Farm Crop Queries

Conducted by Professor Henry G. Bell

The object of this department is to place at the service of our farm readers the advice of an acknowledged authority on all subjects pertaining to soils and crops.

Address all questions to Professor Henry G. Bell, in care of The Wilson Publishing Company, Limited, Toronto, and answers will appear in this column in the order in which they are received. When writing kindly mention this paper. As space is limited it is advisable where immediate reply is necessary that a stamped and addressed envelope be enclosed with the question, when the answer will be mailed direct.

J. H.:—Kindly advise me through your Farm Crop Queries column how is the best way to get rid of quack grass? Does quack grass injure the crop or does it just starve the soil?

Answer:—Quack grass appears a little harder on the ground than timothy, but in the green state it contains 1.1 per cent. more nitrogen than does timothy. Otherwise I do not believe it is hard on the ground. The growing root stalks sometimes have been known to grow through sections of developing potatoes. The greatest injury the quack grass does is to use up the soil moisture and plantfood and thereby starve the crops that are forced to grow where it is competing. A clear and definite statement of methods of combatting the grass has been published in O. A. C. Bulletin 188. It is as follows: "As soon as the crop is harvested plow lightly, then harrow with the ordinary harrow, and, if necessary, with the spring-tooth cultivator. This shakes the roots free from the soil and makes it possible to gather them up with the horse roke. Burn as soon as they have dried sufficiently. Repeat this process two or three times. If the weather at this time should happen to be dry and hot, so much the better. Late in the fall rib up the land into drills, and allow to stand over winter. The frost, in all probability, will render material assistance in the eradication. The following spring plow about the end of May, cultivate well, and put in some hoed crop, or summer fallow, sowing buckwheat, the crop to be plowed in. A carefully cultivated crop of rape is recommended as being particularly effective in destroying this pest."

J. J. D.:—I have 11 acres clay and loam, rather flat and with hard pan about 2½ feet below surface. I have failed to grow crops on this land, have tried peas, wheat, oats and barley. It looks dark on surface and is rather fertile looking. Peas did well for a while but about blossom time turned yellowish brown in patches, which seemed to spread in size and eventually were a failure. Fall wheat was very thin and did not ripen even or yield. Oats were short and very delicate straw. Last season I put two tons of fertilizer on but without any apparent improvement. I have this fall plowed and wish you to suggest my best course for this season. I have also seeded with clover and summer fallowed, but without any available benefit. This field had been under pasture for a long time.

Answer:—Your clay and loam land is in need of drainage. It is undoubtedly sour, both of which conditions bring about the results that you indicate. The reason the crops turn pale and die out is that after germination they are unable to develop deep and substantial root growth because the water in the soil shuts out the circulation of air therein. The sour condition of the soil which results from bad drainage, and from continuous pasture, makes it impossible for the bacteria on the roots of the legumes to reproduce. Therefore, peas and clover fail to grow on your soil. The impervious subsoil or hard pan is in need of breaking up as far as possible so that the roots of your crop may have more room to expand. I would advise you to do as follows: Since spring is pretty well advanced, and you have had the ground thoroughly fall plowed, seed it to buckwheat at the rate of about 1½ to 2 bushels per acre. Buckwheat is a medium shallow feeder and should produce you a good paying crop of grain this year. It also thrives on slightly acid soil. As soon as the buckwheat crop is off put in tile drains and apply at least 1½ to 2 tons of ground limestone per acre, scattering it as evenly as possible and working it into the soil by disking or harrowing. This should put your ground into good shape for a profitable crop of grain next year.

Painting the House

By ADELINE B. WHITFORD.

Next to a copy of any of the well illustrated, well colored seed catalogues, which come out in quantities about the first of February, there is nothing more stimulating to the imagination than one of those folded-in-and-out, forty-two-color paint cards, such as we pick up in the hardware shops, or the drug stores, about the last of April, or the first of May.

At the close of the long, gray winter season, you and I instinctively turn to color, and while the seed catalogue lures us with promises which can only be fulfilled in the slow processes of nature, and even then seldom as gloriously as we had anticipated, the paint card imposes no conditions of time or quantity, but trusts us implicitly and proves it by throwing every combination of the rainbow into our hands at once, and telling us that, at the price of so much per gallon, we may on this very day carry home one or any number of its hues and spread them out over large surfaces, to be looked at indefinitely.

It is just possible that while we all know that this is the language of the paint card, we do not dwell thoughtfully enough upon all that its statement implies; for if we realized as we look at those fascinating bits of color, one-half by two inches in size, that they only represent a millionth fraction of the gallons which we are to "spread out and look at indefinitely" we should hesitate longer than we do over the privilege of being entrusted with so much liberty.

An old-time artist, upon being questioned as to how he obtained certain results in color, answered, "I mix the paints 'with brains'." To-day's house paints come ready mixed but "brains" are still needed to direct the buyer to those few charmed gallons which really should be hers. When once she finds and uses them, she will discover that she not only bought weather-proofing, but at the same time, and at no extra cost, secured for her property a pleasing outward appearance, which has suddenly given the whole place a touch of distinction and individuality.

In every paint pail then, there is something more than paint, and the householder must not choose at random.

One of the first dangers offered by the paint card lies, as has been said, in the fact that its many color samples are so reduced in size as to appear perfectly harmless. No matter how lovely the clearer reds, greens, yellows, yellow-browns and dark grays may be in the tiny patches shown on the advertisers' folders, they are a delusion and a snare to anyone who cannot imagine how they would look when used in large quantities. Indeed, the unimaginative person usually has two chances for disappointment in the house paint selected: the first from making the above mistake of buying colors which are too strong; the second, from an attempt to use some unusual combination of colors, with an idea of making the house appear striking by this mark of so-called originality.

The architect, or trained house-painter, knows that success, and satisfaction, are only gained from studying the problem from a different standpoint—I might say by letting the house and its surroundings decide what the color scheme shall be. He will consider the style of its architecture as a whole, and pay attention also to the smaller details such as doorways, windows, porches. He will think it important to take into consideration the color of whatever buildings there are near the house, and what its background is; whether the house is seen against other buildings, woods, hills or distant fields, whether shadowed by trees and vines, or stands out bare and alone, an object which must rely mainly on its form and color to be made interesting. This takes really close study.

Now as to the matter of strong contrasts of color which have been used to give importance to house "trimmings," they should be avoided always.

The legitimate use of contrasting color is only to accent eave-moulding, window and door openings; to use it for cutting up wall spaces by bands, and zig-zags, cheapens the whole effect.

The most carefully planned painting to-day, makes use of but three colors at most: a roof stain of medium tone, the wall coloring and the "trim"—meaning the outlinings of eaves and openings. "Trimmings" of fussy woodwork and contrasting colorings are no longer considered in good taste. We are learning to cultivate vine and tree-shadows, letting these play their part in exterior house decoration.

There are several reasons why a white house with green blinds seems right in any Canadian landscape. One is that it is purely a colonial inheritance, having come to us from a time when green and white and a dull red were about the only colors our country's paint resources afforded. Another reason—an artistic one—is, that white reflects any color near it, and also shows shadows clearly; on these accounts it is only sharply white where the sun strikes it. Out of sunlight, white is of nearly middle value, where vines and trees make it green and shadowy; it is always more cheerful than light grays and greens, which do not reflect surrounding colors.

We should always use emphasizing paint for window sash. In colonial effects this may be white or medium green, and for other styles of houses, a dark green or blue, which is nearly black. Well-painted window sash are a rich, crisp finish to the whole house, and any painting scheme which does not include this detail has missed an important feature.

It is wise to have nothing whatever to do with the blue-toned grays or slate colors; they do not reflect other colors, and are chilly and disconsolate in themselves. There are, however, many fine tones of warmer gray, those for instance resembling old-fashioned rubber gum, putty, and dull sand color.

One of the handsomest groups of farm buildings which I have ever seen, had its barns, small buildings, and silo, of a middle-value gray or putty color, with white trim; the window sash was dark green, nearly black. The farm house was white, its roof a weather-stained gray. Verandah roofs and roofs of the bay windows, were painted a green of middle value, a little duller than apple green. As the building was old-fashioned, the doors were carefully sandpapered, and painted the same green. For every gallon of dark gray floor paint, a full pint of this green was added, thus harmonizing the verandah floor with the doors, though the floors were several tones darker. The window sash were green-black. There were no blinds but the interior shades were olive.

There were a few trees near the house, vines over the verandah, simple, well-kept grounds and driveways, and from the top of the gray silo, which looked from a distance like the tower of some old castle, there floated the three finest colors in the world. If one can imagine the whole, it is unnecessary to add that it made a beautiful picture, and one which was interesting as far as it could be seen, proving that even a group of old-fashioned buildings, if painted in a carefully chosen color-sceme, may come to have distinction and an individual style.

It is not the unusual which secures these results, either in house painting, furniture or dress—not the striking, startling combination but the right one, the sensible one—even the usual one, done well.

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Sheep Notes

A Pointer on Tying Fleeces.

Some weeks ago a party of county agents were being shown through a wool-scouring mill in a large city. They wanted to learn things that they could take back to help their home folks. At one point the manager of the mill called their attention to the kind of twine to use in tying fleeces. He picked up a handful of partly scoured wool and pointed out dark fibres. These, he said, were the fibres from binder twine which were left in the fleece when it was unbound at the warehouse or mill.

It is the custom of the fleece handlers to cut the cord holding the fleece together and pull it out. If common binder twine is used some of the fibres are sure to catch in the fleece and be left there. They do not take the dye and so are very objectionable to the woolen manufacturer. He will not pay the price for such fleeces that he will for those which do not have the fibres mixed with the fleece. The manager of the mill said it did not pay to pick out the fibres, and showed how a good cotton or paper string pulls out of a fleece without leaving fibres. If a few cotton fibres should be left it should not be harmful, as the cotton takes the dye.

The paper twine has a hard, smooth surface and is best from all standpoints. It probably costs no more than any other kind of tying material, probably less than binder twine since it has soared to present prices.

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The Sunday School

INTERNATIONAL LESSON JUNE 1.

Lesson IX. Faith, What It Is and What It Does, Heb. 11:1-40; 12;1, 2.

Golden Text—John 14: 1.

11: 1. Now Faith. Writing to the persecuted Jews who had embraced the Christian faith, the author of this epistle shows them their fellowship with the men of faith of every former age, with Enoch and Noah and Abraham and Moses, and many another who had believed and suffered and served in their day and generation, their faith in God enabled them to do the present duty, and to look beyond the present to the future glorious fulfilment of God's promises. Having little, they became heirs of all things, and the sojourner dwelling in tents looked for and possessed the city of God. His faith became for him the title-deed of wealth as yet unrealized, the evidence and assurance of the glory which was to be. Faith is the certainty of hope, the open eye of the soul which looks upon realities unseen and eternal. For the Christian it has become a personal relationship to Jesus Christ, in whom and through whose Spirit he sees the working of those powers which are building a new world, in which he himself shall have, or rather has already, his citizenship.

2. A Good Report. The great men of Old Testament times, the "elders," have "had witness born them" (R.V.) in the narratives of the Old Testament, in respect of their faith. It is because of their faith that the history gives so good a report of them. The difference between Moses, of good repute, and Pharaoh, of evil repute, is the difference which faith in God makes.

3. Through Faith We Understand. The tremendous fact of God's creation of the world is not proved by historical or scientific evidence. It is known and apprehended by faith. And yet how certain a fact it is, and how sure our knowledge of it! By faith we understand.

4. He Being Dead Yet Speaketh. Faith is the secret spring of righteousness. So Abel's faith wrought righteous deeds, and assured him by a good conscience that his offering was acceptable to God. And so it is that his voice speaks down through the ages declaring to every generation that the only gift or offering of worship pleasing to God is that of faith and well-doing. For (v. 6) "without faith it is impossible to please him."

7. By Faith Noah, warned of God, prepared the ark which saved his family from the flood. In a world of uncleanness he had kept himself pure, and so had already in himself the assurance and the enjoyment of the "righteousness" which is by faith and which is yet to fill the whole world.

8-10. So "Abraham" obeyed what he knew to be the call of God, and led his people out from an idolatrous and corrupt community to a new and strange land, where he might worship according to his conscience and found a new society devoted to the service of the true and living God. He was only a nomad shepherd, chief of a nomad clan, dwelling in tents, but "he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

13. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar. (R.V.) That has been the experience of faith in every age. The Kingdom of God is coming, but its fulness and power and glory is not yet. The city is being built, but its walls and its many mansions are not yet complete. There is much evil in the world and men are slow to learn the ways of God. The best which the world looks for and agonizes for lies on before. Faith sees the promise from afar, but holds that promise in possession as the dearest thing in life. Though "strangers and pilgrims on the earth," the men of faith desire and seek, "a better country, that is an heavenly." And therefore, the apostle makes the great and significant declaration that "God is not ashamed to be called their God."

There follows a further list of men and women of notable faith, the saints, the heroes, the martyrs, of successive ages, to whom now the records of history do light honor. The promise led them on as a star of hope. But now in Christ there is fulfilment,—their hope finds its justification and completion in Him. All of redemption, all of power, all of goodness, all of spiritual strength to overcome the world, which they had sought, is to be found in Him, "God having provided" in Him "some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect (v. 40).

12. 1-2. Witnesses. The figure is drawn from the ancient races in which swift and hardy runners contended for the prize. Great multitudes assembled to witness this fascinating sport. The runners laid aside the outer garment and every impeding weight, that they might run lightly and freely in the great contest. Such is the life of faith. The witnesses are the great multitudes of the faithful who have gone before. Jesus who started us in this race waits at the end with the laurel wreath which is to crown the victor, that is immortality with Himself in heaven. He has set us the example of faith, courage and steadfastness in trial and suffering. He is "the author and finisher of our faith."

Do you object to a fly lighting on the end of your nose, and then transferring its proboscis to some other tender spot when you wave your hand? If not, just think of the many flies which are teasing the life as well as the good nature out of your cattle in the moist woods.

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