

The Central Farmers' Institute.

Every farmer should endeavor to attend the Central Farmers' Institute meeting to be held in Brandon on June 27th, 28th and 29th. By the programme it will be seen that subjects of an interesting and practical nature will be handled by some of the most able men in the Province. We notice with pleasure that Mr. James, Deputy Minister of Agriculture for Ontario, is to lecture on Agricultural Education, a subject upon which few are better able to speak. Prof. James W. Robertson, Dominion Dairy Commissioner, will also be present, and address the meeting. On the last day an opportunity will be offered to visit the Experimental Farm, which is well worth a special trip to Brandon at any time. The evening sessions will be brightened by music, etc., etc., and as Brandon City never does things by halves we predict a royal welcome and a good time to all who can attend. Reduced fares are promised by the railroads, and all who are not delegates should write the secretary for particulars.

Mr. R. E. A. Leach, secretary, of Brandon, announces the following programme:

June 27th—10 a. m.—Directors' Meeting. At 1.30 p. m.—President's Address, report of officers for past year, election of officers, appointing committees and transaction of business. At 8 p. m.—Addresses of welcome by the Mayor of Brandon and from the Brandon Institute, followed by replies; "Agricultural Education," by C. C. James, M. A., Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Toronto, Ont.

June 28th—9.30 a. m.—"Keeping Accounts," by Mr. H. McKellar; "Stock Raising," by a representative of the Cattle Breeders' Association; "Mixed Farming," by Mr. S. A. Bedford; and "Freight Rates," by Mr. C. Braithwaite, representing the Manitoba Patrons of Industry. At 1.30 p. m.—"Wheat Growing," by R. Waugh; "Economic Farming," by James Elder, Virden; "Tuberculosis in Cattle," by S. J. Thompson, V. S.; "Poultry Breeding," by H. A. Chadwick, representing the Manitoba Poultry Association, followed by a business meeting of one hour. At 8 p. m.—"Agriculture on Business Principles," by C. C. James, M. A., and an address by the Hon. Thomas Greenway.

June 29th—9.30 a. m.—Delegates will visit the Experimental Farm, after which the following important subject will be discussed:—"The Atmosphere, the Soil and the Plant."

Millet.

There are several distinct varieties of this grass, of which the Hungarian grass and common millet are the kinds most frequently sown, although German millet, which matures a little later in the season, is grown to some extent with good results. Our experimental stations are taking up this plant with the view of providing a good substitute for hay in the short years, and they have a number of new varieties which they report as being much superior to the common varieties now grown.

In this country it is grown altogether as a fodder crop, either to be fed green or cured as hay. Millet is especially valuable to supplement the hay crop in bad years, for a farmer can wait until he can determine the yield of his hay or ensilage crops before sowing, consequently he can calculate the amount of millet which will be necessary to insure the usual amount of winter feed for his stock; while nearly all other crops require an earlier sowing as well as a longer season of growth, millet can be put in quite late in the season and still give a heavy crop of feed.

A dry rich soil is desirable, but though it will grow on thin soils it pays best on fertile land. It will grow well on any soil of sufficient richness to give a good crop of corn or potatoes. The soil should be well pulverized and harrowed, and made smooth and level, so that the small seeds may not be buried too deeply. From three pecks to thirty quarts are enough, when sown broadcast; if drilled, less will be needed. After sowing the seed roll the surface. Sow after corn planting is finished, when the weather has become settled and the nights are warm, which will doubtless, in most parts of Canada, be about the first of June.

It should be cut as soon as the heads are well formed and before the seed ripens. Millet ripens very irregularly; some heads will be ripe when others are just shooting out, so it should be cut on the early side to get the best quality of feed. Cut with a mower and cure the same as common hay. One objection to the general growth of this crop is the fact that it is an annual and thus requires the ground to be prepared and the seed sown each season. Millet makes very rich feed and all kinds of stock eat it greedily, so that most growers prefer to mix it with common hay or other coarse fodder. If any of the crop has been allowed to go to seed it should be fed with great care and only in small quantities, as there is a certain amount of danger in feeding at this stage. Great care must be exercised when buying millet and Hungarian grass seed, that it is pure and free from foul weed seeds. A great deal of mustard and similar seeds have been introduced into the Northwest and Manitoba in this way; in some sections every farmer who was growing millet could be pointed out at a distance by means of the yellow mustard blossoms in the crop.

Live Stock Portraiture.

There is a peculiar satisfaction in work well done that comes to the publisher in no other way. Though aiming at constant improvement in all departments, we are reminded by many congratulations that in live stock portraiture the front page illustrations of the FARMER'S ADVOCATE exhibit a distinct advance in this feature of agricultural journalism. Recognizing the existing need in past years for improvement, we are pleased to be able to place within reach of Canadian breeders a class of work that will do life-like justice to stock, the excellence of which has gained world-wide repute. The portrait of Messrs. Jackson's Southdowns, occupying the place of honor in this issue, has probably never been excelled, it indeed equalled in periodical work. Its fidelity to life is remarkable. Among others with which we hope to favor our readers shortly will be a group of Mr. John Bell's celebrated Tamworth swine, Messrs. Gibson & Walker's Lincoln sheep, and the noted Ayrshire sire at the head of Mr. Thos. Guy's herd.

Summerfallowing.

Had our prize essayist started his fallow a little earlier in the season, and advocated only one plowing, followed immediately by thorough harrowing to retain all the moisture possible and repeat the harrowing at short intervals, as pointed out by Mr. Bedford in another column, his "process" would be much more complete. The strong points he makes in recommending the keeping of more stock to convert the large straw piles into manure instead of smoke, and the seeding down to timothy, or a native grass as soon as the Experimental Farm can recommend one which will be better than timothy, place this essay ahead of several other very good ones. Mr. James Elder, of Virden, last year, after killing several crops of weeds as above indicated, sowed wheat at the rate of half a bushel per acre on a 90 acre fallow, and so luxuriant was the growth that he was obliged to get a neighbor's flock of 300 sheep, as well as all the cattle in the district, in order to feed it all off before the snow came. This course would not only help to keep the soil from drifting and supply splendid autumn pasture for stock, but manure the land well and evenly, and firm it down so that it would be in the best possible shape for the drill in the spring, and in our opinion would be better not harrowed at all. We expect to hear later on wonderful results from this experiment. Now a question arises as to what is best to sow under this system, whether wheat, oats, barley, rape or turnips, and the quantities of seed per acre. We should be glad to hear from any who have tried any of these or other things; let us hear what you have done or what you think in regard to this important matter.

FIRST PRIZE ESSAY.

On "The Best Method by which the Manitoba and Northwest Farms May Be Kept Free from Weeds and their Fertility Retained."

BY W. STANDEVEN, CALF MOUNTAIN, MANITOBA.

Presuming it is your wish that the essays for competition shall be such as will most readily recommend themselves to the average farmer of Manitoba and the Northwest, and will enable him to summerfallow some of his land with the ordinary conveniences he has at hand, and not enter into the treatment of summerfallowing in the abstract, I shall confine my remarks to the usual conditions, which, as a practical farmer, I find around me, for I think it would be useless for us to expect the ordinary farmer in this new country to be supplied with means to protect root crops from our severe frost until he could make profitable use of them; therefore, I will not enter into the question of a fallow crop of such, but give my own experience. We know very well that the land will soon tire of continual cropping, and if we want to keep up the fertility of the soil and secure good crops and clean land, then we must watch closely our fields; and when the crops begin to fall off we know the weeds will make great headway and very soon get the upper hand. If the farmer in this country was in a position, as I said before, to grow roots on some of his land which wants change, then, I know there is nothing would clean it so well as the necessary preparation and cultivation for that crop, but failing this, I recommend the following process. Let the farmer use his own judgment and decide what part of his land shows symptoms of sickness, and after harvest turn his attention to the land which it is his intention to crop next year, leaving the proposed fallow alone. Then, when the spring opens there is no time for anything but to get in his crop. As soon as the seeding time is past, let him turn his attention to his summerfallow and give the field a good harrowing, either with a spring-tooth seeder or spade harrow, both ways of the field, and let the field rest for a few days, or until he thinks the seeds of the weeds on the surface

are well started into growth; let the field get green if it will, and about the first week in July plow carefully and well, turning everything down, then give it one stroke with the drag harrows, or more if it is not fine enough, and let the field rest again for a short time to give the seeds which may have been brought to the surface time to start into life—perhaps ten days; then harrow again, and after waiting a few days more to see if any more weeds are left to come to life, give the field one shallow plowing with the gang plow and harrow afterwards if necessary. I am well aware, Mr. Editor, that many farmers object to two plowings in one season, but I have proved that this process will give a fine tilth on the surface and a firm bed for the seed to be drilled on, and a clean field, with renewed fertility. I would strongly recommend that the wheat sown shall be very, very clean, for it would be simply ridiculous to sow dirty seed on a clean field.

The latter part of the subject of our essay is, "How the fertility of our farms is to be kept up." I would advocate, after one crop of wheat, or at most two, have been taken from a field so treated, that it be laid down to timothy grass. I say timothy because it seems the only grass we can depend on at present, but I am anxiously watching for the result of the experiments on the native grasses at Brandon Experimental Farm. Then, let all the manure which can be got out be put on the timothy; this will help the grass and help also the crops of wheat which shall follow the hay crop and pasture. Another condition I would recommend is that more cattle be kept and more stall feeding be done, with greater care of the manure so made; and I cannot too strongly condemn that insane method followed by many farmers of burning their straw after harvest to get rid of it, and then, if the spring is late in opening they have to run around and beg a little straw of their more provident neighbors to keep their cattle alive. There is no doubt in my mind but that we shall have to bring our system of cropping out of the haphazard way in which we now indulge, and lay down a regular rotation of crops. I believe there is no better plan than for the farmer to make the summerfallow his starting point, and in a few years he will have a certain portion of his land every year clean and in the very best condition to get a good catch of timothy, and he will also have the same quantity of strong timothy sod to turn down for wheat; by doing this he will be able to get good crops all round; and very likely to escape the frost, for it is well-known that wheat sown on timothy sod ripens several days earlier.

Before I close I must say a word or two on the subject of sowing wheat on the stubble, and I cannot too strongly condemn this practice; it is one which is, more than any other that I know of, filling the country with weeds, and instead of improving the farms of Manitoba and the Northwest is having a directly opposite effect.

Farmers' Institute Organization at Hartney.

Thursday, 11th inst., at 8 p. m., was the date on which Hartney Institute was gazetted to organize, and notwithstanding the very busy time with farmers—and night brings welcome rest after the long and weary day's toil—a large gathering assembled in the Orange Hall. The work of organization was rushed through in short time. E. Briggs was elected President; A. L. Henry, Vice-President; Jno. M. Fee, Secretary-Treasurer, together with six directors and two auditors, all well chosen.

Messrs. Bedford and Leach, of Brandon, were present to address the meeting by request of the Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Leach being called, intimated that the present meeting, now organized as the Hartney Institute, was the result of his feeble missionary effort performed at the instance of the Executive of the Manitoba Central Farmers' Institute; he congratulated the institute on such live members as their President and Secretary-Treasurer, who had energetically pushed the preparatory organization work. His address on "Institute Work" abounded with suggestions along the line of conducting institute work, describing the advantages to be gained from commingling of thought and experience by the farming profession, and the need for employing the most improved methods in that industry.

Mr. Bedford's address on summerfallowing was full of useful suggestions. He said a man should do it intelligently; not do it because it was customary, or because it was a time in the summer when there was not much else to do, but do it to clean and rest and fertilize the land. Many "summerfallows," so-called, were made more foul by the methods of work than though they had not been touched. Last year he saw hundreds of summerfallows, but not more than a dozen worked right. He recommended for couch grass twice plowing, but for anything else only once plowing, harrowing close after the plow, and as often afterward as weeds showed through the ground. When the ground got worked down hard that harrows did not do the work, put on a cultivator. He liked to destroy from six to a dozen crops of annuals in the summer.

The next meeting of the institute will be held May 27th. Hartney Institute starts off with good prospects and a large membership. Our best farmers are connected with it, and seem to regard it with much favor.