

Europe was more interested in conquest than in agriculture and Spain was not the least ambitious. Many of her adventurers sailed to Mexico to wrest from the natives the rich silver deposits which existed there..

True, these Spanish cavaliers destroyed everything before them, but in their wake they left another conqueror—Alfalfa. It came slowly but none the less surely. It clothed desolation in emerald green, dressed the country-side in royal robes of purple, made barren wastes fruitful. But unlike the Spanish hordes and their bloody unsuccessful, short-lived campaign the conqueror, Alfalfa, is still campaigning, still conquering. Its domain has extended from Mexico northward to California, Texas and the Mississippi Valley. Settlers from the old land brought seed with them and attempted to grow it in the Atlantic States but were unsuccessful at that time. It has since overrun the plains of Minnesota, Dakota and Montana. The plant invaded Canada about the same time and is to-day gaining in popularity as its merits are becoming more fully known.

THE PLANT.

This plant belongs to the botanical order leguminosæ. The members of this order furnish very largely the nitrogen in stock and human foods. They also furnish the nitrogen supply in natural soil fertilization thereby making farms more productive and at the same time improving the mechanical condition of the soil in which they are grown. The scientific name is *Medicago sativa*. There are many species of the genus *Medicago*, but only four are of any value as a fodder crop—*sativa*, *falcata*, *ruthenica* and *lupulina*. The last named is considered a weed in this country. The others or crosses of them form the crop under consideration. They are true

perennials. The slender tap roots and offshoots therefrom penetrate to a great depth and fill the soil with many fibrous rootlets. The stems are smooth upright and branching, which grow from one to four feet in height, according to soil, climatic and cultivation conditions. The branches bear three parted leaves and pea-like flowers varying in color from a yellow to a purple according to variety and strain. The blossoms are borne singly along the stem and branches. The seeds are kidney-shaped and average one-twelfth of an inch long or about one-half larger than red clover—*Trifolium pratense*. They vary in color from an olive green to a yellow.

STRAINS AND VARIETIES.

Above are mentioned three distinct species, but the most hardy is the *falcata*. Because of cross-fertilization with the *sativa* many different variations are found in the plants' blossoms among the different strains. The strains which have proven to be the most hardy and productive are:—

Grimms.

Ontario Variegated.

Sand.

Baltic.

A FIELD OF HARDY ALFALFA.

The parents from which these strains were propagated were plants which survived many and severe winters in our northern climate. They are therefore the survival of the fittest. Being grown in the north these strains are acclimatized and suited to our northern soils.

SEED.

The greatest success can only be obtained by the use of the best seed procurable which has been selected from the hardiest strain. It must be of good size, plump and show a fair amount of lustre. (Fair, because the northern-grown seeds do not exhibit the propor-