. We do not contend that alone they are sufficient to make thrifty and prosperous farmers. But their utility, when made good use of by practical people, does not, it seems to us, admit of question.

Agricultural books and papers also provoke discussion, give opportunity for comparing notes on doubtful points, wake up thought, excite interest, and greatly promote the spread of useful knowledge. No diligent, discriminating reader of them will hesitate to say that they are worth ten times their cost to the farming community.

We would direct attention to the advertisement of Joseph Sharnan, Esq., of Stratford, in another column. The "Thresher," manufactured by Mr. Sharnan, is fully described in our Implement Department, page 315.