

THE ONTARIO FARMER,

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF

Agriculture, Horticulture, Country Life, Emigration, and the Mechanic Arts.

VOL. III.

HAMILTON, DEC., 1871.

No. 12.

The Farm.

HINTS FOR THE MONTH.

December brings the indubitable winter, as surely as July does the summer. Whatever dreamy expectations we may have had of possible Indian summer, vanish now. Pleasant weather indeed we may have, but it will be pleasant wintry weather, with perhaps now and then a day so fine and warm that it seems to have lost its proper place in the year. Clear, bracing, but chilly, air will quicken the pulse, and send the blood coursing through the veins with unusual vigour. The snow will wrap the earth in its white coverlet, and all things will yield to the sleep of winter and to the reign of the forest king.

We are accustomed to think and speak of winter as a season of comparative rest and leisure for the farmer. But how far that is true and applicable to individual cases, depends on a variety of circumstances. Winter affords but little respite to the man who has a large area of wild land to clear, or a numerous herd of cattle to feed. These, however, are exceptional cases, and most farmers, when winter fairly sets in, feel that they are less driven than at any other period of the year. But while "broken weather," as it often termed, lasts, every one has enough to do. That charming writer on rural affairs, "Ike Marvel," says: "Even in December the work of country improvements may go safely forward; the clearing of new land, the thinning of over-crowded forest growth, the building of walls, the construction of

walks and roads,—for these, severally, or together, no better time can be found than that which immediately precedes the locking frosts of winter. And when the dead-lock is fairly established,—so far as treatment of the land goes,—the open sunny weather of December still invites us many many a day out of doors. If we have rocks to move, they glide easily over a frosted and stiffened turf; the brambles and waste growth of outlying pastures cut easiest when the earth is locked unyieldingly about their stems; the woods, despoiled of their leaves, give free insight and oversight to their most sequestered nooks." These are but examples of the thousand and one things that may be done just at the setting in of winter, and there are few so beforehand with their work as not to be caught by the "dead-lock" with some needful preparations or unfinished undertakings that must needs be postponed or until another year. Most people, in regard to work, are like children in respect to tempting food; too greedy. The child's eye is proverbially larger than his stomach, and even so the farmer's eye readily takes in more work than his hand can accomplish. Indeed, generally speaking, plans and achievements too often correspond very poorly. "To will is ours, but not to execute." Happy are those on whom winter does not shut down with a host of half-accomplished schemes of preparation and improvement.

The hints given last month, as to the care of stock, are just as applicable this month, and will become more so as the temperatures goes down into mid-winter.