

SEASONAL NOTES.

THE FARM.

The Pastures.

OFTEN in January and February tall woody or fibrous growth, consisting largely of flowering organs, is prominent on many pastures. If this growth is not removed the plants on which it occurs devote themselves largely to seed-production, whereas if it were removed they would tend much more freely to produce leafage. At this season, both in dairying and in fat-lamb production, there is often an acute need for leafy feed. Hence topping of pastures with its consequent transference of the activity of the sward to leaf growth from seed-production is often advisable. If dry conditions seem likely to persist for any considerable time after such topping, it should be carried out at a height which will serve to remove the stemmy portions at the same time as the bottom leafy portions of the sward are undisturbed—this necessitates cutting at a considerably greater height than is adopted in ordinary mowing. Apart altogether from the occurrence of tall, stemmy growth, topping of pastures may be advisable to remove as completely as is possible, without exposing the swards to the danger of drying out, all the aerial portions of shade-creating weeds such as spear thistles, docks, fat-hen, and red-shank or willow-weed. If weeds of this type are not checked in some way they are likely to weaken greatly the pasture plants in their immediate vicinity, and possibly to create vacant patches on which inferior plants later may become established. If, however, they are mown in the manner suggested, they cease to create the shade which is harmful to the valuable pasture plants.

The preparation of ground for the sowing-down of grass in autumn is a matter of seasonable moment. In general the most economical means of providing the mellow, firm seed-bed that assists in begetting the fullest success in pasture establishment consists, in part at least, in commencing the preparation of the seed-bed far enough ahead to allow time for natural weathering agencies to play a considerable part in the breaking-up and firming of the soil. Clovers which are essential in fully successful permanent pastures call particularly for consolidation, the widespread value of which is illustrated by the fact that the best portions of pastures, in respect both to grasses and clovers, are often to be found round the headlands, which have necessarily been subjected to greater consolidation by the passage of horses and implements.

The purchase of pasture seed mixtures is of such importance that it receives the personal attention of efficient farmers. Instead of being left to the last moment before the seed is to be sown, the purchase of seeds should be undertaken early enough to ensure that there will be time to obtain seed of desirable strain, purity, and germination capacity. As the strain of seeds is a character of fundamental importance which has come into the foreground during recent years, it is fortunate that the official system of certification of seeds has made the quest for desirable strains of the more important pasture species a relatively simple task in practice. The basic fact is that an ever growing mass of field experience shows that, as a rule, it is false economy not to use certified seeds when supplies are available. During the current seed harvest certified seed of rye-grass and cocksfoot will be described either as "mother" grade or as "permanent pasture" grade, while in respect to both white and red clover there will be an additional grade termed "first harvest, permanent pasture." The