

Industrial Topics.

A COUNTRY SCHOOL HOUSE.—No. 1.

PROFESSOR W. J. BEAL.

In many cases the location is a desirable one, situated on a slight elevation near a good road in a central portion of the district. In too many instances the house is built on a piece of low land, back from the main road, perhaps in the edge of the woods or more likely away from any trees. There is a little corner of half an acre, or less, cut off from a field. The lot is generally destitute of a fence, and open to the frequent visits of cattle, sheep, and perhaps swine. These animals keep the turf closely pastured, but otherwise damage the appearance of the yard. The land is rough and ungraded, just as Nature left it, except the removal of all or a part of the trees. The stones are scattered about, if stones are common in that locality. Stumps and logs are plentiful, unless the country is old.

Toward the rear of the lot are a couple of out-buildings much dilapidated, on account of frequent beatings by sundry stones and sticks thrown by mischievous boys. Several portions of the main building, especially at the front, are badly damaged by hard usage. In several places, scattered over the lot, are piles of stove-wood and numerous sticks are strewn about in great confusion. Good order may be displayed in a wood-pile as well as in anything else. A mud puddle is situated near the front door. An old board or two serve to keep the feet partially out of the mud. If we enter the room, we shall not be disappointed in finding that the inside corresponds with the outside of the house.

If the above description will not answer for most of our country school houses, it answers for too many of them. In a few cases there is an attempt to ornament the grounds by shade trees and other means, though even here usually no good design has been followed.

The effect on teacher, scholars, visitors, and passers-by is anything but inspiring. Suppose the ground were graded even a little, and trees set here and there about. In grading, the surface should be made smooth, but not necessarily level or formally graded down. If cattle run on the road, a neat fence should cut off their approach to the house. Let the teacher with the aid of the scholars, who will cheerfully lend a hand, pick up everything tidily. In summer there should be a few neat flower-beds kept in good order. Shrubbery and perennial herbs should find suitable places. It is no use to say the scholars would not help, or that they would destroy the plants after they were set out. Any one who has tried it knows better.

A word about the house. It is usually planned and built by those ignorant of the business, at least the plans are usually poor. The house is plain and almost always painted white, or sometimes red. I know of one case in which the house is red and the battens are white, or a part of each is white. White, for a country house, is too glaring and conspicuous, presenting too strong a contrast with all the surroundings. I know of many instances where the houses cost enough to be models of excellence. I think of one the walls of which were made of pressed brick. Every seat in the house is so high that hardly any one, except a "six-footer," can sit down squarely and rest his heels on the floor. On my visiting the school, the teacher said there was not a seat in the house low enough for the largest scholar. The seats were narrow and flat, not sloping backwards, and the backs straight up and down. In such places the children are required to sit with feet dangling midway between the seat and the floor, just because some one did not put brains enough into his plan for a house. In most cases the ceiling is tight, a stove supplies the heat, and there is no arrangement for ventilation except by the windows and doors. Sometimes there is no black-board, though generally there is a small one of poor quality in an inconvenient place. In some cases there is no wall under the sills. The cracks in the floor allow cold drafts of air to come up freely through it.

In such forlorn quarters, with no sign of ornament inside or out, children are banished for six hours a day, for several months of the year. Is it a wonder that some of them do not like the school? I hope the above picture is overdrawn, but in the majority of cases with which I am acquainted, I am sorry to say it is not.

Would it not be a good plan to put on a little more style? Why should not the inside of the school-room look as well as the church? This is the case with many of our city schools. Or, again, why should not the school-room be made as attractive as some of the village saloons? Through a poor streak of economy people are employing the cheapest teachers they can get.

When a boy, the writer hated school, but did not know why. It was not pleasant. To the rest of his knowledge, the correct reason can

be picked out of the foregoing account of our country school houses. There was nothing cheerful in the surroundings; the seats were uncomfortable; the hours were long and too many in each day; the air was impure, the teacher overworked and unskilled in awakening an interest in the studies. The writer liked nature, but disliked books—at least such books as were accessible. The greatest needs of our country are educated voters and educated mothers. With plenty of these there is no danger that the Republic will fail. In future papers I shall try to suggest means for making our country schools more effective. Agricultural College, Lansing, Mich.

Various.

BEE HINTS.

THE apiarian has still but little to do about the bees, further than to see that the proper temperature is maintained (between 35° and 50°), and to ascertain that they do not suffer from dysentery or the ravages of mice. But now is the time to make hives, frames and implements that will be needed during the busy season. Now is also the time to study good works on bee-culture, to familiarize one's self with the experience of others, to look into the causes of their success or failure. One will thus store up much useful knowledge that will be handy to draw upon when occasion demands.

OLEOMARGARINE.—Of sixteen manufactories of this concoction scattered here and there through the country, thirteen, we learn, have already been closed by the pressure of hard times, though backed with an aggregate capital of \$1,800,000, to begin with, and few if any are running at a profit. Among the causes that have contributed to the stagnation in this greasy business not the least influential has been the lack, of late, of the liberal amount of free advertising foolishly accorded it by all our dairy conventions until the RURAL entered a vigorous protest against the practice. At the late dairy show in this city the stuff failed to receive a single puff from any speaker, and the underhand trickery by which its manufacturers hoped to profit, like trickery generally, finally proved injurious to the tricksters. They cunningly contrived to introduce a few tubs of the stuff among the butter from distant points, and then loudly boasted that the judges could not detect the imitation from the reality; but in every case the odor of the conglomeration alone betrayed it. Some farmers, too, and even some creameries were, not long since, accustomed to use a good deal of it for the purpose of adulterating their butter; but the public odium and low prices that awaited upon detection, have greatly curtailed this opening for its sale. The curiosity of the general public also with regard to the concoction, has been nearly sated, while the low price of genuine butter of late and the necessary improvement in most of it, are also contributing to the unpopularity of oleomargarine.

CHUFAS, PEARL MILLET AND PRICKLEY COMFREY.—A correspondent writes us from Hanover Co., Va., that he has tried these three plants during the past year. The two first he considers really valuable farm crops, and is especially impressed in favor of Pearl Millet. If it is not deficient in nutritive elements—and such analyses of it as we have seen assign it a fair amount of nutriment—he will regard it as the grandest forage plant he has ever seen. His patch was from nine to ten feet high and formed a mass of forage 2x9 feet all along the row. He did not cut it for forage, however, but let it seed, lest it should fail to do so certainly and freely if it were cut once and he should depend on the second growth. The Chufas, on moderately good land and with only indifferent culture, yielded at the rate of 154 bushels to the acre, as ascertained by measuring the tubers from a small area of average productiveness. After two years' trial of them, he is quite satisfied that they are a paying crop.

Although the Prickley Comfrey was grown on very rich land, it proved of little use to him and he is about to abandon its culture, thus setting a much lower value on it than another of our correspondents who speaks in praise of it in this issue.

BEAUTY OF HEBRON.—The following is what James Veitch & Sons, the well-known London Seedsmen, say of this variety: It is an American introduction, a seedling from the Chilian Red. One of its special features is its luxuriant and rapid growth, the foliage partaking much of the character of that of Early Rose, only somewhat more vigorous. It is a very heavy cropper and early, coming into use three or four days before that variety. The tubers are of handsome kidney shape, slightly tinged with red around the eyes, of smooth texture and grouped closely round the stalk when growing.

Everywhere.

RURAL SPECIAL REPORTS.

VIRGINIA, Matthews C. H., Matthews Co., Jan. 15th, 1879.—We have the oldest and most thickly settled county in the State. Our population is something like 65 persons to the square mile, and most of our lands have been in cultivation for over a century without manure of any kind, with the exception of the old Virginia rotation—"a crop of pines"—and, strange to say, they still produce something and respond finely to what manure is spread on them. There have been vast quantities of ship-timber and lumber of all kinds cut from this county, and this has caused the agricultural interests to be neglected; but now we are turning our attention to farming and the oyster trade combined. The manner in which we improve our lands is unique; most of the farms lie on the water, and the owners procure fish from the numerous "pounds" and "purse nets," and drop them in the corn rows about two feet apart, using about 30 bushels to the acre. They are covered by the plow and the corn is drilled on top. This application generally produces about eight to twelve barrels to the acre, and I have known twenty-five bushels of wheat to be raised to the acre after the corn crop. The fish cost, at the pound, 20 cts. per flour barrel, and the improvement would be permanent, provided clover and grass seed were sown on the wheat, which is not generally the case. In the fall the oyster crop comes on, and the bivalves command a ready market, and for those having a suitable shore to plant on, the business is a very profitable one. This is the most healthy portion of Virginia. Billious diseases seldom occur, and the low grades of typhoid fever so common in the Piedmont region and West Virginia, are exceptions in this country. Land here is worth from \$10 to \$40 per acre, according to location and improvements; corn, 50 to 60c. per bushel; wheat, 90c. to \$1; eggs, 20c. per doz.; butter, 30c. per pound; oysters, from 50c. to \$1.25 per bushel. S. E. R.

CONNECTICUT, North Coventry, Tolland Co., Jan. 16.—All grain crops yielded fairly in this neighborhood; so did grass, and the farmer can find a ready market for all his products at good prices. The corn crop was a trifle below an average, owing to the weather having been too cold when the plant was setting ears. But what the farmer lost in his corn crop, has been well made up to him by others, especially buckwheat, which has been a fine yield—25 to 30 bushels to the acre is considered a fine crop in good soil hereabouts. Buckwheat is now worth 50 cents per bushel; corn, 65c.; oats, 40c.; rye, 75c. Our hay crop was very large and of good quality, and is worth from \$12 to \$15 per ton at the barn. The potato crop was damaged considerably by the Colorado beetle, so that the tubers are not as abundant hereabouts as usual. They are quoted at \$1 per bushel and upwards for the best Early Rose. Apples last season were plentiful, and many a farmer sold his crop for 15c. to 20c. or 25c. a bushel on the trees. Stock growers and dealers are now paying from \$25 to \$50 per head for good cows, while a few selections from blooded stock are worth more. Working cattle are worth from \$100 to \$125 per yoke. Fat cattle, dressed, 6½c. to 8c. per pound; hogs, 6c. per pound; good butter, 25c. per pound; eggs, 28c. to 30c. per dozen. Labor is cheap—good help can be obtained for \$1 per day, and some few for 80c. a day, boarding themselves. Many of the young men are teaching school, an occupation that pays better than farming—winter term, \$25 to \$30 per month for 20 days a month. We are having fine winter weather. The wood market is dull; good, hard, dry oak and walnut are worth \$5 per solid cord; mixed wood, \$4, delivered at the wood-yard. Such wood can be bought upon the lot standing for from 80c. to \$1 per cord, solid measure. E. B. T.

KANSAS, Everett, Woodson Co., Jan. 11th, 1879.—I have been living in southeastern Kansas something over two years, this being my third winter here. Two of them have been quite cold; the first winter we had about six inches of snow on a level, which lasted about two weeks. This winter has been very severe, the thermometer standing as low as 16° below zero, with about 14 inches of snow on a level, some say two feet. The first snow storm commenced on the 12th and 13th of December, and there has been sleighing since that date. There is little or no frost under the snow, and all our storms of late have been snow storms. I don't know how it is where L. J. Templin lives, but in this vicinity we have to feed stock nearly as much and for nearly the same length of time as we did in northern Illinois, where I came from. "Sunny Kansas" is the theme of nearly every paper nowadays, but persons coming here to live must not expect to find everything as smooth as land agents and R. R. Co.'s picture it. I do not wish the RURAL or its readers to infer from

these remarks that I do not like Kansas. I have traveled over a considerable extent of the western country, and am well suited with my present location, and I think it is a fine country for new beginners to start, but it is always well to look at both sides of a bargain and then one is not so likely to be dissatisfied in this case as if he pictured the country only one degree below perfection. Good land in this section can be bought as low as \$3 per acre, and some 80-acre lots at from \$300 to \$500; and 160-acre lots at the same rate, the improvements in many cases being worth fully the price asked for the farm. J. J. D.

INDIANA, Newton's Retreat, Tippecanoe Co., Jan. 15.—We have had fine sleighing here for the last four weeks, but most of the farmers would be glad if the snow disappeared and the weather moderated, for a great deal of the corn is still in stooks and some even yet standing; but at present there is little prospect of finer weather, for during the last week the thermometer has ranged from 10° above zero to 20° below. Wheat was a good crop here last year; oats, however, were light, owing to the weevil's depredations; corn was an average crop. Prices for all kinds of produce are low, and times are hard. Wheat sells for 88c. per bushel; rye, 40c.; oats, 20c.; corn, 25c.; hay, \$6 to \$7 per ton; live hogs, \$2.30 per cwt.; butter, 12½c. per pound; eggs, 17c. per doz.; potatoes, 40c. per bushel; onions, 40 to 50c. Business is improving slightly, and we hope times will be better in the near future. Tramps are plentiful, with some to spare. Hands on the farm get from \$15 to \$18 per month. There is plenty of work for those who are willing to do it at good prices. D. C. A.

OHIO, Dayton, Montgomery Co., Jan. 20.—We had, nearly up to Christmas, as nice a fall and winter as I ever remember to have seen, but a day or two before Christmas the cold snap set in, and ever since then the weather has been very cold—old men say the coldest they have ever seen. Potatoes and fruit froze in my cellar, a thing I never saw before. My flowers, kept in my sitting-room, had a very narrow escape, and indeed some of the most tender did get somewhat frosted. Most of my neighbors lost all of their flowers. The thermometer is generally about 20° or 25° below zero in the morning, and that is what we folks out here call cold. C. H.

UTAH, Nephi City, Juab Co., Jan. 14.—The weather is very severe in this part of the country. It is snowing heavily now and has been doing just the same for the last four days. The crops hereabouts were very good last season; wheat averaged 20 bushels to the acre; barley, 30 bushels; oats, ditto; potatoes, about 70 bushels—which, of course, showed quite a failure—and they were not good at that. The crops of John Vickers, one of the best farmers in this part of the country, averaged: wheat, 40 bushels per acre; barley, 75 bushels; oats, 52 bushels. J. B. D.

KANSAS, Offerle, Edwards Co., Jan'y 19.—We are having one of the coldest winters ever known to white men in Kansas. It has been steadily cold since 12 Dec. The ground is covered thickly with snow and the stockmen are losing heavily, as they have no hay to feed with. A good many of the settlers that came here late last fall are also suffering, for as our winters are generally open and warm, they did not expect such severe weather as that we now are plagued with, and accordingly made little or no preparations against such an unlooked-for visitation. S. H. S.

MICHIGAN, South Lyon, Oakland Co., Jan. 20.—We have had 30 days of good sleighing. Wheat went under the snow with light top and surface spotted by the fly. Corn yielded well; oats, however, turned out light, and potatoes were nearly a failure. Wheat was the largest crop ever harvested in this vicinity; but it was not of so good a quality as the year before. It is worth 87c. per bushel; corn, 40c.; oats, 20c.; potatoes, 50c.; buckwheat, 50c.; live hogs 2.55 per 100lbs; steers, 3c. per pound; butter, 10c.; eggs, 18c. A. B.

MISSOURI, Louisiana, Pike Co., Jan. 16.—Since my last crop reports we have been having continued severe winter weather for this locality. Early yesterday morning we had our nineteenth snow storm, with rain during most of the day, which is the first rain for a long time. Stock which has been scarce with many, so that animals had to be driven some distance to the larger water courses. Stock generally is doing well where properly sheltered and well fed. This morning the weather is cold and the roads frozen hard. S.

CALIFORNIA, Penryn, Placer Co.—The cultivation of the Orange is the one absorbing interest with us now. Our climate and soil have been both thoroughly tested as to their adaptability to its growth, and the result has been beyond all doubt satisfactory, and I should not be surprised if before long, some one of the many friends of the RURAL in this section, should send it some fine specimens of oranges grown on the foothills of Placer Co. J. W. B.