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EDITORIAL.

Winter lingered in the lap of spring, and a chilly courtship they made of it, too.

Many a Wellington, surveying his shallow hay mows and empty grain bins from day to day, prays earnestly for spring or lower feed prices.

Small oats, if plump, will make as good feed as large ones, but they are not so good for seed. The moral is plain enough. Screen carefully.

Good seed counts for more, perhaps, with corn than with any other crop, and the quantity per acre being so small, the difference in cost between the best and the ordinary is, comparatively speaking, a mere bagatelle.

Have the clover and grass seed mixed and the grain cleaned ready to slap into the ground. One day's delay in commencing the sowing of twenty acres of spring grain may easily make twenty bushels difference in the threshing returns.

By all accounts, good seed corn is likely to be none too plentiful in certain broad sections of the American corn belt this spring. Buy early, buy on the ear, and test every ear for germination before planting. Do this always as a matter of course.

For prolonged duration, with extremity of wind and cold, the winter of 1911-12 takes easy honors over any season within the memory of most of us. And now, please let no wise official come forward armed with records to mar our grim satisfaction by telling of a worse one.

One of the advantages in consolidation of public schools is punctuality in attendance. Pupils quickly learn that they must be ready for the wagon when it calls at their homes, and the accidents are rare which prevent the wagon from reaching the schoolhouse "on time." Some Minnesota schools report not a single case of tardiness during a term.

Grain being so dear, it will be a good season to try moderately light seeding of grain on fields where clover is to be sown. A little less oats and a little extra clover seed improve the chances of a "catch" on many farms; and, if so, would be amply justified, even if the grain yield were a little less. Try six or seven pecks of oats and twelve pounds of clover and timothy, chiefly clover, and compare results.

In selecting a crop for standing field competition, a very large number of Societies choose the one most extensively grown in their locality, namely, oats. While there are sound reasons for this choice, it is worth considering whether, in some cases, more good might not be accomplished by promoting the more valuable crop like corn or alfalfa. While the successful culture of these crops requires more skill and enterprise than do the more common ones, the returns are much larger.

A Profitable Postal Service.

"The Farmer's Advocate" is in receipt of an official copy of the last annual report of the United States Postmaster-General, Hon. Frank H. Hitchcock, which shows conclusively that reasons other than the establishment and extension of free rural-mail delivery must have been responsible for the large deficits which formerly burdened the service. That was an excuse long urged against the adoption of rural delivery in Canada, where a businesslike administration of the postal service years ago made it self-sustaining. At the beginning of the present administration at Washington, in 1909, however, the postal service was in arrears to the extent of \$17,479,770, the largest on record, but two years has changed that into a surplus of \$219,118, and this done without curtailing public facilities. On the contrary, thousands of new offices have been opened, the staff increased by over 8,000, the salaries of employes largely increased, the pay for rural carriers increased from \$979 per year to \$1,082, and 2,516 new rural routes established, aggregating 60,679 miles. The successful operation of the new postal savings system has been fully demonstrated, the deposits, after eleven months of operation, having reached a total of \$11,000,000, distributed in National and State banks, and protected by bonds deposited with the Treasurer of the United States. While money-making is not an ideal object for a public utility such as the post office, which exists to serve all equitably and well, it is gratifying to find that its business can be conducted without loss.

There are two classes of rural-mail service in the States, officially designated as "rural delivery" and "star route." Any person living on or near a road covered by either may, by erecting a box along the line of travel, have delivery and collection of mail matter. The boxes are provided by patrons at their own expense. "Star route" service includes only delivery and collection of ordinary mail matter, and delivery of registered matter when expressly requested by an addressee. Rural delivery involves the delivery and collection of all classes of mail matter, including registered and special delivery, the sale of stamp supplies, and the transaction of money-order business through the carrier. In the United States the rural carriers now deliver mail on 42,000 routes that reach about 20,000,000 people.

Since the publication of the preceding year's report, a most beneficial consolidation has been effected of the "rural delivery" and "star route" services. It has enabled the department to extend mail delivery to many thousands of additional patrons by a re-arrangement of established routes, with little increase in the annual rate of expenditure. Much needless duplication of service which it was difficult to prevent with two independent systems of rural delivery, has been eliminated, and under the new plan the service is being rapidly extended.

Chief among the recommendations of the Postal Department to Congress is one for the authorization of a trial parcel post on rural routes, and also for the introduction of such a service in cities and towns having delivery by carrier. The parcel post system seems destined to come in time, despite the mistaken opposition of local stores who have an abnormal fear of the big departmental houses, and the more sinister opposition of the monopolistic express companies. What the Department asks is a moderate approximation to give the proposed system a fair trial, at rates

to be prescribed by the Postmaster-General, on packages not exceeding 11 pounds in weight, containing no first-class matter.

How and When to Seed.

Each season of the year brings its problems, and spring furnishes a full share. After a long, tedious spell of cold, rough weather, with chores to do and wood to cut, the thrifty farmer looks forward with no small amount of eagerness to the spring days, with their balmy south winds, gentle warming showers and nature's rapidly changing conditions from rest into vigor and activity. There is satisfaction to be had from getting on the land, especially so if done at the best season and when the soil is in the best working condition for the production of a suitable seed-bed.

The first consideration, of course, is the seed. This should be all cleaned and ready. Time means money in the spring. As far as crops are concerned, there are few more valuable farm assets than a good fanning mill, well used. Extra fanning and screening means a larger yield of cleaner, purer, plumper seed, and that is what all growers should aim to produce. No man can afford to shovel the grain just as it comes from the threshing machine into bags and cart them to the field, to be used as seed for the next crop. Thorough cleaning is essential. In experiments conducted at Guelph, for from five to eight years, with each of eleven different classes of farm crops, the average results showed that the large seed surpassed the small seed by 19.1 per cent. for the grain crops, 40.3 per cent. for rape, and 60.1 per cent. for the root crops. Well-matured, sound seed invariably gives best results. Just before sowing, all grains liable to smut should be treated with the formaldehyde treatment so often given in these columns.

With the seed and implements ready, the farmer is prepared to begin on the shortest notice. There is a time for everything, and nothing pays better for timely work than seeding. Many get over-anxious and commence a little too soon, but more there are who do not get on soon enough. Land should never be worked in a sticky, soggy condition. Such soil makes it difficult to cover the seed, and later in the season the land dries out, bakes, and is a great detriment to the crop from a moisture and aeration standpoint. Just as soon as the land will pulverize well, get to work, and the earlier the seed is sown, the better. Our growing seasons are none too long, and the earlier the seed is in the ground, the greater the chance of a large yield.

Methods of cultivation are very diversified. As long as the right result of tilth is produced, it matters little how it is accomplished. Deep spring plowing is not conducive to moisture-holding, and one of the problems which should be foremost in the mind of the tiller is to get the soil in a condition to retain the moisture already in it and as much as possible of the spring precipitation for the use of the crop. It is a well-known fact that grain crops require over twice as much moisture to mature them as usually falls during the growing season; therefore, this important requisite to plant growth must be carefully protected against the hot, drying winds of spring and summer. No better cultivating implements have yet been devised than spring-tooth cultivators and disk harrows. Put pressure on these and they will pulverize the soil to sufficient depth to make a good seed-bed. Another implement