

COST OF RAISING CORN.

A Farmer's Idea of the Profits From This Crop in Kansas.

A correspondent writes the *Farm, Field and Fireside* (Chicago) and criticizes Secretary Coburn's figures on the cost of raising corn. Mr. Coburn's article was given in these columns some time ago. The correspondent says:

"The article recently published in the *Farm, Field and Fireside* by Secretary Coburn on the cost of raising corn in Kansas gives figures that are not warranted by the facts and should not be accepted by those who might be led to try farming in localities in this State. The Secretary whips us farmers over the head for complaining of hard times and high interest by figuring 2½ per cent. interest on our investment, which, he says, 'is a net rate higher than the capitalist, general banker or money-lender dreams of realizing.' It is no dream, but the naked truth, that the bankers and money-lenders are demanding and getting from our farmers from 12½ to 24 per cent. for money. Of course they evade the law and call it discount, and none of our legislative rosters dare give us a remedy.

"If the farmers are doing as well as Mr. Coburn states, why borrow money and pay so much more than he says they are making if not to maintain honor by meeting our obligations brought about by failures, low prices, high freights and a cursed legislation.

"His report may be true as to the ones of whom he gets his reports, but why not classify the State and show thousands and thousands of acres of corn that never produce an ear, is never harvested and reported in the general yield, and the interest on the investment, labor and all lost to the farmer, and it must be remembered that a large per cent. of the farmers refuse to give the acreage of growing crops to their Assessor, so it can be seen that such reports can be no guide.

"He figures the average yield of corn per acre since 1861 for the State to be twenty-seven bushels and the total cost per acre for raising an acre of corn from \$5.71 to \$6.40. I say it will not exceed an average of ten bushels, but let us call it twenty-seven bushels, which is twenty bushels more than this county has had in three years, and last year had to buy seed shipped in.

"Twenty-seven bushels at 15 cents per bushel is \$4.05, and if it costs from \$5.71 to \$6.40 the farmers of the State go in the hole from \$1.66 to \$2.35 on every acre, which must be made up by paying large interest.

"What is true of corn is also true of other crops. It may sound well to people in the East to talk about the large profits in feeding, but right now \$2.50 per 100 pounds for hogs is staring us in the face, or hold them when not another pound can be added and danger of losing them by heat, and borrow money at above rates with the uncertainty of a raise to offset it.

"Again the Secretary makes our stalk fields valuable. Go to any farmer in this country and ask him how much better he would be off had he not had a stalk field, after deducting the loss of cattle and horses.

"I found out, I think, why the banks and money-loaners he speaks of are not making on the average any larger interest. It is because of holding their money idle too much. Just the other day a banker of this county said there was more idle money in his bank than ever before, and they dare not loan it for fear of never getting it back till

the farmers could get for their products the cost of production, and he saw no remedy until the cause of underconsumption was removed. Of course when they do loan they must make up for the idleness of their money.

"This same banker said they were receiving circular instructions to advocate the gold standard, so it is plain to see where we are at financially. If the gold standard causes so many different ways for money to be kept out of circulation I am against it, and this is the first time it has gone down in black and white.

"The State is now booming the wheat crop in the interest of land sharks or wheat speculators, and not wishing to pass judgment through my prospects, I have looked around some, and although this is known as the banner wheat county, it will fall ten bushels per acre short of any estimate that has been made. If I have made any misstatements let my brother farmers correct me."

Common Sense in Cattle Breeding.

Speaking of Col. Harris' recent sale of the Linwood herd, the *Breeder's Gazette* says:

"If Col. Harris had never done anything else for American cattle-breeding interests than champion the cause of rational breeding he would be entitled to the gratitude of the entire body of Western cattle-growers. He not only led the fight against the pedigree craze that was rampant fifteen years ago but he had the courage to oppose with equal vigor the silly idea that Cruickshank Short-horns can be bred in-and-in for generations with any other result than that which has overtaken all other strongly-bred strains known to Short-horn records. The *Gazette* has for years inveighed against 'pure' this and 'pure' that as embodying an idea that is repugnant to all reason and common sense, and we rejoice therefore at the signal vindication of the soundness of this view furnished by the Harris dispersion sale. When sixty-three head of cattle can be sold for nearly \$13,000—at a time when the average value of all commodities is lower than at any other period during the past thirty years—there is ample ground for encouragement for all who are honestly trying to breed good cattle along the broad lines so successfully followed up by the great breeder who has temporarily laid aside the work. The Linwood sale was an object lesson in the art of cattle-breeding that cannot fail to have a salutary effect upon all who heard the proprietor's brief and *ex tempore* valedictory address at the ringside and saw the many beautiful animals passed under the hammer."

High-Grade Stock in Texas.

In the line of fine stock ranches, both large and small, the Panhandle does not take second position to any section of the West. The great XIT, or Capitol syndicate, has several divisions devoted to full-blood stock exclusively, and a "division" of that company means whole ranches to an ordinary stockman, as some of them contain two or three counties. Different divisions are devoted to different breeds of cattle and these supply the other divisions with breeding stock. A number of small ranches are raising nothing save pure-bred registered cattle of some kind, and some of the highest-priced bulls in the State are located within 100 miles of Amarillo. One firm gave an order the other day

to a bull man to bring them a bull costing not less than \$500. It is such animals as this that will produce such herds as the 6666 or the JA when 2-year-old steers sell at \$22.50.—*Texas Stockman*.

The Feeding Value of Alfalfa.

At the Utah Agricultural Station an experiment has been in progress that has for its object the determining of the relative feeding value of alfalfa cut at different stages of its growth that is proving very instructive. Three sets of steers were used in making the experiment, being fed from December 18 to February 21. One set was fed alfalfa cut before coming into bloom, another set being fed alfalfa cut while in early bloom, and the third lot fed on the same cut after it was entirely out of bloom. The results were decidedly in favor of the early cut alfalfa. The steers fed on this made an average gain of three-fourths pound per day, those fed on the medium-cut made an average gain of one-half pound per day, and the lot fed on the late-cut hay made an average gain of but one-fourth pound per day. There ought to be a lesson here for Nebraska farmers. No doubt there is a tendency among farmers to let the job of cutting the alfalfa crop accommodate itself to the other affairs of the farm. When this is done the haying is sure to have to wait beyond its time very often, and, as the above experiment would go to show, there may be a very serious loss from this cause; and then the loss may be from a double source, as there should be a new crop of alfalfa coming on while as a matter of fact this is effectually estopped by reason of the old stand holding its place and growing so hard and fibrous as to be discarded in a large measure and left in the manger. Cows in particular are fond of the early-cut alfalfa, horses will eat it a little coarser. But we take this opportunity to impress upon those who have had little experience with alfalfa that it ought to have the attention of the farmer at the right time.—*Nebraska Farmer*.

Inspection at the Chicago Stock Yards.

Live stock inspection causes a good deal of friction, and of course there are many mistakes made by inspectors which work great hardship upon owners, but those mistakes are by no means all on one side, and, considering the hurry and bustle of a great live stock market, they are not very numerous, and the present system of hog inspection at least, while far from satisfactory, is far and away ahead of the old days, when packers did all the "docking." There is but one feature of the cattle inspection that works to the disadvantage of shippers, and that is where animals are held for *post-mortem* examination and found to be all right. They never can be sold as well as they could if left with the original drove and sold without any question. A salesman says: "We have had steers condemned by the inspectors, upheld by the State Veterinarian, and when they were slaughtered they were found to be perfectly sound and we were at liberty to sell at the best possible price obtainable, but in every such case it was a loss to the shipper of from \$15 to \$30 on each animal, and without any redress. We think we need a rigid inspection in order that we can get to any markets of the world with a full knowledge that our meats or animals are free from disease, but at the same time we should have laws that, where the government or

State takes an animal which after being slaughtered is found free from disease, should be paid for in full by either the State or national government." This seems an unfortunate thing, but it is one that is difficult to help, and the only thing to do is to insist on having the most competent and impartial inspectors, who will minimize the evil.—*Drovers' Journal*.

Dairying in Mexico.

The *Kansas City Journal* says that milch cows in Mexico ten years ago were not bred, and no milk, butter or cheese was produced. Fifteen years ago there was not a drop of cow's milk or a pound of butter in Monterey, Mexico. The natives depended entirely on goat's milk. The opinion abroad in that region was that milch cows would not thrive in Mexico, and the natives made no attempt to try breeding. Condensed milk was first imported from the United States in 1883, and many have lived to see dairies established. Mr. Edmond Levan, from Texas, advised a Frenchman named La Grange to procure a few Jersey cows from the States and make a start. He did so, and in five years he had a herd of fifty cows, as well as horses and pigs, with fruit and vegetables and made money. This was the first dairy in Mexico, and to-day M. La Grange has made about \$100,000 out of his business since 1887. He has a ready sale for his products and next to no competition.

How Plants Breathe.

All plants, from the humblest wayside weed to the most stately tree, are provided with "lungs," and a regular respiratory system. If a leaf be examined while under the glass of a powerful microscope it will appear almost like a piece of lace work, the entire surface being punctured with thousands of minute openings. These openings may properly be said to be mouths. They are technically known as stomata, but they serve in the capacity of a mouth, and it is through their well guarded lips that all the air passes into the tube that is provided by an all-wise Providence for the purpose of airing the blood (sap) of the plant or tree in question. Strictly speaking, the leaves themselves are the lungs of the plant, and the air comes in direct contact with the sap and aerates it as soon as it passes through the minute mouth or opening in the surface of the leaf. The botanist says that these openings (stomata) are so well guarded with tiny bristles that it is absolutely impossible to force a drop of liquid (water, spirits or anything of that sort) through the lips. This is certainly wonderful, when we consider that they are in fact continually opening and closing, in fact performing the act of inspiration and expiration.

Wagner says that "the average apple tree of five years' growth inhales and exhales as much air in a given length of time as does a full-grown man."—*Farmers' Voice* (Chicago).

Crimson or Scarlet Clover.

The Ohio Experiment Station has made several experiments with crimson or scarlet clover during the past four seasons, all of which have thus far resulted in failure. The chief difficulty has apparently been that the dry weather, which is so common in Ohio during August, the time when this clover is ordinarily sown, has killed the young plants after germination. Of late years this summer drought has regularly extended into the fall. Whether this clover will endure our winters is also a doubtful point.