

SEASONAL NOTES.

THE FARM.

CEREAL HARVEST.

THE grain harvest usually follows quickly on haymaking. For threshing it is generally recognized that both wheat and oats are better cut on the green side than allowed to become overripe. The latter condition involves much risk, and heavy loss may occur from a wind-shake; furthermore the sample of grain is brighter and better in quality when the crop is not allowed to become overripe. Barley, for malting, however, should not be reaped until quite ripe. The proper time to reap wheat is when the straw immediately below the head becomes yellow, and is free from moisture when tightly twisted, with the grains still a little soft but not milky or doughy. At this stage the skin or bran is finer, and the grain yields a higher proportion of flour to bran and pollard, while if the crop is left to become overripe both the latter increase in proportion. On the other hand, care must be observed not to cut too green, otherwise there will be a loss of weight by shrivelling. A certain amount of filling occurs after the grain is in stook.

The size of the sheaves should be regulated to suit the climatic condition and the condition of the crop. If the weather is damp the sheaves should be tied smaller to facilitate drying. Again, should there be an undergrowth of grass or weeds in the butts of the sheaves they should be made small for the same reason, and if very bad they are better left lying a day or two before stooking. This is especially important when dealing with barley with much undergrowth, as this grain is so easily discoloured, which greatly reduces its value for malting.

It always pays to take some pains in making a good stook. The average stook should consist of from eight to ten sheaves, each sheaf being firmly placed with sufficient slant to withstand a reasonable wind and turn a fair amount of rain. Considerable loss often occurs from careless stooking, the grain becoming discoloured or even sprouting when the stook falls and is left lying.

After the crop has been in stook for two or three weeks, according to weather (and if threshing from stook is not practised), stacking will follow. For this a convenient site on high ground should be selected, and a bottom made up of old logs, branches, or hedge-clippings. If the stack is to stand for some time before chaffing or threshing it is imperative that the foundation be good. The size of the stack naturally depends on the bulk of the crop and area of the field. The building commences by forming a stook in the centre and working round in tiers or courses to the marked boundary, keeping the sheaves as upright as possible. The secret of good stack-building is to build the heart firm and always higher than the outside courses from foundation to ridge. Too many stacks of both hay and sheaves are only well built on the outside courses, while the inner ones are loosely or carelessly