

### Our Correspondence Department— Flax.

Of the various departments of the FARMERS' ADVOCATE, that of correspondence is one of the most interesting to those for whom our paper is principally designed. From the beginning, our aim was to establish a means whereby farmers could communicate to farmers their experience in the various branches of agriculture, and the result of their experiments. This we consider a more effectual mode of giving and receiving information than dry lectures that are, at the best, of little interest to practical men. Science in agriculture is comparatively little worth till tested by practice. Were proof needed of the importance of this Department, we have but to refer to the columns devoted to it in our journal, and to the great number of intelligent farmers in every part of the Dominion, and even some beyond its limits, who avail themselves of the privilege afforded them in writing to us from month to month. And the queries from those who are asking information are not without their value to our readers, leading to profitable suggestions. To the enquiry, "On the Subject of Soiling Cattle," we reply in this number. We now reply to another query:—

**ON FLAX CULTURE.**—Flax can be grown on any soil, but, as with all crops, some soils are especially suited to it, and on such it is most profitable. The soil best adapted to it is a deep loam, dry and fertile. We have grown it on every variety, and in every instance with profit; but on soil not naturally suitable for it the expense of preparing it will be greater, and in neither quantity nor quality will the return be so good. In the north of Ireland, where so much attention is paid to flax culture, the preparation of the soil is as follows:—For the preceding crop the land is ploughed deep and well cultivated. When the crop is removed, the surface is lightly ploughed or cultivated in order that the weed seeds may germinate and be killed. In the fall the land is then ploughed deep—not a foot left uncut—and the deep furrows and water-cuts thoroughly cleaned up so that there is no obstruction to the passing away of the water. The soil having been subjected to the mellowing influence of the winter frost, is in good condition for the further preparation for the sowing of the seed. As soon as the ground is dry in spring, it should be plowed again three or four inches deep. This plowing, and a thorough harrowing, are necessary to make the soil fine enough for the seed. Manure is unnecessary if the soil be in good condition from previous attention and manure. Fresh farm-yard manure would be injurious to the crop.

**SEED AND SOWING.**—The best seed is that imported from the ports on the Baltic. Though much seed is saved in Ireland, that from Riga is always in the greatest demand, and brings the highest price. Its quality is judged from its weight, its shade of color, and its oiliness. The quantity of seed per acre differs according to the soil, from 2 bushels on strong soil to 2½ or 3 on soil lighter and less fertile. It is sown by hand, broadcast, and covered by a light seed-harrow. The best time for sowing in this climate is about the first week of May. In Europe, where the seeding is generally accomplished earlier than it is here, flax is sown through the month of April and on till the first of May.

**WEEDING.**—The preparation of the soil, as directed, leaves little to be done in weeding; annual weeds were killed, and if any other, such as thistles, ragworts, &c., they can be easily cut down.

**PULLING OR MOWING.**—What time the bulbs begin to change their green color for brown, and the delicate leaves on the stalk have become yellow for two-thirds of its length, it is time to pull

the flax. By some it is pulled earlier to obtain a finer fibre, and by some later to secure a heavier yield, but we have concluded, from some years' experience in flax culture, that the proper time is that we have stated. Some flax-growers adhere to the old method of pulling the flax, but it can be mowed at less expense, and without any waste of fibre.

Rippling or separating the seed from the stalk, and rotting to separate the fibre from the woody part or shoves, are subjects for a later season, and for that we leave them.

**THE PROFITS OF FLAX CULTURE.**—That a flax crop may not pay expenses is true, but the same holds good of any crop. There may be a bad crop, low prices, a loss, but it is equally true that a fair profit may be expected from growing flax as from any other crop. An acre of land will yield, if well cultivated, four hundred to five hundred pounds of lint, and from twelve to fifteen bushels of seed.

### Soiling Cattle.

An article on this subject appeared in the FARMER'S ADVOCATE a few years since, but very many who are our subscribers at present were not subscribers then; and besides that, it is a subject of so much importance to farmers that a further consideration of it will be of use to many besides those who have been asking for some information on the subject. One correspondent, "Mosa," is very particular in his queries, and as he takes up the points so minutely, we reply to him, and through him to others.

"How many acres will it take to keep ten cows from May to 1st of November?" The number of acres required cannot be exactly named, as some land will yield more forage than other, and the quantity of produce and the number of cattle fed must vary with the season and the soil. We may, however, estimate that eight acres cut for soiling will not only yield abundance of food for ten cattle for six months, but some can be saved to add to the winter's hay.

"What kind of food is best to grow?" For the first couple of weeks of May you must rely on the mangolds saved from the last fall. The first green feed for soiling is rye sowed in September. In the middle of May this may be mown. In feeding it, it is well to add a little dry food as hay. After rye the next soiling is oats and peas mixed, an excellent food for any stock on the farm. After this mixed crop, the clover will be well in season. Following the clover comes in the corn—Western or Canadian, as is thought best.

"How much pasture, if any, is necessary, more than to turn the cows on for exercise?" No more is necessary, and the area of land stated is sufficient without pasture; but in our own feeding by soiling we preferred a mixed system, part soiling and part pasture for milch cows, feeding them in the house in the heat of the day and any other time we thought better.

"Is it necessary to house them?" It would do, as suggested, "to feed them from racks in enclosures when the weather is fine, and to house them when stormy." Whether fed in the house, or more at large in an enclosure, care must be taken to make the most of the manure, which is one of the greatest sources of profit from soiling. More manure, and that of a better quality, can be made by soiling stock in summer than at any other season, and by any other means. Straw for bedding may not always be to be procured—if not, some substitute can be had. We used for the purpose peat, (or muck) dried by exposure to the air, and all the weeds on the farm were used as litter. Soiling, as must be expected, entails more labor and expense, but we have no doubt the expense will be well repaid if properly carried out.

Nor is the expense so very great, as is supposed by some who have never tried the experiment. An English farmer fed two hundred and forty oxen in sheds through a whole summer by the mowing of one scythe; if the attendance on the animal be added to this, the amount will not be very large.

The profits may be summed up under three heads:—First—The difference of the acreage required for feeding under the system of soiling and that for pasture. Second—The sufficiency of good food for the stock at all times, even when pastures might be expected to be bare. Third—The greater value of the manure made by soiling. In pasturing cattle, their excretions are scattered over the field, and nine-tenths dried to worthless matter by sun and wind, leaving no profit. In soiling the manure heaps accumulate rapidly, and the superiority of the manure made in summer from soiling cattle to that made at any other season is very great.

The estimate we have given of the number of cows that may be fed by soiling on a given number of acres is lower than is generally given, but if a season be productive of forage any quantity not required for green feeding can be saved for the winter. There are other forage plants than those we have mentioned that may be profitably used for soiling, such as Hungarian grass and Millet.

### Flax Straw for Feed.

In another column there is an article on Flax Culture. The following extract from the New York Tribune present a use for flax straw not generally known. N. B. G. says:—My experience, which has been considerable, convinces me that flax straw, mixed with chaff, so far from being injurious to cattle, or horses, is decidedly one of the best feeds to be had in the West. Cattle like it, and will eat it in preference to prairie hay, and when the two are mixed I estimate one ton of flax straw as worth at least two tons of Western hay. I have nine cows, which, during the past winter, had free access to stacks of both flax and hay, and in each case they showed a decided preference for the flax. Each of these cows was with calf, and have all done well. So far from causing fetus prematurely, in four instances they have gone from four to five days over the time allotted. My cattle are all looking well, having soft skins and glossy, oily hair, and are in every respect in better condition than in any previous spring, when deprived of this pabulum. My candid conclusion then is that flax straw will not injure either cattle or horses, under any circumstances when properly mixed with prairie or other hay, though it is well known that the naked seed given in excess will effect serious damage and premature discharge of fetus. A. N. W. adds:—Flax straw I have used for feeding cows with calf all winter, and they are, in fact, in better flesh than those of some of my neighbors who fed prairie hay.

### An Agricultural College.

The American Farmer says of the Maryland Agricultural College that the last scholastic year nineteen counties of the State sent not a student, and the whole agricultural community of Maryland sent but seven. Agriculture, so far as we have learned, is no more and no better taught than before the promises of reform.

From the action of the late Legislature in setting out from the appropriation bills for 1876 and 1877 the items for the support of the College, with the intention of putting a stop to its drain upon the State Treasury, and the prospect of having its charter repealed at the next session, it is probably deemed advisable to make another great show of a change, and seek, under a plea of promised amendment, for a new lease of life.