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The Centre Democrat.

AGRICULTURAL. NEWS, FACTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Every farmer in his annual experience discovers something of value. Write it and send it to the "Agricultural Editor of the DEMOCRAT, Bellefonte, Penna.," that other farmers may have the benefit of it. Let communications be timely, and be sure that they are brief and well pointed.

Skim Milk Farming. In the section I live in the farmers are chiefly engaged in wheat raising, with a growing tendency in the direction of stock and dairy farming.

Careful estimates have placed the actual cost of producing a bushel of wheat in this section at not far from sixty five cents; this does not include depreciation in land nor cost of transportation by rail, or otherwise, to the markets of the world.

These expenses aggregate at least twenty five cents more, and when the wheat is placed in any market where it will bring \$1 per bushel, the cost of production and transportation have run up to at least ninety cents.

The crop of '83 marketed in my town aggregated 550,000 bushels, worth in Chicago something like half a million dollars, on which the farmers have realized a profit of not more than ten per cent., or \$50,000, in this favorable wheat year.

The freight tariff alone on this wheat amounts, however, to \$115,000, and as the cost of transportation affects the price paid, this enormous tax really falls upon the farmers. Their expenses for freight alone are therefore more than double their profits.

Now, assuming that stock and dairy farming are, of themselves, quite as profitable as wheat farming—in other words, that it costs no more to produce a given amount in butter or beef than the same amount in wheat (an assumption most favorable indeed to the wheat interest), it is easy to estimate the benefit the farmer might receive in this one item alone, by condensing his products.

Half a million dollars worth of live stock could be sent to the Chicago market at an expense of not to exceed \$35,000, and thus of this \$115,000 freight expense incident to wheat raising, there would have been saved, to the farmers' profit, \$80,000.

The same product in pork and beef would have gone to the same market at an expense of not to exceed \$25,000, and thus another \$10,000 of freight might have been saved—all clear profit. The same amount in cheese would have required the expenditure of but \$15,000 in freight, instead of \$115,000, and thus an even \$100,000 of expense might have been saved to the farmers—just twice the amount of their profits on wheat; and on dividing up among the 500 or more farmers each would have a balance of \$300 to show for every \$100 realized on wheat.

In the production of butter the difference is still more to his advantage. To ship \$500,000 worth of butter would cost not more than from \$7,000 to \$8,000 in place of the \$115,000, and thus about 93 per cent. of the cost of wheat transportation would be saved, and the farmers' supposed profit of 10 per cent. would be increased to considerably over 50 per cent. of the gross receipts. Putting it in a different form and we find that the Southwestern Minnesota farmer, who produces good butter, pays out for transportation to market but 2 per cent. of the value of his product.

The cheese producer pays out from 3 1/2 to 4 per cent. The pork and beef producer pays from 5 to 6 per cent. and the live stock shipper from 7 to 8 per cent.; but the wheat farmer settles his little freight account by turning over from 23 to 25 per cent. of all the gross receipts of his crop, and a large share, if not all, of the balance goes for other expenses.

The wheat farmer is content to take his small pittance of gain in skim-milk, while the millers' associations, the speculators, and the railroads take all the cream of his crop.—From a paper by H. E. Heard, read before the N. W. Dairymen's Association.

Chickens, such as Asiatic, should never be allowed to perish until about six months old, or the breast bone will be liable to become crooked. There is no cure, and it is a disqualification for exhibition fowls.

The Potato Crop.

A year ago at this time, potatoes were selling throughout New England at prices fully double their present value, and there were consequently a larger number of acres planted last season than usual.

The season proved favorable to the crop, and potatoes have been selling low, as an inevitable result. We find some of our cotemporaries advising their readers to learn a lesson from the experience of the past year, and to give more attention to other crops, particularly corn, and let the potatoes receive less thought.

Now it is true that the potato is an exhaustive crop to grow, as it returns very little to the soil, and in some localities its culture may have been carried to excess, because it is so easily turned into cash as soon as harvested; and in such localities it might be well to reduce the area devoted to it, but its cultivation should not be neglected because of the unusually low prices that have ruled the past season.

The probability is that the present low prices will cause a great many to give up the potato as a farm crop, for this year at least, and that the next season's crop will bring much better prices. Those farmers usually succeed best who follow some chosen line through good seasons and bad seasons; then they learn how to do their special work in the very best manner, and they get the benefit of the occasional high prices, which are sure to rule every few years.

There is far too much shifting from one thing to another among many of our farmers. They take up new things just in season to make a losing every time, while if they would stick to a more uniform course they would succeed far better. If you know how to grow potatoes well, this will be a good time to continue in well doing.—N. E. Farmer.

Farmers' Homes. Frank D. Curtis, in his address before the New York State Agricultural Society, said several good things in regard to farmers' homes, but none more to the point than the following in regard to the location and surroundings of the dwelling: "A house on a hill, with no trees about it, looks cheerless and unhomelike. Have grounds around the dwelling. Tear away the fences; they cost money, and are useless. I mean fences shutting the house up as if there was danger of it running away. Let there be not less than an acre of dooryard; ten will be better. Make a rich lawn of this, and cut the grass. It can be no waste, but it will be a thing of beauty; and a thing of beauty is a joy forever. There need not be any loss to be tasteful; nature and beauty are synonymous; good taste and economy can therefore be made handmaids to each other. Set your fruit trees in this inclosure, and dig around them with a spade each year, and top dress the whole, and the trees will grow finely, and the grass will grow luxuriantly, and the house will grow beautiful, the children will grow contented, the fathers and mothers as they grow old will grow happy, the neighbors will grow to emulate and excel, the township will grow attractive, and the young men and the young women will grow up to feel that there is no place after all, like 'Home, Sweet Home.'—American Farmer.

MILK cows due to calve soon should receive more care now than heretofore. Extra rations of wholesome food with good shelter and pure water is very important and necessary. Bran fed now will have the tendency to increase the flow of milk when the cow comes in, and should be given regularly each day. During the warm days of approaching spring a run in some high, dry lot or field is desirable. Do not try to force your young heifers with overfeeds of rich food. Many a promising young animal has been ruined in this way by parties caring more for an abundant and unnatural yield of milk than for the health of their animals.

An Ohio farmer washes his apple trees every spring and fall with a strong lye that will float an egg, and finds it to be sure death to the borers. He claims that he has not lost a tree since beginning this practice, although he had lost several previously.

Hoaling Plaster for Tree Wounds.

When large limbs are cut from trees, either as pruning or for the purpose of grafting, the stock is very apt to rot in after years. The water soaks into the wood, and although the part may heal over apparently, and become nicely covered with new bark, yet the rot will be found, after many years, to shorten the life of the tree.

Various remedies have been tried to prevent this rotting, such as tar, paint, gum shellac, etc., but the following we have found an excellent composition: Burn an old leather shoe, mix the ashes with three times its bulk of bone dust, then add about an equal share of grease or fat to some pine tar, heat up and mix over a slow fire, and at the same time mix in the powdered bone and ash of leather, till it comes to the consistency of thick paint. Pour around the outer edge of the cut, then apply with an old brush or a flat, narrow piece of board, and let it be well rubbed on.

The above is from Mr. Thomas Bennett, an experienced planter. In ordinary practice a coat of coal tar will be sufficient. A simple application will make an almost impervious and weather proof covering. Its odor, too, drives away insects, and it has been adopted, after many and costly experiments, by the Directors of Parks in Paris, as the standard coating for tree wounds. Where the wounds are exceptionally large a second coat may be applied in a few years to the part not yet healed over. The thicker preparations, with rosin or wax for a base, offer obstructions to the new growth of wood, which, as it spreads over the wood, must crowd aside the coating or break it up. In Professor Sargent's translation of Des Cars' book on pruning the fact is noted that coal tar is not so satisfactory as an application to the elm as to other trees. The water blisters which form on the surface of this wood prevent a firm adhesion. In such cases the coat should be removed from the blistered places and a new application made.

It Doesn't Keep. Perfectly pure butter will keep a very long time, like pure lard or pure tallow, but no butter is made, or can be made perfectly pure, without destroying the grain by melting it. As turned out by the best makers it still contains some of the other elements of the milk, its sugar or caseine, incorporated with it. But to have as little of these in our butter as possible is essential to even moderately long keeping. Salt will not save butter containing much of them. In fact, any butter will keep as long without salt as with any amount of it that can be used and leave the butter marketable. Salt is put into butter for flavor, and not for keeping. When butter is made from perfect cream and churned, washed, worked and packed as perfectly as possible, it is in the best condition for keeping. But however perfectly manufactured, long keeping can only be secured after ward by careful handling, ever remembering that butter at the best has always in it germs of decay which high temperature and exposure to the air will surely develop. For the foreign trade, especially to warm countries, carefully made butter, closely packed and sealed in air-tight and non-absorbent packages, ought to and undoubtedly will command very high prices. But only a thoroughly skilled maker should attempt this.—T. H. Hopkins, M. D., in Mirror and Farmer.

Farm Notes. Peas should be soaked in water twenty-four hours before being planted.

The raising of turkeys for the market is a very profitable investment. At least it is found to be so by all who have tried it. Every farmer should keep a flock. He is sure of two markets, one at Thanksgiving and the other at Christmas. The damage they do is but little compared with the good they do in the way of picking up grubs.

Eggs will absorb bad odors from musty hay if the latter is used for packing. It is not generally known that eggs are very much like butter or cream in the susceptibility to surrounding influences of this kind. Eggs in a grocery where there is salt fish, tobacco, kerosene, and such things, sometimes become affected if they are near these goods very long.