

How Shall We Feed Our Straw?

Mr. G. H. Grierson, of Oshawa, one of the most progressive farmers of Ontario, and who has evinced on many occasions a deep interest in questions of vital importance to farmers in Canada, has sent the following to us:

"The Sept. number of your paper has come to hand, and we are much pleased with its contents, and I join my son in expressing regret that we had not taken the paper years ago. The articles in the *ADVOCATE* on the subject of ensilage induce me to make a few remarks on the fodder question—on a point to which the attention of many men in this neighborhood has been drawn of late—namely, the proper preparation of straw for use. We believe that straw must always, and largely, form the basis of our winter feed in this country; we believe there is great loss in feeding it whole, most animals merely picking it over and rejecting a large portion of it. If straw is cut, it is objectionable on the well established fact that the short, sharp, unbroken particles affect injuriously the mucous membrane of the mouth and stomach. On these grounds many farmers in this section are anxiously asking the question, Why cannot straw be ground? That is, its fibre completely broken, and made into chaff. We believe that in this state it would make infinitely better feed, go further, and in the end make better manure. What say you, Mr. Editor, to these views? Some inventive genius may present the public with a straw grinder that will make our straw go twenty-five per cent. further, and to that extent increase our ability to keep cattle."

The suggestions offered by Mr. Grierson may be the means of being an incentive to encourage other progressive farmers to give the question their serious consideration, and it may not be premature to remark that, should his suggestions be practically applied, much of the coarser fodder, which at present is difficult to utilize for feeding purposes, can be profitably used. Considerations of profit are serious questions to the farmer, and it is only by pursuing an intelligent system of experiments that he will be able to arrive at an intelligent conclusion on the subject. It is very evident that a larger quantity of digestible food can be prepared for stock more cheaply by utilizing coarse fodder, and that various kinds of straw, if properly prepared, can be more profitably used than depending entirely on concentrated fodders. Animals of a ruminating disposition are by nature so constituted that the nutritive properties of coarse fodder are easily assimilated by their digestive organs. The question of preparing coarse fodders for stock is one of vital importance to the farmer. Straw is frequently regarded as possessing little value for feeding purposes, and the assumption that the fibre is wholly indigestible has deteriorated its value in the mind of many farmers. A distinction must be made between good and bad straw, as all straw affected by rust, mildew, etc., is unfit to be used as fodder. The conditions under which the straw grew, and the kind of straw, must be taken into consideration, as the value of the nutritive properties depend largely on the quality of the soil. It must not, however, be overlooked that in order to produce the best results by feeding straw, it must be fed in conjunction with cereals or their product.

The following figures furnished by Mr. J. E. Read, an eminent agriculturist, will show the relative value of the various straws compared with hay: 100 lbs. of good hay is supposed to be equal to 400 lbs. green clover; do., 275 lbs. green corn; do., 374 lbs. wheat straw; do., 442 lbs. rye straw; do., 195 oat or pea straw; do., 400 lbs. dry corn stalks.

Mr. Grierson claims that cut straw is injurious, as the unbroken particles irritate the mucous membrane of the mouth and stomach. This objectionable feature has been largely overcome by some progressive farmers by preparing the straw in the following order: Two boxes, sufficiently large to hold enough of cut straw for a day's feeding each, are made. A layer of cut straw two feet deep is placed in the box, and is moistened with enough boiling water to make it damp, over which bran is scattered. A second layer of cut straw is added, and the same process of adding hot water and bran is again repeated. Continue this process till the box is full, over which place a tight fitting cover. This mixture is left in the box for 48 hours, by which time the straw has absorbed sufficient humidity to make it palatable and prepare it for the stomach without possessing the objectionable features of which Mr. Grierson writes. In conjunction with the above mixture, meal of some sort should be fed; the quantity of meal should vary according to the animals to which it is given. Animals that are being fattened, cows giving milk and those in calf, should receive more meal than store cattle.

Another way of utilizing cut straw, and which has proved very successful in the experience of Mr. Jos. Ward, of Marsh Hill, is to incorporate the cut straw with pulped turnips. Boxes similar to those described in the former process are used. After the turnips are pulped and the straw cut, they are placed in the box and thoroughly mixed. A tight fitting cover is placed over the box and the mixture allowed to remain 48 hours before feeding it. Mr. Ward fattened 30 head of cattle last winter by adopting this system, and the result was most satisfactory. A little cut hay was mixed with the cut straw, and the desired quantity of meal and bran mixed in when fed.

The Provincial Fair.

BY JOHN DRYDEN, M. P. P.

At intervals during the past eight or ten years considerable discussion has taken place relative to the continuance of the Provincial Exhibition under the auspices of the Agricultural and Arts Association.

My opinion in reference to it is now so well known, that it will do no harm to repeat it here.

The arguments for its continuance may be briefly stated as follows:—First—It has accomplished much good during its past existence; therefore, it should be continued indefinitely in the future. Second—It is an exhibition held especially for the benefit of the farmers, and money given for that object ought not to be withdrawn. Third—It is the only exhibition in the province that is controlled by farmers. Fourth—It is, or ought to be, a purely agricultural show, without any outside attractions.

Regarding the first argument, no one will deny the truthfulness of the statement. But I take decided objection to the inference drawn from this statement of fact. It is not a proper reason to urge that, because good has been accomplished in a certain way, under special circumstances, that when these have changed, it is certain to follow that the same good will be accomplished by their continuance now.

The school which may have answered an admirable purpose fifty years ago, will not suit the necessities of to-day. And it appears to me that the arguments for the continuance of these exhibitions under present circumstances, are no stronger than the argument for the perpetuation of the school of the last century.

Let us inquire, what is the object of these exhibitions? It is, certainly, to gather as large a variety of the best products of the province as possible, in order that they may be compared with each other, and that the uninitiated may be stimulated to a higher endeavor to produce

similar results. The exhibition thus becomes an educational institution.

There was a time when only the Provincial accomplished this, and all that is said about the good then resulting is no doubt perfectly true; but to-day this is being done to a very great extent by almost every county in the land; and, indeed, the only complaint that I would make is that it is now being overdone by existing Associations. The Provincial Exhibition steps in and simply makes one more. There is nothing better about its management, nothing better about its prizes, nothing different about it in any way, except it may be in some respects inferior, as suggested by my friend, Mr. McRae, at Kingston.

It appears to me perfectly plain, that it is impossible for representatives comprising the Board of this Association to gather together in a strange place and manage an exhibition as well as men who are on the ground during the whole year.

Every large city or town of any considerable dimensions has now an annual gathering, altogether independent in many cases of government grants. Many of these are quite as provincial in their character as that held under the auspices of the Agricultural and Arts Association. Compare, for instance, several of those held this year, notably Toronto, Hamilton and London, with that held in Kingston; and I am certain nothing could be advanced showing the one at Kingston to be any better or any more provincial in its character than the others.

Now, if this be true, the farmers are equally benefited by the latter; and there is no advantage in crowding in one more where there is no lack whatever.

Again: It is alleged that this institution is controlled by the farmers. I doubt very much that there are more farmers having a controlling influence on this Board than there are in connection with other similar exhibitions. The county agricultural associations are not always controlled by the farmers; the residents of the town and village have an equal voice, and hence, the representatives chosen may not necessarily belong to this class. Of necessity the Provincial must to some extent be controlled by representatives of the city where it is held. These persons insist on adding attractions which will make it popular in the city. But, to my mind, there is no point in this argument. It does not matter whether a farmer, merchant or doctor manages the exhibition, so long as it is managed for the advancement of the agricultural interests of the Province.

But, it is urged that these competing exhibitions are largely composed of circus performers, horse races, &c. This may be an objection to some. It certainly indicates what is the general taste of the people; and unless this taste can be changed, it is not likely these attractions will cease; but I do not find the Provincial any different in this respect from the others. The principle of outside attractions is acknowledged and acted upon, the only difference being that some of the attractions may be of an inferior character. If all were of my opinion, these outside attractions would count for very little. Many of them, however, can only be considered as harmless amusements; and while it may be urged that they are educating the masses to look and seek for such things, yet there is another view which may be taken of them. It is certain some are