



## The Producing Interest in Australia as seen by our Correspondent and others.

THE season thus far has been the most peculiar one we have yet experienced in the Colonies; you will probably think we have a good many peculiar seasons here. January, which is usually the hottest month in the year, proved to be almost a winter month this time, with the heaviest rainfall throughout the Colonies that has been recorded for some thirty or forty years past. February and March have been exceedingly dry, and at the present moment the country is so dry and the ground so hard, that seeding operations are almost at a standstill.

As soon as the rain fell in January farmers started plowing and seeding operations, which is about two months earlier than usual, and a month or so ago the prospects of a large crop being sown under favourable conditions were of a most promising character. Since the last rains, however, the weather has been dry and sunless, excepting the last few days, which have been slightly warmer. The moisture in the ground has again all been mopped up by drying winds, and seeding operations have for the present been brought to a standstill. Much of the early put-in seed has not germinated as yet, and, unless it gets moisture ere long, it will either rot or malt, and not come up at all. The ground is now so very dry that farmers are, of course, afraid to sow any more seed until rain comes. It is not too late, by any means, for sowing with the assurance of obtaining heavy yields. As a matter of fact, in ordinary years the months of April and May are generally considered the best time for putting in wheat in the northern districts, but the late dry seasons that have been experienced have shown that early sowing is an advan-

tage, and for this reason growers are, perhaps, more impatient than usual about getting in the seed this year. So far there is not the least occasion for alarm. A large area of land is all in readiness to receive the seed, and it only requires a good shower to put everything right. It generally rains about Easter.

Fortunately, the season is proving favourable to the producing interests in the southern and north-eastern portions of the colony. There is plenty of grass in the Western District, while in Gippsland it was never more abundant at this time of the year. A South Gippsland farmer writes that "the weather during last month has continued unusually favourable for graziers. Although a trifle on the cold side occasionally, we shall all remember this 1897 autumn as the best ever experienced, even in this favoured province, and, although supplies of milk are slightly diminishing now, we have had a long innings this season, and have reaped a fair harvest. We are all too ready to find fault with the railway management, so it is only just to give credit when it is deserved, and at the present time the department are offering facilities for trucking our various products, except in the matter of timber, such as we never expected to receive. There is much to be done yet in this direction, but it is pleasant to record substantial progress." This is more cheering than the news that has lately been received from the north and north-western districts, where water-carting is the rule, and stock are famishing for the want of a bite to eat. What makes the situation so bad in the Wimmera is the great scarcity of straw, as well as grass and water.

*Melbourne, April 8th.*