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Home Course In Modern Agric. IX.—Weeds and How to Combat Them. By C. V. GREGORY. Agricultural Division, Iowa State College.

IN attempting to produce crops the farmer finds that he has many enemies working against him. Among the worst of these are weeds. One of the greatest problems that confront the farmer is that of keeping his crops free from these pests. After a field has been so handled and prepared that a large amount of plant food is in available form, with plenty of moisture to dissolve it, it is poor policy to allow weeds to solve this food and moisture and convert them into a worthless product. Weeds may be divided into three general classes—annuals, biennials and perennials. Annual weeds are propagated entirely by seeds and live but one year. An exception to this is found in the winter annuals, which come up in the fall, live through the winter as small plants and produce seed the following spring. Among the most troublesome annual weeds are the foxtails. These are grasslike plants that are too common to need any special description. The fact that makes them so difficult to



FIG. XVII.—A RUSSIAN THISTLE.

control is their great seed producing capacity. It is not difficult to kill one foxtail plant, but no sooner is that done than another springs up to take its place. Early fall plowing gets rid of many of these weeds by turning them under before the seed is ripe. Some of the seed which is ripe will grow up, and the plants will be killed by the first frosts of winter. If the field is harrowed early in the spring many of the remaining seed can be induced to start. The more weeds that come up at this time the better, since they will be killed in the subsequent preparation of the land for planting. There is no better implement for killing weeds before they come up than the harrow. Harrowing is a cheap operation, since so many acres can be gone over in a day. The more times a cornfield can be gone over with the harrow before the corn comes up the better. In harrowing to kill weeds care should be taken not to do the work when the weather is cloudy or the ground too wet, or the weeds will be transplanted rather than killed. In regard to the value of harrowing growing corn opinions differ greatly. It is almost impossible, however, to harrow corn without destroying some of it. It is a waste of time to test the seed and planter with the idea of getting a good stand and then harrow part of it out. Unless the weeds are very bad the harrow had better be put away in the machine shed as soon as the corn begins to appear above the surface of the ground. Thorough cultivation from the time the corn is two or three inches high until it is ready to "lay by" will do much to keep the weeds in check. The deep early cultivations will bring up the seeds that have been lying dormant at the bottom of the furrow slice. These will germinate and be killed by the later cultivations. For fall crop growers and for those who do not have a good plan to sow rape in corn at the last cultivation. This will come up quickly and shade the ground so completely that it will prevent the growth of annual weeds almost entirely. Annual weeds seldom do much damage in small grain. If the grain is drilled in on a properly prepared seed bed it will get such a start that most of the weeds will be smothered out and die for lack of plant food and light. One annual that is sometimes troublesome in grainfields is mustard. Since this weed is easily killed by cultivation it seldom goes to seed in cornfields. Consequently when small grain follows corn there is little mustard seed in the soil except that which is sown with the corn. There is another annual or rather winter annual that is much harder to eradicate than those mentioned so far. This is quackgrass, so called because of its fuzzy heads. The seeds are very small and are attached to long, flexible, which render them to be carried for considerable distances by the wind. Sprouted quackgrass is not troublesome in cornfields, but when the fields are mowed and pastured in such a way as to make them almost worthless. Mowing as soon as the

heads appear will not kill the plant, but if kept up three or four times will prevent it from producing seed. In fact, even about the only remedy is to plow up the field and put it in some cultivated crop. Where a regular rotation which includes the meadows and pastures is followed this weed can be readily kept in check. A point that must be carefully attended to in preventing the spread of this weed as of any other weed is to keep the roadsides and fence corners from raising weed seed enough each year to keep the entire farm seeded. Another troublesome annual in some sections of the country is the Russian thistle, a form of tumbleweed. By rolling across the fields after it ripens it scatters its numerous seeds very widely. These weeds are usually not so plentiful but that they can be easily destroyed by pulling before they form seed. By doing this they may be kept from becoming thick enough to do any serious damage. Biennial weeds live through the first winter and produce seed the second year of their life. They die as soon as the seed is ripe. The common bull and prairie thistle and burdock are conspicuous examples of this class of weeds. Biennials are not difficult to subdue. In cultivated fields they seldom live long enough to produce seed. They seed so late that they hardly ever ripen seed in meadows. In permanent pastures they may be controlled by cutting off below the surface of the ground just at the beginning of blossoming time. Sheep and goats will rid a pasture of these and all other troublesome weeds.

The hardest class of weeds to control are the perennials. These do not depend entirely upon seed production to spread themselves, but are propagated by means of underground stems. These stems extend along beneath the surface of the ground, except for up stalks at short distances. They live in the soil from year to year, sending up fresh shoots every spring. Some of the most common and troublesome perennials are the Canada thistle, morning glory, wild arife, milkweed and quack grass. These weeds are found on all parts of the farm—in cultivated fields, in small grain and in meadows and pastures. The only way to kill them is to destroy the roots or starve them by preventing leaf growth. This is much more easily said than done. Where the weeds occur only in small patches the desired result may be accomplished by covering them with a thick layer of straw. In a dry season thorough cultivation will discourage them, though it will seldom exterminate them entirely. When the ground is wet cultivation will do more to spread perennial weeds than to kill them. The pieces of the underground stems which stick to the shovels will grow wherever they happen to fall and thus start a new center of trouble. Of all the means of getting rid of perennials the most effective is to dig them into a deep position. If the fields are fenced hog light and the rotation includes the hog pasture the best way to get a change at all parts of the farm

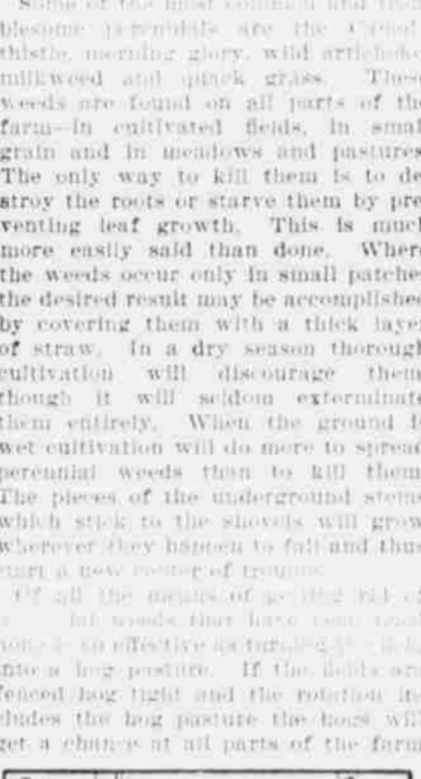


FIG. XVIII.—QUACK GRASS.

every four years or so. They are very fond of the roots and stems of perennial weeds, especially those of quack grass and morning glory, and they will continue to root until the soil piece is brought to light and eaten. Where all the fields are not fenced hog light a temporary pen may be used. This can be moved about over the patches of quack grass and morning glory until they are destroyed. The weed problem is not nearly so different as many people believe. The remedy for weeds is good farming, and when good farming becomes the rule weeds will largely disappear. In a way weeds are more of a benefit than an injury. If it were not for them we would often be tempted to let the cornfield go a few days longer before cultivating and thus fail to get as large a crop as we might otherwise have done. It is the cultivation that the presence of the weeds forces upon the farmer that makes plant food available and prevents the escape of soil by soil erosion and enables the farmer to put his best efforts into productive results.

CHOICE MISCELLANY

Disaster and Earthquake. "Let us set aside all sentiment and try to differentiate between the disaster as such and the earthquake itself," writes Frank A. Littel, formerly bull guard assistant at the Royal Venezuelan observatory, concerning the Mexican earthquake in the Century. "Let us realize the fact that if the population of these cities had been a third as large the disaster would have been correspondingly greater, while the earthquake would have remained the same and the still more interesting fact that if instead of these rubble built cities a large area had been occupied on the spot there would have been no disaster whatever, the earthquake still remaining the same. Years ago laws were passed prohibiting the erection of houses having more than two stories, but these laws led to the building of tall, flimsy structures which would accommodate many families and bring the owners a goodly rental. And yet this was in a well known seismic area, where quakes were of frequent occurrence and a great one might be expected at any time."

He Got His Papers. While Justice Martin J. Keogh was holding court at Carmel, Putnam county, recently he took up a few naturalization cases. One of them amused the court. The applicant was Ludovico or some name like that. He approached the judge with the air of one who was fully prepared to present his qualifications for citizenship. The judge, having plenty of time on his hands, thought that he would test the applicant's knowledge of affairs, and he began with: "Well, my good man, do you know in whose presence you are?" "Yes, your honor," was the reply. "I am before the judge." "And how does the judge get here?" "He is elected by the people." "And do the people also elect the governor and president?" "Oh, no, no," was the prompt reply. "The Republicans attend to that." "You are quite correct," said the judge smilingly as he signed the paper. New York Tribune.

The Postal Shower. "What are you going to do with all those postcards?" asked a girl upon seeing her elvish partner over an assortment of postal cards. "We're going to give Tom a postal shower on his birthday." "A postal shower? What is that?" asked the girl. "Postcards! Don't you know? We get everybody we know to send a dozen or so postals to our victim on a certain day and sign them all with different names. Now, in Tom's case we will sign 'Lovingly, Mody,' 'Tenderly, Sue,' or 'Your Own Italy.' You might as well pick out some while you're here. I will give you his address." "Surely not his office address?" "Sure! That's the best part of it. Jack got 250 on his birthday."—New York Press.

Women's Gloves. In a recent divorce case in Scotland it was testified that a lady searching her maid's trunks found 200 pairs of her own old gloves therein. "Ah, dear!" said a dealer in this happening. "It isn't unusual for a woman of fashion to have 200 pairs of gloves. At the sale of the Duchess of Somerset's things over 2,000 pairs, all as good as new, were put up. "You see, gloves are cheaper abroad. Over there you'll pay a dollar for an article that would cost you two and a half here. But, aside from that, foreign women incline to go in more for gloves and boots, too—than we do. The foreign woman is likely to be better gloved and booted than her American sister."—Philadelphia Bulletin.

Pneumonia. Lecturing at the Harvard Medical school, Dr. Elliott P. Joslin declared that pneumonia in Boston in 1908, claiming 3,000 victims, heart disease ranking second in this regard and the "white plague" coming third. Pneumonia affects all ages, and about 25 per cent of the cases result fatally. It is not usually contracted from a cold, as is generally supposed, said Dr. Joslin, but develops from bad physical or hygienic conditions and from exposure. It is contagious in that one may catch it by breathing in the atmosphere where there is a pneumonia patient in the vicinity.

Sardou's Unpublished Plays. Sardou's executors have found four unpublished plays among his papers. One of them is a four-act play written in collaboration with Ange Gildner for a London theater. The other three consist of the libretto for a comic opera, entitled "The Feast on the Nile," a dramatic comedy in four acts and "Mme. Tallien," a tragedy in five acts. All these three works, of which the first will be produced during the present year, were written in collaboration with Emile Moreau.—New York Herald.

The Waste of Wood. It has been estimated that the amount of wood annually consumed in the United States at the present time is 23,900,000,000 cubic feet, while the growth of the forest is only 7,900,000,000 feet. In other words, Americans all over the country are using more than three times as much wood as the forests are producing. The figures are based upon a large number of state and local reports collected by the government and upon actual measurements.

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