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TOPICS FOR FARMERS

A DEPARTMENT PREPARED FOR OUR RURAL FRIENDS.

Hay for Market Should Be Baled—To Rid Corn Houses of Vermin—Don't Overwork the Boys—Charcoal for Fattening Fowls.

Marketing Hay.

Owing to its great bulk in proportion to value, hay was formerly never sent very far to market. The hay press has revolutionized that, and hay is shipped pressed from all parts of the West when the price rises above a low figure. It is probably true that the Eastern farmer who owns land near a good market can use it to better purpose than producing hay. To sell any kind of hay from the farm exhausts its fertility quite as fast as growing and selling grain and straw. Besides, the farmer who draws hay in bulk on a wagon must use at least a day's time for himself and team. He is shut out from making many sales, for many people who keep a single horse have not spare barn room to hold a full load of hay unless it is first compressed into bales. They pay more for it in this way, because in buying the hay they also pay at hay prices for much other material done up in the bale which is practically worthless.

Vermin in Corn Houses.

Mice often get into corn houses, and, as they breed rapidly, they do a great deal of damage before they can be destroyed. They are so small that they harbor in the corn, slipping around between the ears where the cat cannot follow them. Rats will kill off mice, but are themselves worse than the vermin they destroy. If a good mouser is put in the corn house she will catch a good many, and more yet can be taken in traps baited with newly-toasted cheese. The best way to prevent mice damages is to keep the vermin out. It is not a hard task to set a corn crib in a well-protected place on posts, each mounted with a heavy tin pan upside down. The mice cannot run up an inclination with their heads downward and their feet up. With such a corn house all that is needed is to take care that no mice are brought in with the corn. Every corn house should be cleared of all rubbish, such as corn cobs and the like, at least once a year. Mice harbor in this rubbish, and are ready to work with their numerous progeny when the corn house is filled.

Do Not Overwork Them.

Be easy with the growing colt and the growing boy. They can be made to do a full day's hard, exhausting work for awhile, but it doesn't pay. Overstrained boys make stunted, round-shouldered, listless, stupid men. Don't do it, even if the work does crowd a little in the busy season. Farmers' boys who are smart and who have a taste for science, will get better education at the agricultural college than they would anywhere else.

Charcoal for Fattening Fowls.

Four turkeys were confined in a pen and fed on meal, boiled potatoes and oats. Four others of the same brood were at the same time confined in another pen, and fed daily on the same article, but with one pint of very fine pulverized charcoal mixed with their food—mixed meal and boiled potatoes. They had also a plentiful supply of broken charcoal in their pen. The eight were killed the same day, and there was a difference of one and a half pounds each in favor of the fowls which had been supplied with charcoal, they being much the fattest, and the meat being superior in point of tenderness and flavor.—Poultry Chum.

Heavy Seeding of Oats.

Lodging of oats is due to the imperfect development of the tissues of the stem, and this is the result of an insufficient exposure to sunlight in consequence of the plants being too close together. The greatest exposure, says the Agriculturist, will doubtless be secured by moderately thin sowing. It is usually considered that the quantity of seed per acre should vary with the condition of the land and the time of sowing, a great quantity being sown when the land is in poor condition and when the season is late. A greater quantity of seed is required on poor land, as the oats do not "stool out" so well, and in a late season it is necessary to increase the amount in order to hasten the harvest, as, where the land is thinly sown, the "stooling" process is liable to be carried on for too long a time, making the harvest late. In England as high as eight bushels per acre of oats are often sown, in other year tests that quantity of seed yielding an average of forty-three bushels per acre; six bushels, fifty-three.

Veal Calves.

Here are some of the prospects for a raiser of calves, not unlimited wealth by any means, but where are the farmers' wives and daughters who have much money for spending according to their own will? I have known of a calf to be milk-fed, says a writer in the New York Tribune, and perhaps fed on oilmeal a little besides, until 6 weeks old, and then sold to the butcher for $9, and I could tell you by whom and where the calf was sold. It is true that the cases are rare where such a price is realized, but still it is equally true that as much or more might be made from a 6 to 8 weeks' old calf if said calf had been not only milk-fed, but well fed besides on oilmeal or some other equally good flesh-forming food. Providing the calf has a good-sized frame to build upon in that length of time, he will be capable of taking on quite good avoirdupois. When quite ready for sale, have him butchered at home, his pelt saved for sale, and his carcass cut up into the right kind of cooking pieces, and then sell him by the pound. The cases are not rare where a good-sized calf would bring from ten to fifteen dollars and more when sold out in this way. It is safe to assert that twice as much will be realized from such a sale than there would be if the animal were sold to the butcher by live weight.

Root Out the Weeds.

Winter is not an idle time for the farmer or gardener who does full duty, until the land he is on and the trees and roadways about it are free from insect pests and weeds, says the Philadelphia Ledger. And Dr. Halstead has shown us that weeds are the harboring places of some of the most injurious of the fungi that vegetables and fruits are ruined by. Certain diseases peculiar to certain vegetables were thought to remain in the soil for years, "once in a field, always," because, after a lapse of years, that particular vegetable grown there was attacked by it. An inspiration set him looking for the weed the fungus had been boarding with in the meantime, and he found it.

Some of the wise farmers who were told of it went immediately into their fields and rooted out these enemy harboring weeds and burned them, and, when in their daily walks abroad and rides they came across them, they destroyed them, even by the roadside or on somebody else's land. Others didn't, but thought it was quite enough that they knew where the trouble came from.

Cochin Bantams.

Of all diminutive or pigmy fowls there can be nothing as odd as the Cochin Bantam, while its perfect similarity to the awkward big Cochin makes it a very comical specimen in a diminutive form, says the Independent. The Buff Cochin Bantam looks to me the prettiest, yet that is simply a matter of taste. The Game Seabright, Polish or Silky Bantams are really very showy and attractive, it being hard to single out one from the other. Bantams are a study of themselves, and should be made a specialty to breed them successfully. They are more delicate, lacking the constitutional vigor of the larger fowls, hence they require the very best care under all conditions. Good specimens sell from $5 to $100 per bird, the price being estimated by the blood and the perfection of the specimen, and these prices are not fancy. There is nothing more attractive to a lady or child than a flock of fine Bantams of good breeding.

Successful Fruit Storage.

Fruit-growers in the famous Michigan fruit belt are making experiments in cold storage of fruit without the use of ice. In a recent farmers' institute essay a Mr. Billinger, of Western Michigan, described a storage plant on a small scale. It is situated under the north wing of the barn, is thirty-five feet square, and eleven feet high, is covered with three layers of lumber, with two air chambers and plenty of tarred paper. This applies to doors and sides. The doors are cut in two horizontally, to close the bottom against stock, when desired. A hallway, with doors at either end, serves as an air lock in passing in and out during warm weather. This room has repeatedly held over 1,100 barrels at one time. No mould has ever bothered nor has an apple been lost by freezing. It has been in use for several years, and is as good to-day as when built. Such results are worth trying for. Can any of our readers give their experience in fruit storage?

Durability of Basswood Rails.

There are not nearly so many rail fences as there used to be, and basswood is less likely to be used than formerly, because so many uses of this wood will pay better. Basswood is very porous, and whenever it is to be cut up it should be as soon as possible after cutting, so that air may reach a larger portion of it and dry out surplus moisture. It is always noticeable that a thin basswood rail, especially if in a sunny place, will outlast a heavy one, the latter filling with water in every wet time, and taking so long to dry out that its center never becomes thoroughly dry.

Over-Driving Heavy Horses.

The true draught horse can often get over the ground much faster than is supposed. His strength of limb makes him what an old farmer once called "a strong trotter." He will not tire easily, but his extra weight throws an additional burden on his feet. If driven fast on hard roads he will almost certainly go wrong on his feet in some way. It is this that gives rise to the idea that heavy horses have naturally poor feet. They should be used mainly for slow farm work, and whenever it is necessary to use them on the road, care should be taken to keep them at a moderate steady pace, which will make as good time as is needed in marketing the farm crops.

EDUCATIONAL COLUMN

NOTES ABOUT SCHOOLS AND THEIR MANAGEMENT.

Demand of To-day Is a Thorough Excision of All Matter that Prevents a Thorough Study of the Common Branches—Advice to Teachers.

Fewer Subjects.

There is a reaction of opinion in the minds of thoughtful persons in relation to the work that public schools ought to do. Ten years ago the common branches were so strongly denounced by prominent educators that only persons of exceptional courage dared advocate their thorough study. To-day we are repenting. We see that the mob of subjects required in our curricula is all wrong—that simplification, condensation and concentration are the watchwords of the hour.

But is it not a fact that, while we are crying out against this multitude of subjects, we still continue to teach them? How many of us have materially remodeled our programs and courses in conformity with the idea of simplification? We are crying "Wolf! wolf!" but we are doing nothing to drive him away. We are excessively afraid of the adverse criticism of specialists, who all demand a leading place for their respective subjects. We fear too much to change from the loaded course of our predecessors because, perchance, some one may accuse us retrogression.

Let us forever ostracize the idea that progression in education means a continual increase in the number of studies. Progression in teaching means a continual improvement in the adaptation of the subjects and methods to the development of the whole movement. The nature of the mind, carefully studied, will show the harmful character of crowded schedules; yet we fear to unload because of the appearance of retroversion. The sooner we cast out some of the studies now in our curricula, the better for our minds and manliness, and the better for the education of our pupils. Many teachers pay too little attention to reading in the higher grades. They claim that they have no time—that Natural History, Physics, and other subjects consume the minutes so rapidly that reading must be dropped. Why not allow reading to displace the sciences in the seventh and eighth grades, and perhaps in the ninth? The ordinary fifth and sixth readers contain gems of literature that, if properly taught, will exercise more influence over the child's soul that all the sciences combined.

But these reading lessons must be thoroughly taught. Two or three paragraphs are often more than enough for a half hour's reading lesson in the fifth reader. Ruskin sees a beautiful and significant idea in the expression "Man of letters." A literary man studies productions so closely that he may be said to scrutinize every letter, and is therefore called a man of letters instead of a man of words. So in our higher reading. Close and thorough study of a masterpiece, word by word and sentence by sentence will bear rich fruition.

What can we say of our spelling? Does the eighth grade pupil of to-day spell as accurately as did the eighth grade pupil ten years ago? We fear not. Pronounce fifty words of every day use to our eighth grade pupil of to-day, and in most schools he will make a sad exhibition. "Throw away the spelling book!" said the reformers ten years ago; and in many schools spelling was expelled in disgrace. The results are woful. Throw away the spelling book if you will; but for propriety's sake drill your pupils on the words of common usage, that they may write a decent letter. The days of teaching children foreign words, or English words that they may never use, are gone; but to-day let us resolve to make our children perfect in the spelling of everyday English.

What can we say of our eighth or ninth or twelfth grade penmanship? Is it better than it was ten years ago? Do our pupils present neater work, on paper or on blackboard? In the majority of cases, we fear that the answer must be in the negative. Is good penmanship desirable? Certainly. It is an insult to a man to write him a one-minute letter in such illegible handwriting that it takes ten minutes to decipher it. How many druggists make errors in filling prescriptions because the doctor writes his prescriptions in a careless way?

If the importance of good reading, good spelling, good writing, good language, and good arithmetic be acknowledged, and if we feel that we are not treating these subjects as fully as we ought, we must change our schedules. We must find time somewhere; and the only way to do this is to cast out some of our science work, some of our higher mathematics, and first of all lay a firm foundation in the common branches. Then our pupils will be ready for the more advanced work if they continue in school; and those who leave school will have a handwriting, an orthography, and an understanding of their reading that will commend itself to our business men, and may result in position and fortune. Reading and arithmetic can arouse deep and consecutive thinking. Reading can call to its aid many of the natural sciences, and can train through them the senses; but reading must not be displaced by what should be its assistants.

This article presents no churlish objections to science work in all grades. It only insists on thorough work in the common branches in the eighth and ninth grades. If this can be done and some science taught in addition, well and good; but if there is not sufficient time for both the common branches and the sciences, the latter must be subordinated and curtailed. What science work there is in these grades should be hygienic and sanitary. If the common branches are displaced by the higher branches before the former are properly studied, it is very probable that they will never be well studied in the rush and press of subsequent work. There is no time to return to them. A young man preparing for college was studying Virgil, Homer, and University Algebra; and this same person at that time could not divide a fraction by an integer, nor a decimal by an integer. He knew practically nothing of the common branches. He is now a college graduate; and it is to be feared that his future success will be jeopardized by the many weaknesses of his early education.

The pupils of a certain county in this State, when between the ages of 13 and 17, pass in nineteen studies in two years, and receive a county diploma. Yet when these same pupils come to take the teachers' examination for the lowest grade of certificate, nearly all of them drop below 50 per cent. in one or more of the common branches. Instead of passing nineteen studies and knowing nothing about the most of them, would it not be more reasonable to devote the time to half that number and know something about them? There would be four times the mental development that the other case allows. The consciousness of power in a few subjects is an all-powerful excitant to thoroughness in later studies; while cramming in many subjects produces a nerveless, impotent, insipid overfullness that crushes development.

What our schools now imperatively demand is a fearless excision of all matter that prevents a thorough study of the common branches; and he who does it is an educational reformer.

The Study of Grammar.

In fact, grammar is the natural focus and center of all philological study, and it is easy to see that this must necessarily be so. For as the spring of all language is predication, and as with the progress of development the act of predication becomes highly complex and elaborate, some habit of analysis is requisite if the mind is to keep pace with its own creations. Grammar is the psychological analysis of predication. We are too prone to hold elementary grammar cheap, merely because it is elementary, and because it is supposed to be common knowledge; but it is in reality the first condition of our bringing a scientific mind to bear upon the phenomena of language. Whatever we learn by comparative philology goes but to constitute a periphery which revolves, or ought to revolve, round this central "hub" of linguistic science. When we have found out a new etymology, what is it but a new instance of the recovery of an old and forgotten predication? When, for example, we learn that "umpire" has dropped an initial n, and that the word represents non-par ("odd, single"), we find that the fact of his standing between two discordant parties as a single arbitrator was the predication of which this functionary was the subject.

There is a notion abroad that philology is superior to grammar, that it is in a commanding position over grammar, and that it has a natural right to supervise the arrangements and terminology of grammar. The consequence has been of late years almost every author who has come forward as a grammarian has done so, more or less, in the guise of a philologist, as if this character invested him with higher authority, and gave him power to innovate upon the time honored institutes of grammar. By this avenue some confused and hybrid doctrines have found their way into current school books.—Forum.

Schools in Mexico.

The principle of public instruction, the necessary basis of all free, intelligent government, is appreciated, as there are at the present 12,935 teachers employed in the public government schools, at an annual cost of $4,962,886, aside from the large number of private and sectarian schools and colleges. Compulsory education is enforced in the federal district and most of the States. Good schoolhouses are supplied, as well as school-books. Particular attention is paid to the practical branches. The study of agriculture, engineering and mechanics is particularly encouraged.

Advice to Teachers.

Gain the confidence of the people of your district.

Comply cheerfully with the request and wishes of your county superintendent.

Strive to exert such an influence as will tend to make your pupils better men and better women.

Make your school room attractive and pleasant. Give the room a home-like appearance as far as possible.

Keep your records in a neat, workmanlike manner, so that they will be a credit to you and a guide to your successor.—Public Schools.

TOPICS OF THE TIMES.

A CHOICE SELECTION OF INTERESTING ITEMS.

Comments and Criticisms Based Upon the Happenings of the Day—Historical and News Notes.

A Detroit alderman says he refused a $6,000 bribe the other day; but the rumor cannot be substantiated.

Lord Salisbury says that England's arm is not long enough to reach Armenia, but she stretches it to Venezuela without any apparent difficulty.

When Jerry Simpson says he has always worn socks he doesn't exactly kick over the ladder on which he climbed to fame, but he yarns about it in a most astonishing way.

Emperor William has ordered the statues of thirty-two of his ancestors for Berlin, but the fantastic young man will omit one of the greatest of them all—his English grandmother.

The heir to a Vanderbilt fortune is in danger of being cut off with an annual income of $20,000, because he desires to marry a poor girl who will bring him only $2,000,000. But after all, there are worse things even than poverty so abject as this.

Spanish papers say all propositions that Spain should greatly modify Cuba's colonial condition are "laughable." The Madrid Government is clearly bent on adding one more to the number of American republics, which is the usual result of such stubborn pride and despotism.

At the trial of an Oregon murderer the fact appeared incidentally that the prisoner had assassinated two other people besides the one named in the indictment. This fact his lawyer advances as the basis for a new trial. The employment of a criminal record as a mitigating circumstance is new enough to be interesting.

The production of aluminum in this country has increased from 83 pounds in 1883 to 850,000 pounds in 1895, and the estimate for 1896 is 3,660,000 pounds, the processes for making it having been greatly improved. The price at the reduction works ranges from 50 cents to 55 cents a pound. Applied electricity explains the ease with which the light metal is now turned out.

Edna Mitchell recovered a verdict for $20,000 for damages against the Tacoma Railway and Motor Company for personal injuries. The Supreme Court has given her the option of taking $12,000 or else going to the trouble of a new trial. Of course the court has the right to do this, but one cannot help wondering if the court would have increased the damages to $12,000 if the jury had only awarded $5,000.

There are all sorts of clubs nowadays—eating clubs, thirteen clubs, whist clubs, fat men's clubs, and lean men's clubs—but the most unique of them all is the one recently started in New York, entitled "The Society of Pointed Beards." The first article of the constitution says: "No one shall be eligible unless he have a carefully cultivated beard, terminating in one symmetrical point a half-inch from the apex of the chin, of sufficient evidence to preclude controversy." It is rather difficult to imagine what the club talks about. They surely cannot always discuss one another's whiskers.

The careful avoidance of a battle in Cuba indicates that the war is not near an end. It is claimed that there are over 12,000 or 15,000 armed insurgents in the field, while reports allege that 30,000 to 50,000 Spanish troops are in the armies commanded by General Weyler. If General Weyler has this number of soldiers why does he not find the insurgents somewhere and fight them? If the Cubans have a single army of 6,000 men, besides other forces, why do they not fight a battle? When both armies systematically dodge each other throughout the campaign the war is likely to be a long one.

A Southern magazine prints reports from 500 correspondents on the financial condition of the farmers of that section. It is shown that the Southern farmers are carrying less debt than ever before; that they are producing more provisions for home consumption, rapidly impoving their farms, and adding to their household comforts. The corn crop of fourteen Southern States last year was 607,665,017 bushels, an increase of 124,000,000 bushels over 1894, and of 172,000,000 bushels over 1893. Southern agriculture is in excellent shape, and grows in proportion as it is intelligently diversified. This fact is now so clearly proved that it should no longer be necessary to harp upon it.

A Rhode Island woolen manufacturer has raised the wages of his employes from 10 to 15 per cent. He made a cut-down about two years ago in order to keep his employes at work, and his mill is constant operation. But now that business is again booming this true disciple of live and let live has rewarded those who stood by him at a sacrifice by sending checks to them covering the sum lost by the cut-down during the dull period. This sort of voluntary profit sharing and loss sharing between mill employers and their "hands," if made universal, would soon leave socialism with nothing practical to contend for.

Westminster Gazette: The decadence of the British nation, according to the "Vegetarian Almanack," is due to beefsteaks and tobacco. "The people of this country are getting so that they are not able to make anything for themselves. We have no great inventors, we have no constructors of things either ornamental or useful. Women are even losing the useful domestic arts which make homes happy and comfortable. This all arises from eating flesh and drinking liquor, and the smoking of tobacco caps the climax of ruin, for it is destroying the brains of the people and reducing their intellect to nothing, so that they cannot see the evils that are coming on them." Some persons will think, after reading this, that the clearness of vision vouchsafed by vegetarianism is not particularly remarkable.

Another one of the many devices by which the French Government seeks to encourage the increase of population is to be found in the new income tax scheme just submitted by which a levy is made upon every one with an income of $500 and upwards. One per cent is levied on an income of $500; 2 per cent on $1,000; 3 per cent on $2,000; 4 per cent on $3,000, and 5 per cent on $5,000 and upwards. The significant feature of the scheme, however, is the deductions which are to be made in proportion to the number of children which a man may have, and which in case of a large family would wipe out half the tax. Numerous schemes have been tried in the past to increase the population of the republic, which, after being comparatively stationary for many years, is now slowly but steadily diminishing, but none of them succeeded. It now remains to be seen whether a money premium will offset the moral discount in encouraging the domestic virtues and in heightening respect for the the well-known scriptural injunction.

The verdict of the committee which conducted the investigation of the outrageous charges made by Lord Dunraven presents a complete refutation, which is expressed in terms more courteous than his petty lordship deserved to have applied to him. They say: "Upon a careful consideration of the whole case the committee are unanimously of the opinion that the charge made by Lord Dunraven, and which has been the subject of this investigation, had its origin in mistake; that it is not only not sustained by evidence, but is completely disproved; and that all the circumstances indicated by him as giving rise to suspicion are entirely and satisfactorily explained." While the committee are charitable enough to attribute his charge to a mistake, their report places Lord Dunraven in a position where he will forfeit the respect of his fellows unless he takes action to purge himself. The only action he can take that will meet the necessities of the case is to confess his wrongdoing and make an ample apology. If he fails to do this he will have to face the contempt of the two nations interested as a malicious falsifier.

In America it is the fashion to give presents to servants at Christmas time, but it has by no means reached the pitch as a nuisance to which it has arrived in England. There a man is besieged by every human being who has done anything for him, from the railway guard who takes his ticket to the man who hands him his hat at his club. But oppressive as the tax is now, it seems that one hundred years ago it was even worse. At that time the servants demanded Christmas-boxes from the tradesmen who purveyed to their employers. It is still the case in the large fashionable households of England, and a butcher recently wrote to a nobleman there, his letter being marked "private" and reading: "Your cook has so enormously increased her commission terms this Christmas that I shall have no alternative but to increase my prices to you during the ensuing year. If I had not complied with her demand, she would have complained to you of my meat." This recalls the fact that in 1795 the butchers living within the parish of Hackney, London, were forced to advertise in the Times that they would be obliged to discontinue the practice of giving Christmas-boxes to servants, otherwise they would lose all their profits on the sale of meat.

Good Municipal Government.

The city of Paris taxes bicycles $2.50 a year and gets a revenue of $40,000 from them. She also makes the gas companies light her public buildings and streets at their own expense and in addition to this gets about $4,000,000 a year in cash out of them from the profits they make. Paris also has water and paved streets, which are kept clean by companies which pay for the privilege of taking away, to be used as fertilizing matter, all sweepings.

Form good habits, and you will find them as hard to break as bad habits.