

HOUSE AND FARM.

How to Use Straw.

Shall we feed straw and make up with grain, roots, &c., what the straw lacks? This is in consequence of the high price of hay. Straw, such as it is, has but little nutriment. To feed stock on this alone will impoverish it; and if brought into winter quarters in poor condition it cannot be wintered on straw alone; it will die. Now it is known by our most successful experimenters, that to feed the grains is not generally profitable—at present a losing operation. Roots, unless successfully raised, come under the same heap. As we must ever view our feed with respect to its loss or profit, it will be seen that roots and the grains as well as straw are not the feed which gives satisfaction. What then shall we do with our straw? Not put it on a pile and let it rot down. Better spread it on your wheat fields; but best of all, use it for bedding in stables. If there is convenience to run it through a straw cutter all the better. Then, in connection with the chaff of grain and clover, nothing can well be better for bedding or absorbents of the fluid parts of the stable. Use plentifully so as to make the cleanings of the stables comparatively dry, so as to handle without danger from filth. This makes a clean, healthy thing of your stables, and secures you all the benefit of the urine and excrements, which otherwise, to a great extent, would be lost. Here straw makes manure as save it. Thus the whole benefit is received by the land, the straw to be reproduced as it readily will be. Now in feeding it, but part will be retained for the use of the animal. Still would not this part be a benefit of more use to the animal than to the dung heap? That depends whether anything can be raised cheaper to put in its place.

Where land produces, say twenty bushels worth of grain per acre, (at present prices,) this same land with a close stand (thick sowing) will realize about three tons of clover, or clover and some timothy, in two cuttings—cutting both crops when green and their substance all available. Such material is worth, according to present prices, twenty dollars per ton, being the best kind of hay, amounting to sixty dollars per acre. But drop to fifty and raise the grain amount five dollars, and there will be saved as an offset to the straw, and as but a share of the benefit (nutriment) of the straw—as is also the case with old ripe hay—can be appropriated in feeding, and as all or nearly at that of the clover can be made available, so it will be seen that straw is a comparative damage as a feeding crop. It is this because a cheaper and much more profitable feed can be secured. Cattle relish tender, well cured grass. It has a healthful effect upon them; produces largely of milk, good milk, and makes a moderately rich manure if fed freely. We therefore discard straw from the feed rack and put it under the feet of stock. It will improve straw to cook it; will make its substance more largely available, and more relished by stock. But the expense and trouble of thus preparing and feeding it has a discouraging look. There is no doubt about the other feed, the green, well cured clover, or clover mixed with timothy. Little or no grain need be fed with it. This is profitable.—Cor. Utica Advt.

Growing Asparagus.

One of the vegetables which every farm might have at very small trouble and cost, and yet which is one of the most desirable. It is at the same time one of the most desirable. It is very rare to find a person who does not like it. It is probable that the reason it is not more grown is an idea that it is a costly thing to start. There is some reason for the prevalence of this idea. Almost all the works on gardening would indicate that a great deal of labor and trouble was necessary in order to start an asparagus bed properly. They say the earth must be dug up two feet deep, that load on load of manure must be incorporated with the earth; and possibly they will urge the importance of some rare and costly fer-

tilizer as an essential ingredient in a proper asparagus bed.

But all these things are unnecessary. Any rich garden soil is good for asparagus. It need be planted only as other things are planted. Some say set the roots a foot deep, but four inches below the surface is plenty. It is not well to plant them too thick, or the sprouts will be small. Twenty inches or two feet apart is a good distance. Plants one year old, or two if they can be had, are the best. If one be at a distance from stores to get roots, seeds may be sown and the beds made the next year. These can be sown in rows, like peas.

An asparagus bed once made will last for years, with no trouble but an annual manuring and forking over every year, and one or two hoeings during the summer to keep the bed clear of weeds; but, except on the score of neatness and cleanliness, this is scarcely necessary where an annual spring forking over is given. Almost all other crops have to be reset and otherwise cared for every year, while this is an enduring crop; and we are quite sure there is nothing which will give one so much pleasure and satisfaction as a good asparagus bed.

Keeping Hens.

In general a singing hen is a laying hen; certainly a hen will carry out the adage just as a comfortable, contented cow is a good milker. And this is the secret of both cow and hen. Feed well, treat well, and you make happy and contented. A company of hens, therefore, must not be crowded; must not be cold; must not suffer from bad or insufficient food. A hen must not be disturbed or annoyed in any way. It must not suffer from foul water, but must have clean water at all times. It must have a dust spot to wallow in; a quiet retreat to lay its eggs, and an easy place to roost. It must have plenty of light. All this makes summer for the hen, summer in winter. And what will prevent it from laying, singing and laying? Any breed will do well, some better than others. Never keep a hen till it is old, either for its flesh or its eggs. Hens thus treated will never fail to do well, especially the best breeds. It is a safe investment. And these investments in small colonies may be multiplied at will, each independent of each other, although adjoining. It will be seen here, as in other things, that principles must be aimed at. These may be carried out in various ways. Each one is to do this himself. If not capable he is likely to be unsuccessful with hens.

Crossing Cotswold and Merino Sheep.

A few days ago one of our sheep men, who has been for two or three seasons using a Cotswold ram on his high grade Merino ewes, invited me to look at a nice flock of lambs which he had just turned into a meadow near his house. We discussed the propriety of thus crossing the breeds, he advocating it strongly. I expressed the opinion that one crossed for the production of "lamb" for the table was the extent allowable, and that the second cross, though possibly affording carcasses, would not be profitable by reason of the small amount and poor quality of the fleece. He is a man given to change of views without any positive proof that he is in error, and I was, greatly surprised on meeting him this morning to learn that he had been making a thorough investigation of the matter, and had felt constrained to admit that such is the fact in his own case. I think the introduction and use of coarse wool rams among the flocks of Vermont has been immensely injurious to the best interest of our flockmasters, though they have made a very good thing of it temporarily by raising "lamb." With a stock of old high grade or pure bred Merino ewes and no desire to perpetuate the flock, but only to raise lambs for the shambles, the practice is admissible but no further.—Country Gentleman

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