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## EDITORIAL.

### Preparation for Seeding.

The return of spring brings to the farmer a measure of anxiety about the spring work on the farm, and especially in regard to the operations of seeding. He knows that much of the success or partial failure of the prospective crop depends upon the preparation of the soil and the character of the seed sown. It is not necessary to remind the wide-awake farmer of the wisdom of having his implements and tools looked over, repaired if repairs are needed, and put in first-class condition for their work, to have the teams and their harness well prepared for their part, and to have the seed grain cleaned and ready to be taken to the fields as soon as the land is sufficiently dry to work satisfactorily. All these things will naturally suggest themselves to the man who is watching every point with a view to making the best use of the time for seeding when it arrives. The series of letters from successful farmers in various sections of Eastern Canada, published in this issue, show a substantial agreement in most essentials, and should be read in the light of the fact that the same methods do not apply in all soils and circumstances, and each one should use his own judgment as to the best procedure in his case.

It is generally conceded that, as a rule, by far the best results are received from the earliest sown grain crops, especially in the case of spring wheat and oats, while in regard to barley and peas early sowing is more generally approved of now than formerly. As early, then, as the land is sufficiently dry to work without poaching it is well to make a start with the cultivation and preparation of the seed-bed, which should be well worked and stirred to a depth of at least three inches, and it is doubtful whether there is any advantage in the case of land that was plowed in the fall in working it to a greater depth than four inches. We are persuaded that a large proportion of Canadian farmers, especially in the older provinces and on clay or clay loam soils, are sustaining heavy losses every year from inferior crops owing to imperfect or insufficient cultivation of the land in the preparation of the seed-bed. The probability is that in nine cases out of ten the failure to produce reasonably profitable crops is not nearly so much owing to the lack of a sufficiency of the elements of fertility in the soil as to the fact that the mechanical condition of the soil has not been made such that the crops can appropriate them and use them for their development. In far too many cases the implements used are not calculated to do effectual work in breaking up the land, stirring and pulverizing it so as to make a proper seed-bed. In some this is due to the unsuitable construction of the implements, and in others to their not being properly sharpened and kept in the best condition to do thorough work. To skim the land with a jumping cultivator which cuts only here and there the width of its hoes, leaving one half the surface soil unbroken and unmoved and making an imperfect seed-bed, is to court failure in the harvest unless the season be exceptionally favorable. A protracted drouth may defeat the best of cultivation and management, but the probabilities even in that case are largely in favor of the well-cultivated field, other things being equal. The farmer in his seeding operations will do well to prepare for the worst possibilities of either excessive drought or excessive rainfall by thorough cultivation and thorough drainage; then, having done his part to the best of his ability, he has no delinquencies to regret, and has good grounds to hope and trust for a satisfactory outcome. So great faith have we in the benefits of thorough tillage that we are willing to believe the time is coming when the cultivation of grain crops will not end with the seeding operations, but will be continued till the crop is half-

grown. In view of the manifest advantages of hoeing in the case of roots, corn, and garden stuff, why should we doubt that similar tillage would produce proportionate results in other crops? We are fully persuaded that this idea might profitably be carried out in most grain crops to the extent of harrowing them once or twice after the plants are above ground, or even before they are "braided," as the Scotch say, if the land has been packed by a heavy rain and is in danger of baking. The only reasonable objections to this course is in cases where clover seed has been sown, and even in that event it is a question whether more of the clover plants would not perish in a baked soil than in a loosened and friable bed. Winter wheat, too, is often greatly benefited by a good harrowing in the spring, followed by the roller.

The difficulty of securing a catch of clover in some districts, and especially on clay soils, is to many a perplexing question and one which will bear discussion, as it is a serious matter when repeated failures are met with, the regular rotation of crops being interfered with and continued cropping resorted to, the land being thus depleted of fertility when it should be recruiting. No doubt the lack of humus in the soil is largely accountable for this difficulty, and it is certain that top dressing with short manure worked into the surface soil is one of the best measures known for securing a catch of clover, but it is obvious that the supply of manure on the average farm is insufficient for this and the many other purposes for which it is required.

### The Horse Show.

The prospects for the Canadian Horse Show, to be held in the City of Toronto, April 14th to 16th, under the joint auspices of the Dominion Horse Breeders' Association and the Country and Hunt Club of Toronto, are very satisfactory. The date fixed is some three weeks earlier than in the last two years, which is a decided improvement from the standpoint of the farmers and the breeders. The list of prizes in the breeding classes are liberal, and should bring out a strong show of horses. The steady decrease in the number of horses in the Dominion in the last few years, and the improved demand for good horses, both of the heavy draft class and the stronger types of harness horses and hunters, should encourage farmers and other owners and breeders to turn their attention to breeding the class of horses required, and the probabilities are that the raising of such horses will prove a profitable enterprise. Heavy draft horses are now in very active demand, and the supply is lower than for many years past, while for the most desirable classes of carriage and saddle horses there is constant enquiry, and the prices being paid for such ought to prove an incentive to every farmer who has mares of a suitable class to produce these types of horses to turn his attention to breeding them. The large influx of immigrants and of settlers in Manitoba and the Northwest will doubtless make an improved market for the average class of work horses, and these being largely drawn from the Eastern Provinces will make room for the production of a better class to meet the demand, and in this, as in every other class of live stock, it will be found that the best will prove most profitable, since they cost no more to raise than inferior ones, and command the highest prices going. The service fees for the best stallions in these times are not excessive, and there is no good excuse for patronizing any other; indeed, the man stands in his own light and prejudices his own interest who breeds from inferior sires, since the axiom that like begets like is reasonably reliable, and the only known way to improvement in live stock breeding is by the use of pure-bred sires of the most approved type, coupled with liberal and intelligent care and treatment.

### Dominion Agricultural Statistics.

On page 80 of the last "Statistical Year Book of Canada," a copy of which reached us some time ago, we find the following statement:

"The Dominion Government provides no agricultural statistics beyond those procured in connection with the decennial censuses."

Here we have a standing official confession that only once in ten years does the Canadian Department of Agriculture undertake to furnish the facts relative to the condition and supply of farm products and animals. Such information is surely of practical and economic value, both to the producer and those commercially concerned, else why maintain a statistical department at all? But to be of real service the information must be accurate, prompt, widespread, and frequent. When we consider the vast importance of agriculture as the first of Canadian industries, the steady advances which it is making, the development of new productions, the opening up of new farm lands, and the additions which, through immigration, are being made to our agricultural population, it would seem that the time had arrived when the scope of the Dominion Statistical Department should be enlarged to meet the needs of the situation. The Dominion Statistical Year Book—quoted above—excellent as an annual reference volume—contains a chapter on agricultural exports and imports, selections from British and U. S. agricultural trade returns, a summary of data from Provincial crop reports of Ontario and Manitoba only, and some facts from the censuses of 1881 and 1891.

In this age of intense, world-wide competition, statistical information is necessary to a proper knowledge of the nation's actual conditions, productions, and prospects, tending to assure profit to the producer by augmenting production where needed, by maintaining a fair equilibrium between supply and demand, by contributing to stability in value through reducing the risks in trading, and largely depriving speculators of the power to manipulate markets to the disadvantage of the farmer.

Methods of collecting information: About fifty years ago, in the Province of Ontario, the Board of Agriculture began to collect and publish through the press and otherwise such information, and the celebrated Royal Agricultural Commission of 1880 recommended the regular collection and publication of agricultural statistics. The Government wisely adopted the suggestion, and Mr. Archibald Blue mapped out a plan and was made Secretary of the "Bureau of Industries," which he conducted with great ability until called to take charge of another department, being succeeded by Mr. C. C. James, the present Secretary and Provincial Deputy Minister of Agriculture, whose great executive abilities have further improved the service. We find that:

- (1) Information is collected on crop, stock and food conditions from regular correspondents three times every year—1st of May, August, and November. Occasionally a fourth request is made, if special weather conditions, such as frost, too much rain, drought, etc., demand it.
- (2) These are got from a list of permanent correspondents numbering 800 to 1,000, the list constantly being revised, negligents being dropped, and newly found competents added; 600 to 800 are counted on replying on all occasions.
- (3) The statistics are obtained by sending out blank cards or schedules to every farmer whose name and address is secured through the school teachers. Returns are received from 6,000 to 15,000 persons.
- (4) Correspondents are pretty evenly distributed over the Province, from 25 to 30 in each county.
- (5) To regular correspondents are sent all published reports and special pamphlets; no money is paid.
- (6) In June of each year a large card is sent to every farmer in the Province, returnable first week in July, for details as to acreage of farm crops, timber, etc.; orchard, stock, implements and their