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### The Farm.

Distribution of Samples from the Central Experimental Farm of Ottawa.

To the Editor of the Messenger and Visitor, St. John N. B.:

During the past nine years, samples of those varieties of grain which have succeeded best on the Experimental Farms have been distributed on application in 3-lb. bags to farmers in all parts of the Dominion, free through the mail. The object in view in this distribution has been to add to the productiveness and improve the quality of these important agricultural products throughout the country by placing within reach of every farmer pure seed of the most vigorous and productive sorts. This work has met with much appreciation and considerable degree of success.

Instructions have been given by the Hon. Minister of Agriculture to make a similar distribution this season. Owing to the very large number of applications now received it is not practicable to send more than one sample to each applicant, but with this limitation it is hoped that the stock available will be sufficient to permit of every farmer who so desires sharing in the benefits of this useful branch of the work of the Experimental Farms.

The distribution now in progress consists of some of the most promising sorts of Oats, Barley, Spring Wheat, Pease, Field corn and Potatoes. Requests for samples may be sent to the Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa at any time before the 1st of March, but after that date the lists will be closed so that the applications then on hand may be filled before seeding begins. All communications can be sent free of postage. It is desirable that each applicant should name the variety which he desires to test, also one or two alternative sorts in case the stock of the sort chosen should be exhausted, while no promise can be made that the variety asked for will be sent, the wishes of correspondents will be attended to as far as practicable. The samples of grain will be sent early, but potatoes cannot be distributed until the danger of injury in transit by frost is over.

W. M. SAUNDERS,  
Director, Experimental Farms,  
Ottawa January 5th.

#### Deep Ploughing.

A friend asks if it is any benefit to plough run-down land deeply that has only been skimmed over before. Well, I cannot answer positively in your case. We have been bringing up a farm that was run down and never had been ploughed deeply, and we know that a gradual deepening of the soil, by ploughing a little deeper each time we break up a sod, has been a great benefit to us. I believe that generally this will be true. We expose more soil to the action of frost and air and sun. We get more loosened up so we can pulverize it and stir it around. Thus we liberate more plant food, or make it available for our crops. But now there are exceptions to this rule. So test the matter carefully for yourself. Increase depth of ploughing very gradually. The probabilities are that you will see results that will cause you to keep on. Your soil and subsoil has considerable of clay in it, as has nearly all of ours. On light, sandy land it would be different, of course.

It will help "level land" to tile drain it, where water has to evaporate from the surface, where there is not natural under-drainage, so it can readily soak down, and the same of rolling land, too. "Why were you so afraid of rain after sowing your wheat? I should think it needed rain to start the seed. Is it best to make soil so fine?" It certainly is best for the young plants to make a fine firm seed bed. It cannot be made too fine and firm for the good of the wheat. The plants cannot start and grow as well in roughly prepared ground. The little roots cannot get foot as well. I was not afraid of rain, but of heavy rain that would pack and run together this dustlike soil, and wash much down the hillside on our rolling land. I have had every bit of wheat, along with the soil, taken right out of the drill rows on a hillside by a heavy rain after drilling. There would not be so much risk on roughly prepared land. But that is not as good for the wheat. So we make it fine and take risk. Now don't you see?—(T. B. Terry in Practical Farmer.

#### Breaking Sod in the Spring.

Speaking of fall ploughing, in a recent number of your journal, you wrote of the liability of spring-broken "meadow grass and June grass" growing up through the furrows, and recommended, incidentally, the breaking up of such sod in fall. My experience has taught me to do all breaking in the spring, the difficulty of the grass growing up between furrows, being much less damaging to the crop, corn especially, than the loss of fertility sustained by fall ploughing.

Again, spring breaking can be done so as to obviate the trouble of the growing up of the grass entirely. This is accomplished by using what we call a jointer. I suppose this implement is in general use among farmers who break sod at any season of the year, but if there be any who have not used it, for the benefit of such I will describe it.

A jointer is, in reality, a miniature breaking plough, fastened to the beam of the main plough, and set so as to cut about four inches wide and one inch deep of the land. It will throw this small strip of sod into the bottom of the furrow, and the cutting of the main plough will cover it up entirely, and this cutting of the main plough laps over upon the precious cutting, leaving no sod in sight. After the sod has been thus broken the applications of the drag and roller render a first-rate seed bed for corn, which crop ought to be cultivated without disturbing the sod at the bottom.

If the season be dry, the decomposition of the sod at the bottom creates a moisture which will invite the roots to descend to it; but if the season be wet, the loose turf at the bottom of the furrows forms an avenue of escape for the water, so that the plant is relieved, in part, from the effect of water scald. I am decidedly favorable to breaking meadow sod in the spring, using a jointer for reasons above given.—(W. T. Strickland in American Cultivator.

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Dust Baths.

The hen has an aversion to bathing in water; her substitute is the dust bath, which answers the same purpose for cleansing her feathers. A dust bath is very essential to the health of all fowls. In winter, when the outside ground is frozen hard, a substitute should be provided in the shape of a box filled with dry sand mixed with coal ashes or road dust. Watch your hens on a bright sunny day in winter and see how they enjoy this bath. They pick the dust into their feathers, roll first one side and then on the other, and seem to sift the dry dirt into every part of their feathered coat. It cleanses them and frees them from their mortal enemy, the lice. One would suppose that hen lice were clean themselves, since they have such a dread of dirt, and it is true they cannot exist where dirt or dust abounds. The dust bath is therefore very necessary for the health and happiness of your fowls. It should be placed where the sun can shine into it; this makes it attractive, and your hens will soon avail themselves of it.—[Country Gentleman.

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Subsoiling.

Subsoiling is sometimes beneficial, and sometimes useless, and may be injurious. Spring subsoiling is not to be recommended. Wherever there is a dry, hard subsoil, it will pay to loosen it up. Wherever there is a subsoil inclined to run together and become compacted, deep and thorough loosening is just what is required. In porous, gravelly subsoils the process is useless and often injurious. Subsoil ploughing does not produce moisture; it simply puts the ground in good condition to receive and retain moisture from precipitation. The capacity of a porous soil to retain moisture is well illustrated by this bit of experience. Early last spring the writer had several loads of coarse sand and gravel hauled and deposited in piles of about one cubic yard each. This was removed about the end of the protracted drouth. Six inches below the surface it was wet enough for any purpose of plant growth. About the same time post holes dug in the black, stiff soil near by showed it to be apparently perfectly dry as deep as the augur went, eighteen inches to two feet. Subsoiling should never be done when the soil is very wet, for this leaves the ground in a worse condition than before. Subsoiling should be done in fall or winter, so that repeated rains may settle it and fill it to saturation. After this a shallow stirring of the surface will retain the moisture with but little subsequent rains.—Texas Farm and Ranch.