

## WALKS AND TALKS AMONG THE FARMERS.—NO. IV.

Since our last "Walk and Talk," I have met with a *rara avis* in the person of a farmer whose land is absolutely free, not only from thistles, but from weeds of all kinds. He is so unusual a specimen of a farmer, that Barnum ought to secure him for his circus. If he were to go round the country and explain, as he did to me, how he has accomplished the marvellous feat of utterly extirpating the weeds from his 100-acre farm, he would do a large amount of good. Such an example quite lifts one out of the despair apt to be induced by a survey of the weedy condition of the country in general. "What man has done, man can do." I cite this case, in the hope that it may rouse others up to the diligence, perseverance and success, which have proved equal to the conquest of the whole army of pestiferous weeds.

Let it not be supposed that this man has an income independent of farming. He has not. He started in the bush, has raised a large family, and is in comfortable circumstances. What he has got, he has obtained wholly by tilling the soil. He has engaged in no outside speculations, and is a living instance of what can be done by steady, faithful plodding at his own calling. Nor let it be imagined that he lives in a locality specially free from the thistle nuisance. On the contrary, he is in a very thistley region, one of the worst with which I am acquainted. His farm is an oasis in the midst of a weedy wilderness. He can say with Caesar: "*veni, vidi, vici*;" "I came, I saw, I conquered." The sight of his fields, destitute of a solitary weed, is a very beautiful one, well fitted to inspire all beholders with a determination to "go and do likewise."

The grand result has been attained by adopting and rigidly carrying out the maxim, "death to weeds." "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty." He has gone on the Donnybrook Fair principle, "whenever you see a head, hit it." Acting on the resolve not to tolerate a weed on his place, the task has been less arduous than might be supposed. Nor does it grow harder with the multiplication of weeds around him. He says the most difficult part of the process was at the start, when the land was new, and plants of all kinds grew so readily and luxuriantly. With no thistle roots in the soil, he has little trouble in guarding against the annual seeding from adjoining farms. Fall ploughing effectually kills all thistle plants of that season's growth. Every spring the growing crops are scanned with eagle eye, and if a weed of any kind shows itself, it is destroyed there and then. The strength of the land not being wasted on useless growths, the yield of farm products is large, and there is an air of thrift apparent everywhere about the place.

I was talking with a farmer the other day who is building a new house to replace the old log one which has been the only dwelling on the place from the time the land was cleared, a long while ago. He was telling me what anxious deliberations he had passed through as to the material he should adopt. Stone is abundant in the neighbourhood, and almost all the better class of houses are constructed of it. A properly-built stone house looks well, and is a permanent structure. But he had come to the conclusion that stone houses are damp and cold. He could recall many cases of families that were healthy in the old log cabin, who had considerable sickness after moving into the new stone house. Brick was little if any better, in his estimation. So he came to the conclusion to build a frame house on a stone foundation. He adopted the balloon frame, boarding horizontally on the outside, then putting on a

layer of tarred paper, and siding the outside with rustic. This gives a four-inch dead-air space between the sheathing and the plaster. Such a house must be both dry and warm. It may not be so durable as stone, but kept well painted, it will last for several generations.

Is this man right as to the dampness and coldness of stone houses? The idea largely prevails that if stone walls are furred and studded so that there is a dead-air space between them and the plaster, the house will be dry and warm. But is this idea a correct one? A stone wall embedded in the ground, must, by capillary attraction, become damp through its entire extent, and will not the moisture permeate the comparatively thin coat of plaster which lines the inside? As a matter of fact, we know that it does, and that there are no bed-rooms so cheerlessly cold as the spare bed-rooms in large stone dwellings that are usually remote from fires, and only occupied semi-occasionally. Want of ventilation and lack of fires account for this to some extent, but after all, it does not seem wise to rear a damp enclosure for human beings to live in. Dry cold is easier to endure than moist cold. This is why the climate of Manitoba is more tolerable than a milder one where the air is more laden with dampness. On the whole, I am inclined to think the choice of a frame house tightly built in preference to one of wood or stone, is a wise one.

The house of which I have been speaking is located far back from the road, near the centre of the farm. When I asked the reason for setting it there, I was told it was much more convenient for getting at the various parts of the farm, than if it had been placed near the road. But I think the convenience is more imaginary than real. The traffic to and from the road all the year round is greater than that to the various parts of the farm. There is often serious inconvenience in breaking a track from the highway in the winter time, when the house is far back. Besides, it greatly increases the loneliness of farm-life when the house is a long way from the public road. There is a degree of enlivenment about seeing teams pass, and you often have an opportunity of exchanging a few words with friends and neighbours if you live near the highway, which you miss when the house is in the centre of the farm. In addition to all this, it is easier to lay out a nice front near the public road, and when laid out, all who drive by have the pleasure of seeing it. It relieves the monotony of a journey to pass a succession of such fronts, and note the various expressions of character and displays of taste which present themselves as you go along. Finally, in case of a break-down, or mishap of any kind, it is a weary pilgrimage to the centre of a farm for any help that may be needed, or any requisite that circumstances may demand. If the front of a lot is low and unsuitable for a building site, there may be no choice but to go back some distance, but other things being equal, I cannot but think that the best place for the house and barn is pretty near the public highway.

Self-binders are steadily making their way into public favour. They are the climax of a wonderful revolution in harvesting. "Look at that boy of mine," said a farmer to me the other day, "he's only fifteen years old, and he's doing the work of ten or a dozen men driving that self-binder." A man is very independent on the labour question in harvest time if he owns one of these machines. He has no need to run all over the country in search of extra help, and then turn his house into a temporary hotel to entertain them. Harvest is hardly a busier time than any

other on a farm equipped with one of these reaping automata. The one drawback is their costliness. This is greater relatively to the small than to the large farmer. A farmer in my neighbourhood who owns and works 600 acres, appears to be at hardly any more expense for the larger implements than others who have places comprising only 100 acres. One would think several neighbours might combine and own a self-binder among them. The difficulty is that all want to use it about the same time, and if the weather be catching, there is danger of loss by delay. But, certain it is, that the investment in labor-saving implements necessary to run a 100 acre farm has come to be a serious item. It should at least teach the necessity of taking the best possible care of implements when they are bought. I think there is great and culpable neglect on this point. I often see costly implements, such as reapers and mowers, left out in the weather for weeks and months together, to say nothing of ploughs, harrows, rollers, and less expensive farm requisites. This is very bad economy. Machinery exposed to sun and rain, must suffer from warping, shrinkage and swelling of timber, and from rusting of iron. All farm tools and implements should be kept under shelter, and well oiled from time to time, that they may be always in good working order, and last as long as wear and tear of actual use will let them. W. F. O.

[Erratum. Page 148, Aug. No., middle column, line 15 from bottom; for "heat it," read "treat it."]

## TORONTO INDUSTRIAL FAIR, AND SEMI-CENTENNIAL EXHIBITION.

## THE DOMINION SHOW AT OTTAWA.

Following out the idea of the late demonstration on the occasion of the fiftieth or Semi-centennial year of the incorporation of Toronto as a city, the Industrial Exhibition Association have determined to make their forthcoming exposition of such magnitude as will throw all former attempts in the shade.

The buildings are being enlarged, on account of the extra number of applications for space, and an elaborate programme of attractions of a novel and most interesting character is being prepared for the occasion. The exhibition will be opened by the Governor-General and the Marchioness of Lansdowne on the 10th of September. The *fête* will continue over to the 20th inst. Among the attractions already announced are an international fireman's demonstration, a collie show, and field trial by the dogs. There will also be balloon ascensions, and an electric railway. Mr. H. J. Hill, the manager, is going on a visit to New York and other points in search of special attractions of the latest and most interesting kind. There will be special days for different visitors, such as a farmer's day, a school children's day, a society's day, etc. This will be the greatest event of Toronto's jubilee year, and will doubtless attract thousands of Canadians from the United States, and the outlying Provinces of the Dominion.

Ottawa will be the scene of the Dominion show for the current year. The programme on that occasion promises to be one of unusual excellence. The exhibition begins there the week following the close of the Toronto show. The attractions of the capital added to those of the show will make the success of the Dominion exhibition for 1884 a foregone conclusion.

Australia is having oysters and the salmon family introduced to its waters, with success.

Locusts are doing great damage in Vera Cruz, Mexico, endangering the crops of sugar, tobacco, and coffee.