

# The Farm.

## THE HAY HARVEST.

BY ALEXANDER MYDE.

The wide-extended and long-continued drouth is cutting short the hay crop, and farmers are anxiously inquiring, "How shall we make the most of our scant allowance of grass?" Some are delaying the hay harvest for fear that the scorching sun will dry the roots that they will utterly perish. To these we say that the damage from dry roots is not so much to be feared as from dry hay. The exhaustion of both soil and roots is less when the grass is cut than when it is allowed to ripen its seed. True, the ground becomes more parched after the grass is cut, but roots have great vital power, and can stand the extremes of heat and cold, moisture and drouth, better than is generally supposed. The bulbous roots, such as onions and tulips, are often left exposed to the direct rays of the sun for days before being holed, and are in fact kept all the better for being thoroughly dry. Fibrous roots, of course, can not endure the extreme drouth so well, still they seldom die while in the ground. We have seen closely-planted July hay, but starting up and green with the first rains of August, and a root seemingly having perished, but all, therefore, were delaying the hay harvest for fear of damaging the aftermath or next year's crop, we say the delay is more dangerous than the harvest. Grass cut in the latter part of June or first of July is worth twice as much for hay as that cut in August.

Much hay is also damaged by being over-dried. Too long exposure to sun and winds takes all the aroma out of grass. Some farmers dry their hay till there is no succulence left in it. They are apparently ignorant of the fact that the volatile oil, which exhalates with the juices, gives to hay a stimulating quality very similar to green tea. When hay is made so dry that the leaves and stems are brown and brittle the virtue is gone out of it. Hayers of hay are especially desirous that it should be dried thoroughly, so that they may not purchase water, but if the greenness and flexibility are gone they are in the condition of those who purchase dry wood, so long dried that no vitality is left in it. We desire to have our hay holed in such condition that it will make a strong decoction, and will make two-fold more milk and beef than fed on a late and long-dried article. Observing the volatile oil which exhalates from the grass while drying is stimulating and strengthening, and never does a man feel stronger than when pitching hay that is cured just to the right limit. Another suggestion on hay harvest is the storage of it in as compact and close a space as possible. We have new barns with wide cracks on the sides of the mows, left apparently for the purpose of letting in air to the hay. What would a tea-dealer think of boring holes in the sides of his chest of tea in order to air it thoroughly? The same principles which govern the curing and keeping of tea should govern the hay-maker. Cure it with as little exposure to sun and air as possible, and when cured keep the air from it entirely. Next to these wide cracks in the barn, the hay is brown and crisp, and comparatively worthless. If we could exclude air from hay entirely we could put it into the barn with much less curing than we do now. In case hay is cut in the mow insufficiently cured, it is the top layer only which moulds. If we dig down into the mow eight or ten inches, where the air does not penetrate, we shall find no mould. The microscope reveals this mould to consist of small plants, fungi, growing from the decomposing hay. Now if hay could be bottled up at night, the air being previously excluded—there would be no decomposition of the hay and comparatively no fungus growth.

It is customary with some farmers, when compelled to put in hay imperfectly cured, to place it on the scaffold, where they expect the circulating air will finish the curing process. This air is much more likely to finish the hay by decomposing it, unless it is scattered very lightly. A better mode is to place the poorly cured hay in the centre of the mow, tread it down tightly, and put other hay or straw over it. In all cases we find the thorough treading of hay to tend the good keeping and good spending. The Chinese press their tea into chests lined with metal, that all the atmosphere, and if farmers pursued an analogous course with their hay, they would find it good economy.

The analogy between tea and hay also holds good in the using, or "spending," as farmers call it. We remember once going into the barn of a friend at the time of evening foddering. His cow had received a good evening meal, and he had her breakfast on the barn floor, which was forking over—slaking the dust out, as he explained it, so that it might be ready for use in the morning. We asked him what he would think of his wife if she should take out of her chaddy in the evening the tea from which she expected to make her breakfast in the morning. He scratched his head for a moment, and said "I understand your idea. I should certainly object to her shaking the tea to get the dust out." A mow of hay will spend better if cut down with this faces six or eight feet apart. This makes some work, but it expends less hay to the action of the fork than does feeding from the entire surface of the mow.

One more suggestion as to the storage of the hay crop. Fill up one bent in the mow before commencing on another, and never fear to put a dozen loads into one bent in one day. If all the grass on the farm, that was fit to be cut, could be moved in one day and holed, the hay would keep the better, and spend the better. In the good old times, when hay was cut in New-England was never commencing until pretty well along in July, we have known all the grass of a parsonage farm cut in the morning by a bee of the parishioners, and holed in the afternoon of the same day, and this for a succession of years, and we never knew the hay to mould, except, possibly, a little on the surface of the mow. We had the foddering of this hay during a portion of our teens, and well remember its green look and delicious aroma.

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