

THIS YEAR'S CROP.

By J. C. READEY, PROVINCIAL SOIL AND CROP INSTRUCTOR.

WHILE out on the work of judging the crop competition the writer has been asked so many times regarding the problems of soil-cultivation, weed-eradication, and blight-control that this little pamphlet has been prepared in answer to a popular demand. In addition to answering the questions so commonly asked, the writer has ventured to offer a few criticisms of prevalent methods. The whole pamphlet has been inspired by a deep interest in the work, and by a most sympathetic appreciation of the difficulties and disappointments that surround the farmer, in spite of his best endeavours.

IN GENERAL.

An encouraging number of good crops were shown this year. Fields of oats, wheat, turnips, kale, and other crops were shown that were a credit to the farmers and to the Province. The achievements this year only demonstrate the possibilities. Next year we shall do better.

GRAIN-CROPS.

METHODS OF CULTIVATION.

Some of our farmers do not cultivate thoroughly. The great excuse offered is lack of time. The reason really is that they try to cultivate too much land for the time at their disposal. Try less land, and cultivate it more thoroughly, and watch results. Plough carefully. Don't use the disk harrow for all harrowing purposes; it is a special implement. The spring-tooth cultivator is a safer implement to use. Use the drag-harrow often to prepare a seed-bed and conserve the moisture.

SELECTING AND CLEANING THE SEED.

The best crops are produced from seed selected from the best plants. The next best from seed from the cleanest, best-matured part of the field.

Fairly good returns may come from thorough cleaning with the fanning-mill.

No matter what the method employed to obtain it, nothing but large, plump, seed should be sown. Try it, and see.

Try thorough cultivation and more careful selection of seed on a small plot for next year's Crop Competition. See further on for particulars.

WEEDS.

In the grain-growing districts, wild oats, wild buckwheat, tumbling mustard, and lamb's quarter. Some of our farmers are doing heroic work in fighting the weeds. In spite of infested roadsides and slovenly neighbours, their farms were object-lessons in clean, high-class crops. Why are so many of our farmers so careless about weeds? True, weeds get in through no fault of our own, but it is our own fault if they overrun our farms. Some men can take charge of a farm in weed-infested districts, the farm itself polluted with the worst weeds in the noxious-weed catalogue, and in a few years clean it up and completely control the weeds. Some farmers refuse to believe there are weeds in their crops until the weeds have the mastery; then they appeal to the Government to prosecute their slovenly neighbours or to suggest remedies, and are surprised that the weed expert cannot by some short-cut rid the field of the nuisance. Weeds not only reduce the crop, but their ejection is a mighty expensive proceeding when they gain foothold. No doubt infection by weeds from outside sources is a vexation, but the damage would be lessened easily by one-half if our farmers would cultivate less ground, cultivate it more thoroughly, inspect their growing crops occasionally, and see that the forerunners of the weed army are destroyed. Prevention is better than cure. There are no short-cuts to a cure; more thorough cultivation and pulling the first scattered weeds are good methods of prevention.