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Improvement of Seed on the Farm

D. H. Currie, Wellington County, Ont.

IN a large number of the Experiment Stations of the United States and in our own Experiment stations, considerable time and money has been expended towards the improvement of grain crops. The farmer is privileged to reap a share of the results of this work. It is an unquestionable fact however, that every farmer should do something towards the improvement of his own grain. We have very frequently heard, concerning wheat in particular, that a change of seed every few years is essential to good yields. One of our best seedsmen has said that he never neglected to set aside for seed, the grain from any particularly good piece of wheat which he observed in his fields. The result has been that his grain, instead of deteriorating, improved more or less from year to year. The necessary precautions that are required to obtain the grain from a small section of a field, does not necessarily involve extra labor, as we have found from our own experience. We feel satisfied that the seedsmen's practice is well worth following.

IMPORTANCE OF CAREFUL CLEANING

In addition to securing all our seed grain by keeping the grain obtained from the best part of the standing crop separated from the rest, we make judicious use of the fanning mill. We even practice hand-picking on a small scale. We have found that the practice of postponing the cleaning of grain for seed until we are ready to commence sowing is one that is well worth discouraging. Not infrequently there is a scant supply of grain left in the bins for seed. At such times it is a temptation for any one to let one fanning suffice, and to allow as little as possible of the small grain to be separated from the bulk. Necessity for making haste also leads to rapid fanning. If this work is done during a slack time or in the winter for spring grains, no excuse can be given for hasty or careless work. As there is likely to be considerable grain in the bins at such times, no hesitation need be felt in removing a large quantity of small grains. These smaller grains answer equally as well as large grains for feeding purposes. Hence there is no loss.

THE VALUE OF HAND PICKING

A few years ago we carefully hand-picked a bag of winter wheat for exhibiting at the Fall Fairs.

The grain proved to be more uneven and more dirty than we had anticipated, accordingly the slow work grew monotonous. When completed, however, we had a very fine sample of wheat. This sample was sown the next year in the same field as the rest of the wheat. As the crop matured, considerable difference could be noticed between the hand-picked and not hand-picked wheat. The former excelled to quite an appreciable extent in evenness of growth. When threshed, the grain was found also to be distinctly superior in uniformity. Since that we have hand-picked small quantities of oats and barley with equally as satisfactory results. The task of hand-picking has lost its laboriousness because we are now fully convinced that the hours thus spent will be well repaid by the increase in quality and yield of the resultant crops.

HAND PICKED IN SPARE TIME

The popular plea for neglecting to give more attention to the improvement of crops is lack

of instalment of machinery to clean the grain. Since similar complaints are heard from the dealers, the question of improving our seed is one that deserves careful attention.

The Culture of Fall Wheat

H. B. Webster, Perth Co., Ont.

Fall wheat is not grown as extensively in Ontario as it was a few years ago. Farmers are realizing that it is more profitable to feed all the grain grown on the farm to stock, rather than to sell it. In this way they return to the land, in the form of manure, much of the fertility removed by the crops. For feeding purposes, mixed grains, oats and peas, prove more valuable than wheat. The enormous amount of wheat produced in the West, and the keener competition which this brings, makes a high price for wheat very uncertain. Again, it is becoming more difficult to secure a good crop.

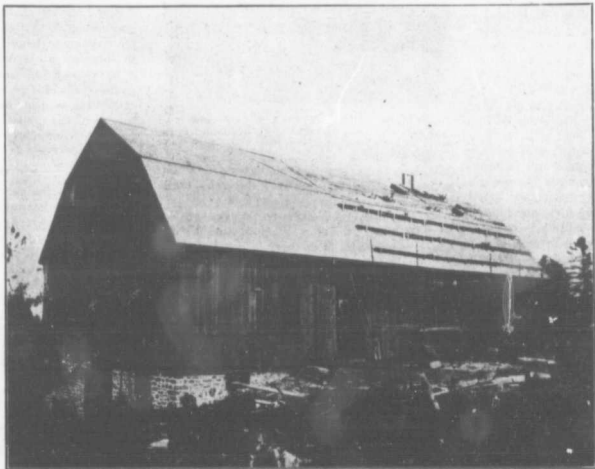
Notwithstanding these facts, wheat growing

has much in its favor. It enables the farmer to do more work in the fall, thereby relieving the pressure of work in the spring. It also divides the work of harvest, as the wheat is off before the oat harvest commences. Another item in its favor is that it may easily be converted into ready money. Considering everything, a small acreage of wheat still has a place on the Ontario farm.

Fall wheat grows well on a variety of soils. It prefers a sharp clay, or clay loam, with a porous or gravelly subsoil. The open subsoil is necessary to prevent the land from remaining saturated with water, thus lessening the damage done by frost.

METHODS OF PREPARATION

There are several ways in which the land may be prepared for the wheat crop. The ideal seed bed is one which is thoroughly pulverized at the surface, and which is fairly compact immediately underneath. This condition is obtained by various methods. The most popular method is that of plowing down a clover sod early in the season. It is often plowed at once after the removal of a hay crop. It should be plowed by the end of July, or very soon after. If left till later it is often impossible to plow sod on account of drouth. Plowing early gives the sod a better chance to decay. A skimmer should be used to turn under all the grass. The sod should be plowed about four or five inches deep. The land should be rolled immediately after plowing, to compact the sod, to hasten its decomposition, and to smother the grass. The disc-harrow fol-



A Splendid Barn in Course of Construction

This barn owned by Mr. R. Cleugh, of Northumberland Co., Ont., is 120 x 48 feet. The stables are arranged with a driveway down the centre, thus permitting of a team being used. Such construction is becoming popular. It effects a great saving of labor in caring for the stock.

of time. However, there are comparatively few who could not spare for this exceedingly important work, a few hours during some of the rainy Fall days and a few hours during the winter days when the average farmer's rush is over.

ASSISTS IN COMBATING WEEDS

A little time thus spent also assists, in no small measure, in combating weeds. Good clean seed is always in demand and will always command the highest prices. It is a noteworthy fact that the price of barley for malting purposes is almost invariably dependent upon the purity of the grain. In practically every brewery, complaints are heard about impure barley which necessitates