



VOL. XI. No. XX.
(NEW SERIES.)

TORONTO, CANADA, OCTOBER 15, 1874.

\$1.50 PER ANNUM.
SINGLE COPIES 8 CTS.

The Field.

Seed Saving.

It is good policy, in various aspects of it, for the farmer, when he can, to raise his own seed, both for the farm and the garden. There is, or ought to be, a garden on every farm, and successful culture in both largely depends on having not only seed that will grow, but seed that is first-class as to quality. Valuable time is often lost through want of vitality in seed that was good enough when it was fresh, but it has been on hand too long. Seed bought "promiscuously" can never be depended on. It is always best to obtain it from a responsible seedsman. But the thing has been neglected, the season presses, it is some distance to the town or city where the regular seedsman carries on business, and so what is wanted is got from the country store near by. It may have been on hand a long time, or it may have been old and dead when it was peddled round wholesale, and sold cheap to the country store-keeper. At any rate it fails to grow, and either the season is lost altogether, or so much of it that there is no chance of getting a full crop.

Even when seed is fresh and germinates readily, there is liability to disappointment. It may be inferior in quality. The turnip seed may have been grown from turnips too small to feed or the cabbage seed from cabbages that would not head; and so on through the entire list of field and garden seeds. "Liko produces like" in the vegetable as well as in the animal world, and first-class seed can only come of first-class parentage. The true principle is to save seed only from the choicest and best plants. It is by carefully doing this year after year, that not a few of the most valuable kinds of seed have been produced. We hear much of degeneracy. A variety of wheat "runs out," as the saying is. It is not so good as at first. There are of course various causes for this, but one of the most common is, neglect in regard to saving the best. For two or three seasons perhaps the plant comes pretty well up to the mark, but gradually there is a decline, until inferiority becomes a settled character. Periodical change of seed is no doubt beneficial. Facts, like human beings, are often improved by change of air and place. But making due allowance for this, there is also a process of acclimation, especially in the case of seeds from foreign countries. When this is fairly accomplished, the plant and its seed may be considered to be at their best, if care be taken in the cultivation of the plant, and the saving of the seed.

Every cultivator of the soil can raise a small quantity of choice seed for his own use, better than a dealer can raise a large quantity to keep up his stock in trade. There are few seedsman who are in a position to grow their own seed. Most of them

buy from wholesale dealers, and these again from all sources. Notwithstanding all the care exercised by seedsman who feel their responsibility and desire to use their customers well, it is inevitable that disappointments will be experienced. Occasionally inferior samples will find their way to the store-house, which when sown will mock the husbandman's hopes. Due allowance must be made for this in dealing with the most careful seed merchants. The sure way to avoid all uncertainty and disappointments is for the cultivator to grow his own. "When he can," we wrote at the outset. We freely grant that it cannot always be done. But is it not practicable to a much larger extent than is now practised? Seed wheat, peas, oats and barley even, are largely bought when, with a little thought, they might be home-produced.

Of course, it involves time and trouble. So do all the operations of husbandry. The farm and garden will not run alone. They cannot be left to chance and leisure. An old-time observer makes this note. "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding, and lo! it was all grown over with thorns, nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down." Weeds grow, self-sown, in rank luxuriance. But the precious fruits of the earth must be grown with assiduous care.

The suggestion has often been made, that to keep grain up to a high and even improving standard, the best ears should be culled out just before cutting the main crop, and preserved for next year's seeding. It is not so long or so troublesome a job as might be supposed to do this. And will it not pay in extra yield, to say nothing of the pride and pleasure attendant on getting produce of the best quality? Those who aim at obtaining premium corn crops in the United States, where that cereal is extensively grown, are accustomed at husking time to pick out the best ears and save them for seed. This illustrates the principle and practice we are pleading for. What is to hinder a farmer picking out the smoothest, finest, biggest carrots, mangolds and turnips, and reserving them for seed-growing, or a gardener selecting the best cabbages, melons, lettuce, &c. for the same purpose? If this were constantly and carefully done, our farm and garden products might easily be kept up to a high standard of excellence.

There are minor considerations well worthy of being taken into account. How convenient it is to have seed on hand ready for use when wanted. Often when a day is very precious, it cannot be improved for want of all things being in readiness. All else may be at command, but the seed, the essential thing, is wanting. The matter of expense is no trifle. Little by little seed-buying runs away with a great deal of money. A farmer should stop all leaks as far as possible. Small leakages often do considerable damage. Economy is one of the cardinal virtues in a farmer, not that pinching

economy which refuses wise and necessary outlays, but the economy which scrupulously avoids all needless expense. To be self-contained and independent, having resources within reach and under control, is as fine a thing on the farm as it is anywhere else. Then it must not be forgotten that by saving a liberal stock of seed, a source of profit may be secured in a quarter where usually it is all outlay, for a man known to be careful in saving the best of seed will always find ready market for any surplus he may have at any time.

The method of saving seeds is too large a topic to be discussed at the close of this article, but it may be remarked, in brief, that the conditions for safe preservation are a low temperature, dry storage, and exclusion of air. Fruit seeds are an exception to the rules just given, since they need to be kept moist, and are usually buried in soil. But they belong to the special department of the nurseryman, and the present discussion relates mainly to the work of the ordinary farmer and gardener. A seed room or closet is a great convenience to such as would give thorough attention to this matter. Secure packages and careful labels are also points of no little importance.

Forty Bushels to the Acre.

A writer in the *Practical Farmer* tells how he gets big crops of wheat:

For the past five years I have averaged forty bushels per acre of wheat of the finest quality, always being over weight. I think I am still gaining every year, and attribute this to the system pursued, and especially to keeping sheep. My rotation is corn, barley, with clover; third year, clover; and fourth year, clover ploughed down for wheat.

I have never missed a crop of clover by seeding it with barley. It gives the grass seeds a chance which oats do not. I raise full crops of barley which do not at all interfere with the grass, but I think barley rather helps by the slight shading. After the barley is cut the clover makes astonishing growth, giving me superior late pasture. Owing to danger from mice, I pasture it down pretty close.

My soil is clay loam. I plough down the rank clover about nine inches deep, give it one harrowing, then haul out my manure and spread. This I plough down shallow, as I consider it important to have the fertilizer near the surface for the roots of the wheat plant. I use the drill, putting in one bushel and one peck to the acre.

I have never had a wheat crop hurt by freezing and thawing, which I see you sometimes suffer in eastern Pennsylvania. One season, and one only, when we had a very fine fall of growing weather, the wheat grew so rank that I pastured it some during the winter. I have never had any attacks of insect enemies on the wheat crop, and feel as certain of a crop of about forty bushels per acre under my system as that spring will succeed winter. It is ten years since I moved on this farm, and believe nothing more recuperates a worn-out farm than keeping sheep. They spread their manure evenly over the field, and I have found the truth of what some one said, that "the tread of the sheep is golden."