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RURAL NOTES.

The scarcity of clover feed during the past winter was a serious loss to breeding ewes. That, with pea straw, is a palatable and healthy food for sheep, and their condition in many parts of the country this year has been far from satisfactory. The percentage of deaths among lambs is considerably higher than the average.

In the northern counties of Ontario during the past winter a considerable area of fall wheat has been destroyed by the snow drifting along the rail fences. It has been wisely suggested that the substitution of wire fences for the rail would obviate drifts, and there are many localities now where wire is cheaper than rails for fence-building.

BEES did not fare well during the past winter. In fact an unusually large number of hives were found to be dead when spring opened. The chief cause doubtless is, the failure of the food supply owing to the long winter; but it is probable also that quite a few perished by being smothered with snow—the result of neglect on the part of their keepers.

FARMERS in York, Grey and some other parts of Ontario are organizing joint stock companies with the object of introducing thoroughbred stock. If these companies are wisely managed they are capable of doing a great deal of good. The high price of first-class cattle and horses makes it difficult for many farmers to go into the business single-handed, but on the company plan it is easily managed.

OHIO and Illinois farmers are this year complaining of their seed corn, as much of it has failed to germinate. The reason is, that they left it exposed to the storms and frosts of winter, instead of selecting it in the fall and keeping it in a dry place until required for planting. The same mistake has not infrequently been made in Ontario. We shall soon hear whether it was made last fall or no.

MARYLAND gardeners find that peas, tomatoes and sweet corn from northern seed mature earlier and have a better flavour than those from home-grown seed. This is found to be true in Ontario as well as in Maryland, and applies to all seeds—whether of grain, fruits or vegetables. The best results are invariably obtained with seed brought from the northerly counties of the Province, and usually better the second year than the first.

According to the May returns to the department at Washington, the condition of wheat was poorer the 1st of that month than on April 1st in New York, Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, and Mis-

souri. With the exception of Indiana and New Jersey, which are unchanged, all the other northern States report an improvement. The statistical agent of the department in London reports an improvement in European wheat prospects during the month.

The sparrow is beginning to be better known in this country now, and he don't improve upon acquaintance. The *Louisville Courier-Journal* sizes him up thus: Steals wheat; eats few moths; makes too much noise; picks off blossoms; eats early lettuce; drives off useful birds; disfigures buildings; befouls gutters; and can't sing. It is a bad reputation, but it is one thing to say the sparrow must go and quite another to get rid of him.

It is not at all unlikely that Ontario farmers will have a short crop of hogs this year. There is a general complaint of pigs having been dropt dead, and with many of our farmers now the practice is to fatten spring pigs for next winter's market. The cause of the mortality does not appear to be well understood, but doubtless the long winter has something to do with it. Hogs are never so healthy as when they can get free access to the ground.

Mr. W. HASKINS, writing to the *Hamilton Times*, says:—"Grape vines have wintered well and none have been killed in this section. There is a good prospect for a crop, though the late spring will shorten the season for growth. Concord, Delaware, and Rogers' hybrids are the favourite varieties. Enough peach buds have escaped injury to give a good crop. The past winter has been a favourable one for the fruit-grower, and the prospects all round are good."

The cultivation of the mistletoe for ornamental purposes is recommended in foreign papers, and young trees with mistletoe growing on them are offered for sale in English nurseries. It is generally found on branches of apple-trees, but it is not very particular in this respect, and takes its habitation also on different other trees. It may be raised from seed placed in the crevices of the bark of young, healthy branches, or it may be propagated by grafting, in which case a portion of the bark of the tree from which it is taken has to be cut with the piece, and firmly secured to the new position.

Persons who are not aware that the first cup of tea poured out is the weakest, and that the tea grows stronger as you proceed, often bestow the poorest cup upon the greatest stranger and give the strongest to the youngest member of the family, who would be better without any. Where

several cups of equal strength are wanted, you should pour a little into each, and then go back, inverting the order as you fill them up, and the strength will be apportioned properly. This is so well understood in England that an experienced pourer of tea waits till all the cups of the company are returned to her before she fills any a second time, that all may share alike.

An instance showing how fruit culture pays when it is properly attended to is given by the *Empire State Agriculturist*. A half acre of orange quinces was planted in 1871, having a protection of low hedges and apple trees, and a barnyard on its upper side. It gets a yearly mulch of twenty loads of stable manure, and the leach of the barnyard, and the trees get a little pruning each year. The trees began bearing in 1877, and the six crops gathered since that time have netted \$1,100. That is pretty good for a half acre orchard; it is more than half the average yearly earnings of a day labourer. The fruit, it may be remarked, was duly thinned, as it always should be when the crop is heavy.

Jersey cattle are fast coming into favour in the United States, and fancy prices are being paid for first-class animals. Several sales have been made recently at \$10,000 and \$12,000 figures. But of course it is only amateur farmers who pay such prices as these. No Jersey in the world is really worth it. Fifteen or twenty years ago Merino sheep were the rage, and rams of a certain strain brought prices ranging from \$7,000 to \$14,000 each. But no man in his senses would dream of paying such prices to-day. The Merino found his proper level in due time, and so will the Jersey; so do corner lots in a boomed town, but only after a dozen or more people have gone into bankruptcy over them.

There is real economy in a coal oil stove in the summer season, if the proper article is obtained. But it should be a good heater, two or three five-inch wicks will usually answer for all purposes, although some stoves are furnished with as many as six. With plenty of heating capacity heavy work can be done when desirable, and the burners are easily regulated to suit any requirement. Two or three cents worth of coal oil per day will run a good sized stove, and one of the great beauties of the concern is that no time is lost in its management. The full heating power may be obtained in less than half a minute, and the moment its work is done the furnace may be extinguished. The coal oil stove has much to commend it to the prudent house-wife, but we think that manufactures have not yet paid sufficient attention to its construction.