

On the Land

Grass-Seed Saving by Hand-Labor (Contributed.)

Here and there in the corner of orchards or in other small paddocks where creeks or drains make it inconvenient for cultivation, it not infrequently happens that patches of grass, notably rye, prairie-grass, or cocksfoot are allowed to run to seed.

At prices at present obtainable for seed these neglected patches may often be turned to account and made to render a return that will compare favorably with the majority of other crops.

The writer has experience of grass-speeders saving an average of 30 bushels of rye-grass-seed per week for each man—a convincing proof of the practicability of the harvesting of patches inaccessible to machinery.

A SIMPLE OUTFIT.

Very little in the way of outfit is necessary for harvesting the seed. A reaping-hook, a home-made flail, a calico sheet, and a couple of carrying-in sheets are all that are absolutely necessary. The seed may be sent to be machine dressed to the seed-cleaning plant if one be near at hand, and the quantity is sufficient to warrant it.

CUTTING THE SEED.

Reaping should not begin before the crop begins to put on a yellow ripening appearance, some little time before it begins to fall.

There is no occasion when reaping to tie in sheaves—indeed, the seed will dry more quickly if the reaped straw or stalk be laid down in handfuls as soon as cut, and allowed to flatten out and open somewhat. These handfuls should not be laid down too close, one on top of the other. When reaping care should be taken, too, when bringing the hook backwards to refill it, to swish the stalks sideways in order to prepare a good surface on which to dry the seed-heads.

More straw than is practically convenient should not be cut off with the seed—superfluity in this case meaning more stuff to carry in, and more labor involved in threshing.

One advantage possessed by reaping, is that undesirable grasses may be left standing and excluded from harvesting.

THRESHING.

The use of the flail may be looked upon as a retrogressive step in face of the modern, effective and up-to-date methods of saving seed by the machinery of to-day, but it must be borne in mind that working on the old plan is only advocated for small areas, or patches grown in the backblocks, where it is impracticable to employ machinery.

Seed-saving by hand was common in the bush districts among the logs and stumps, some 30 years ago, and hundreds of acres were reaped in a single district.

Frequently nowadays one sees small isolated patches of really useful seed allowed to go to waste, which might be profitably saved by reverting to the use of the reaping hook and the flail.

For the flail, two straight sticks about 1½ in or 1¾ in in diameter will suffice, one for the handle and one for the beater. These sticks should be tough and springy. Score a circular groove around the head of the handle and attach the beater to it by means of a piece of green-hide, which should be so tied as to allow the beater to revolve round the handle when being used; while the notch prevents its flying off. Twisted wire is sometimes fashioned to serve as a beater.

THE CARRYING-IN SHEET.

An ordinary grain sack will make a good carrying-in sheet.

Split open one end, and a side of the sack, then by the aid of the packing-needle and some twine stitch a couple of straight sticks or rods about 1 in in thickness, to the longer sides of the sacking, and finish by attaching a piece of cord to the centres of the sticks which serve to keep the edges of the sheet taut. The cords serve to draw the sheet together when filled for carrying in.

The seed-heads should be placed in the centre when filling the sheet.

THE THRESHING-SHEET.

A common calico sheet about 12ft x 12ft is all that is needed for this purpose. When laying down the sheet to commence operations it may be secured in position by tying it to the stalks from which the seed-heads have been cut.

A small quantity of the threshed straw, spread under the sheet on the spot chosen for the threshing floor will prevent it from being cut or worn through by the blows of the flail.

Where there are two mates to thresh together, each takes his stand on opposite sides of the sheet and flailing is carried on by striking alternately, with due regard to a rhythmical timing of the blows, each striving to catch the seed-heads "on the jump" following the last stroke of his mate's flail.

When necessary the straw is turned; particular attention being paid to the corners.

As soon as the straw appears to be sufficiently threshed it is shaken up and thrown off the sheet.

To prevent portion of the seed jumping off the sheet when using the flail or being blown off by the wind, distribute an armful or forkful of threshed straw or hay under the outer edges in order to raise them a little.

Threshing should be done on hot sunny days. The sunny part of the day should be reserved for this part of the work and the evenings and mornings devoted to reaping, when economy of time renders it imperative to commence threshing before the whole crop has been cut.

Prairie-grass is especially easy to thresh, cocksfoot being more difficult, while rye-grass occupies a midway position between the two in that respect.

CARE OF THE SEED.

Unless the seed is thoroughly dry when threshed it should be exposed to the sun in

the open sheet before being finally cleaned and bagged for the market. It is usual to defer seed-cleaning till threshing operations have been completed. It is first bagged up in the rough, and the short straw which has been chaffed by the flail, remaining in it, prevents it from becoming heated for the time being, but care should be exercised to thoroughly dry it, if it shows any disposition to heat before the final cleaning.

Where the seed is required for sowing by hand on the owner's farm seed-cleaning may be dispensed with if care has been taken to leave out all undesirable grasses when reaping.

ST. JOSEPH'S SCHOOL, OAMARU.

PRIZE LIST.

The following is the prize list of the St. Joseph's School:—

Preparatory, Standard 1.—Catechism: Maurice Barry; class prize, J. Ford; arithmetic, P. Butts; reading, J. Smith; writing, L. Harney; drawing, F. Dougherty.

Standard I.—Catechism, D. Shannon; class prize, S. Easton; second class prize, D. Butts; reading and arithmetic, J. O'Brien; sentence building, P. Shanahan; reading and recitation, Phyllis White and E. Connell; needlework, P. Mitchell; diligence, S. McGrath; good conduct, E. Smith.

Standard II.—Catechism, M. Griffin; class prize, M. Easton; second class prize, M. Barry; recitation, G. Berry; reading, J. Berry; arithmetic, A. Fodie and Willie Higgins; drawing and writing, J. McGrath; writing, H. McElhenney; composition, M. Pilling; needlework, K. McGrath; general improvement, M. McEvoy.

Standard III.—Catechism, M. Cooney; class prize, T. Cahill; second class prize, M. Luxon; reading and recitation, F. Harney; writing, F. Flett, E. Shanahan, and Y. Young; arithmetic, J. Nash; composition, M. Pilling; spelling, K. Simons; diligence, E. Price.

Standard IV.—Catechism, A. McPherson; class prize, A. Firth; second class prize, H. Rowe; arithmetic, reading, and comprehension, W. Berry; reading and recitation, S. Young; spelling, I. Pickworth; needlework, R. Clare; neatness and spelling, G. Smith; application, J. Fodie.

Standard V.—Catechism, I. Berry; class prize (equal in merit), H. Illingworth and N. Dexter; grammar, composition, and writing, P. Mollison; reading and comprehension, F. Gallagher; reading and recitation, L. Butts; geography, P. Bracken; history, S. Harney; arithmetic, T. Bracken; diligence, B. Brosnan; Needlework, P. Firth; general improvement, V. Corkin and T. Flaherty.

Standard VI.—Catechism, M. Carrington; class prize, M. Dwyer; drawing and needlework, D. Rowe; history, M. Purton; writing and diligence, L. White.

General Prizes.—Christian Doctrine (gold medal), M. Carrington; good conduct (gold medal presented by Mr Rowe), J. Doyle; dux of the school (gold medal), M. Dwyer; good conduct (boys), J. Kearns; most faithful altar boy, W. Foss; Irish history (Tablet prize), N. Dexter; music, H. Illingworth and K. McGrath; harmony, N. Dexter; class singing: boys, L. Butts; girls, N. Dexter.

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