

HOME AND FARM.

This department of THE CRITIC is devoted exclusively to the interests of the Farmers in the Maritime Provinces. Contributions upon Agricultural topics, or that in any way relate to Farm life, are cordially invited. Newsy notes of Farmers' gatherings or Grange meetings will be promptly inserted. Farmers' wives and daughters should make this department in THE CRITIC a medium for the exchange of ideas on such matters as more directly affect them.

MARKET GARDENING.—The home market for vegetables in this province is, in the coarser varieties, fairly well supplied, but for table vegetables the limit of the market has not nearly been reached. In the United States, where the great centres of population offer an exceptionally good market for what is known as truck, market-gardening is carried on as a distinctive branch of farming; but in this country, the dwellers in towns and cities, who have not sufficient land to produce the garden vegetables that they wish for, have to run their chance of being able to purchase them in the market, but more frequently they are obliged to go without them altogether. Rhubarb, asparagus, salsify, celery, etc., to say nothing of lettuce, beans, peas, and tomatoes, are always in demand in Halifax, but the consumption of these vegetables is here comparatively small, mainly owing to the fact that people have not learned to look for them in the markets, except during a very brief season. In Boston, the markets are kept supplied for many months of the year with most of the vegetables enumerated; and all classes of the inhabitants, having learned to relish them, buy them up readily. In the vicinity of Halifax, there are several market-gardeners who make a good living by supplying the hotels, clubs, restaurants, and private boarding-houses with garden truck; but the cost of bringing the land under cultivation near the city is so large, that the price of such vegetables is far above the means of the ordinary householder, excepting as has been stated for a brief season. Owners of land along the Intercolonial and Annapolis railways would find market-gardening a profitable business; but, before undertaking this speciality in farming, they should visit Massachusetts and study the methods employed by the gardeners of that State, who have succeeded in keeping the Boston market so well supplied. Market-gardening is a branch of farming as distinct from general farming as dairying or fruit culture. It does not require as extensive an acreage as general farming, nor is the outlay for stock and implements nearly as great. When we remember that the seed catalogues show that 200 varieties of vegetables are now in more or less common use, and consider how few of these are cultivated by the general farmer, it shows that there is still room for enterprise in this direction; and, knowing as we do from practical experience, that as a speciality market gardening is one of the most profitable branches of agriculture, we should like to see it more generally adopted in this country.

A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION.—Dear Critic,—I am now a farmer of thirty years standing, and as you can well understand, I have had little practice in writing for newspapers, indeed I leave even the writing of letters to my wife and daughters, as when I was a boy I only went to school for a few years, and so I never learned to write easily. I see that you are asking for contributions on agricultural topics; were I a writer I would certainly avail myself of your invitation. In talking to a neighbor of mine who is also one of your subscribers, we came to the conclusion that we might get you something up together, but in thinking the matter over, I am afraid to try it for fear that my bad grammar or bad spelling would not look well in print. My object in writing to you now is to make a practical suggestion. We farmers are busy men and have little time for writing newspaper articles, but we have the experience in farming, and that is what most young farmers want to get at. Supposing we should send you facts jotted down in our own rough way, could you not have them written up so as to make a readable article? I merely suggest this, in order that our farmers may take advantage of the space in THE CRITIC that you have placed at their disposal. If the suggestion is a good one, furbish up this letter and give it room in your columns. If it is a worthless one, throw my letter away.

Yours,

J. S. T.

Our old friend J. S. T. has struck the nail on the head. Never mind the grammar, never mind the bad spelling, but send along your contributions, and we will put them in shape before they appear in print. We are in earnest in this matter, and mean to give our farmers an opportunity to use THE CRITIC as a medium for the exchange of ideas. If the space devoted to agricultural topics is of any advantage to the fruit-growers, to the dairy-men, or to the general farmer, it should be utilized by them. Jot down the facts upon a post-card, sign your name as you wish it to appear in print. This in brief is all that is required to bring this department of THE CRITIC up to the same level as our department of mining. Talk the matter over with your friends, get them to give you a helping hand, and at the same time give us one by becoming subscribers to the journal that is endeavoring to be of service to the farming community.—Ed.

Dear Critic,—I wonder if many of your readers have ever grown the "tom-thumb" tomato. I grew them last season, and consider them one of the best kinds of tomatoes I have ever raised. They are small and very juicy, and if the plants are properly trained, they never fail to ripen in the open air, before the frost can hurt them. They make delicious pickles and good preserves.

Yours,

Mrs. L. STEPHENS.

Falmouth, N. S.

Dear Critic,—Mr. A. C. Thomas, Windsor, has been writing some articles lately in the Windsor "Tribune" on underdraining, and, as I understand, is endeavoring to get an act passed in the Provincial Legislature, similar to an act now in existence in the Province of Ontario, which enables

the farmer to borrow a certain sum per acre to be used expressly for underdraining.

The provisions of the bill I have not by me at present, so refrain from making any statements in connection with it, for fear of making misstatements.

Let us jump "in medias res" and see what Mr. Thomas is aiming at. In one of his letters, to quote from himself, he says, "Now we come directly to the point of issue. Why not, particularly in these days of machinery and superphosphates, increase the root-area largely? Because not one farmer in five hundred in this climate dare do so without the risk of ruining himself, etc."

There Mr. Thomas is perfectly correct. Let us take the last three seasons as an example of what Mr. Thomas means. The springs of 1884, 85 and 86, were so wet that it was almost an impossibility to get the crops in the ground, after they were in and came up, especially the root crops; it was impossible to hoe them, the consequence was the ground was completely taken possession of by the weeds, many fields throughout the country, especially in heavy soils, were never touched by the hoe.

In the autumn the rains came on again, and many fields of potatoes were left undug, the land being too wet and the crop valueless.

The loss to the farmers of Hants alone the last three years for the want of underdraining is almost incalculable.

The farmers are beginning to wake up to the fact that drainage would enable them to get on their land so much earlier in the season, and enable them even after heavy rains to cultivate their crops with some measure of success.

Knowing these facts and fully realizing the great benefits they would derive from a drainage act, it is to be hoped that the farmers, not only of Hants, but N. S. in general, will give their aid to assist in getting an act passed this session, which will enable them to underdrain their lands at comparative small cost to themselves, and so add a treble value to their property.

RUSTICUS.

FATTENING DUCKS AND GESE.—This is best done when they are confined in little stalls, or when only two or three are together, writes a poultry-keeper. Like the pig, a duck or goose will eat more when it has a companion than when it is alone, as greediness is one of the characteristics belonging to both. The food need not be expensive. Boiled turnips, carrots, and potatoes, with corn-meal, makes the best mess to get ducks and geese fat quickly. They must be kept very quiet, given plenty of water for drinking, and allowed pulverized charcoal once a day. Ten days is long enough for getting them in proper condition.

Farmers should see to it that as little straw as possible be carried off the place—utilized as it may be in several ways, whether food and bedding for stock, an absorbent in the barnyard, or spread upon the land and ploughed under in the fall for corn the following spring, or on grass land intended for mowing the succeeding summer.

Fruits and vegetables, like persons, change their characters to some extent with a change of soil and climate. Hence the necessity of holding to the old reliable sorts until the novelties originated in other localities are carefully tested.

A Norwegian botanist, Professor Schubeler, states that most plants in high latitudes produce larger and heavier seeds than in regions nearer the equator—an effect which he ascribes to the prolonged influence of sunlight during the summer days in high latitudes. In some cases the difference of seed development is astonishing.

CULTIVATING AND THINNING FRUIT.—Hugh T. Brooks said at a meeting of the Western New-York Horticultural Society, that several distinguished cultivators whom he named "have been telling us and the rest of mankind, during long years, that the fruit on trees must be thinned if they are inclined to overbear—everybody has heard it, and nobody pays any attention to it—they appear to treat it just as if it was a common sermon. Three bad things," says Maj. Brooks, "come from this neglect of overbearing trees; first, the tree is permanently injured by its crushing load; secondly, overbearing injures the quality of the fruit—I sow with forty pigs," said the major, "can't make good roasters of them all; thirdly, excessive bearing lessens the future product more than it increases the present crop."

Old currant bushes can be made as good as new by simply cutting away the old wood and leaving a bare stump, and then digging the soil up thoroughly down to the roots, and working in plenty of well-rotted manure or superphosphate, with a good handful of salt for each bush.

The farmers of the whole land need co-operation more than any other portion of our people. In the very nature of our calling, we are of necessity more isolated than others. It is needed for social improvement, as well as intellectual achievement. It is demanded for protection of political rights.

Prepare for maple sugar making. If strawberry beds have not been mulched, mulch now, even though the manure or whatever is prepared be placed on the snow over the plants—gather brush for peas—make poles for beans, and form compost heaps.—Rural New Yorker.

White fowls when dressed for market do not show pin-feather marks as do the black breeds. This is a point in their favor which is worth considering.