

English Letter, No. 18.

[FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.]

Liverpool, Sept. 1st, 1880.

On the 7th of last month there was a heavy fall of rain, which deluged the whole country, flooded the midlands, and seemed to administer the *coup de grace* to the hopes of the farmers for a good season. But brighter times were in store. After this heavy downpour, the weather cleared up, and for twenty-four days there has not been one drop of rain, but clear skies and hot suns have prevailed. The change came just in the nick of time. Much of the hay crop in the low lying districts had been rotted on the ground, and much more swept away by floods; but in the north a great breadth was still uncut, and this has been well got. The corn crops were in a bad way, but the wonderful weather of the last three weeks has worked almost a miracle, and a very moderate calculation places the harvest now being reaped over the whole length and breadth of the country at fully double the value of that of last year. Nor is this all. The potato disease, which was showing itself vigorously in many places, is checked, and the crop is proving one of the biggest and best on record. Turnips are also good; and beans and other field crops are of the best, whilst the after growth of grasses and clover is such as to give a position of great advantage to the dairy farmers, and feeders of stock for the fall markets. Yet another beneficial effect of the blazing hot weather is the killing off of the germs of the "fluke," which, in the early summer, owing to the excessive wet, were again developing and attacking the flocks in an alarming degree. I have just had a run through the heart of the country, from Liverpool in the north to Hastings, on the South Coast; and I must confess that I never enjoyed a ride more. There is a practical aspect in the beauty of a landscape waving with golden corn, or studded thick with gathered sheaves, which neither the fresh green of the spring nor the snowy mantle of the winter can give it. My journey south carried me through the region devoted to hop growing, and I am glad to learn that the Kent and Sussex hop growers are likely this year to have a full share of the general agricultural prosperity which seems now, in a substantial degree, to be assured.

I found, from returns which have appeared in various publications, that the harvest in Europe generally will be satisfactory. France will have about one-seventh more wheat than last year; the other crops are generally good, and it is said that the wine year will be a notable one in all the principal districts. In Austria there has been some falling off from the anticipated results, but still the total will be above the average. Italy has an unusually abundant harvest; and that of Germany, Eastern Prussia excepted, is fairly satisfactory. I have read fearful accounts of the agricultural disasters of that unhappy district. Prussia also has suffered, and will have much less grain for export than usual. You, of course, know far more of your own and of the States than I do; but the whole of Europe is coming to regard you and your neighbors as a sort of grain bank, equal to all drafts upon it; and though, of course, we prefer to have good crops of our own, it is very pleasant and reassuring to us to have you to fall back upon. The only problem that bothers me in the situation is this:—Supposing that you go on increasing your production of grain for the next five years, at the same rates as during the last few, and we in the meantime require less, owing to a succession of good harvests, which are due now, according to the law of average, what is to be done with the surplus produce? Will political economists please advise? It is well to look a little ahead.

I have already referred to the losses sustained during the transit of live cattle from American ports to this country. A certain mortality during heavy weather cannot well be avoided, but it is sometimes fearfully heavy. A correspondent of the *Daily News* writes as follows:—

"During the winter 1879 and 1880 public attention was drawn to the excessive mortality on board steamers bringing live cattle from America to this country. The following instances may be quoted: J. C. Stevenson, s., 1,276 tons, 378 cattle shipped, 357 deaths; Gleadowe, s., 1,431 tons, 175 cattle shipped, 157 deaths; Canopus, s., 1,818 tons, 266 cattle shipped, 219 deaths. The cause was stated to be the unusually rough weather in the Atlantic, which compelled the masters to keep ports and hatches closed for the safety of the ship. Now all is changed, the summer is here, and weather in the Atlantic during the last few weeks has been "dead calm." The ports and hatches of steamers could therefore have been constantly open, and there also would have been comparative freedom from excessive rolling. Notwithstanding these favorable circumstances two steamers have lately arrived at Liverpool from the United States, showing an excessive rate of mortality, viz.:—The *Eduardo*, s., 1,503 tons, 130 cattle shipped, 30 deaths; the *City of Bristol*, 1,802 tons, 460 cattle shipped, 127 deaths. I trust that the Board of Trade may cause strict inquiry to be made, as I do not hesitate to attribute these preventable losses to improper stowage and defective ventilation. The public has lately shown itself morbidly sensitive in the case of feeding the reptiles at the Zoological Gardens. What is the suffering there inflicted compared with that endured by numbers of pent up oxen whilst being slowly suffocated in the hold of a steamer whose temperature varies from 80 to 100 degrees? To prove that these losses are preventable I may add that some time ago I inspected a steamer that had brought cattle from America, and complained to the captain of the insufficiency of ventilation. He stated that it was the fault of the charterers, who, in reply to the remonstrances, said they would not incur the expense as the cattle were well insured, and if they died the insurance companies would have to pay."

How far these observations apply to the policy of the Canadian shippers in particular, I know not, but, if there be any truth in it at all, what a miserably short-sighted policy it is, to say nothing of its dishonesty. Not only is a large amount of valuable food lost, but the insurance companies, having to make good these terrific losses, are bound to keep up their rates of insurance, and shippers may rely upon it that ultimately they and their customers will be made to bear the loss, the bulk of which might be avoided through a little foresight and expenditure in the first instance.

Amongst the visitors to Canada this fall is a gentleman who, I think, deserves well of the Dominion, and of all who have an interest in it. I refer to Mr. Dyke, the Dominion agent at this port. I have on several occasions been brought professionally into contact with him; and, so far as I am competent to form an opinion, few men devote themselves to these duties more heartily than Mr. Dyke. He has represented Canadian interests in several countries of Europe, and in different capacities; but especially since he became agent at this port has he been able to do good service in watching the interests of Canadian trade. His activity and watchfulness undoubtedly contributed in a main degree to the exemption of Canada from the restrictions of the Contagious Diseases (animals) Act in regard to the import of live cattle; and in many other ways he has been able to make his post here one of substantial value to the whole Dominion. Mr. Dyke left on the 26th ult. for the purpose of making a tour through the Dominion, which will be extended as far west as the term of his leave of absence admits; and I need not say that his thorough and recent acquaintance with the great North-west will be of immense value to the department which he serves.

During Mr. Dyke's absence the Liverpool office will, I understand, be under the charge of Mr. Grahame, the energetic agent of the Dominion at Carlisle.

The "Allan" line of steamers is a household word in Canada, and therefore the death of Mr. James Allan, the founder of and senior partner in that enterprise, which occurred at Kilmoolie, N. B., on the 25th ult., will be an item of regret to your readers.

Sheep Breeding.

At this season of the year permanent improvement can be made in the flock by the judicious selection of a male for the coming season, and no specific rule can be laid down to govern the farmer. Each must select with special reference to his own flock, and obtain such an animal as will counterbalance any defect which may exist in his flock; for instance, if your ewe shave good mutton qualities, but are deficient in wool, then select a male especially good in wool; and other faults must be similarly treated, always breeding from pure bred males of some variety or other. In choosing a variety, select one which is most suitable to the vicinity in which you live. A great error has existed among the Canadian farmers which has caused much disappointment and financial loss. Instead of improving their native stock for mutton and wool producing purposes, they have either kept unimproved stock, or else have sold all their native bred animals, and invested as extensively as their means would allow in pure bred stock, and have endeavored to become breeders of pure bred animals for stock purposes. In this a great many have failed, few men by nature or education being qualified for this calling, and with each of such failures an odium would arise against pure bred stock, when in fact the fault was entirely due to the fact of a man engaging in what he was not by nature or experience fitted for.

Our advice to the general farmer would be, improve your native stock by using nothing but pure bred animals, of good constitution and early maturity; also by liberal feeding and constant care.

Breed for the butcher and manufacturer only and leave the breeding of pure bred animals for stock purposes to men whom experience and nature has fitted for the business, and who can devote their life to the calling. When business is conducted in this manner, profits will be realized by both farmer and breeder, and the serious losses and disappointments which now occur will be avoided, and above all, the quality of the general stock of the country will be greatly improved. This error has existed not only among sheep, but among all varieties of farm stock.

For several years sheep in Ontario have attracted a great deal of attention, but never more than at the present time. There seems to be a revolution about to take place; the longwools have heretofore taken the lead, especially the Cotswolds, but the Downs are now coming forward and contesting for the first position. The Hampshire, Shropshire and the Southdown are the most promising among the varieties of Downs. The Hampshire and Shropshires being preferred to the Southdown for export to the English market by several good authorities, we believe they will be preferred by the general farmer, as they are larger than the Southdown.

The exportation of live stock to the English market is a means of bringing the Downs into popular favor, as their meat demands a higher price in the English market than that of the longwool varieties, and another influence in favor of the Downs is the present tariff, which is causing a greater yearly demand for home-grown wools. Canadian manufacturers in a majority of cases preferring the medium wools.

A farmer says that he has found from experience that six Cotswold sheep will not consume more food than a cow, and are more profitable. For a lamb of this breed, weighing 125 pounds, \$5.50 is obtained. He estimates that six ewes will produce eight lambs per annum and fifty pounds of wool.