ALFALFA IN MARYLAND.

BY W. T. L. TALIAFERRO.

The susceptibility of the plants to excessive moisture was strikingly illustrated at this station this season.

A piece of sandy loam soil underlaid at the depth of about three feet with a rather dense material was planted on the 29th day of April, the seeding having been delayed while the lower part of the track was underdrained. May and June were very dry months yet the alfalfa grew beautifully and perfectly even except at the extreme upper end where a crop of crimson clover turned down too late had kept the earth from becoming firm and interfered with the upward passage of soil water. The first of July the alfalfa over the greater part of the track was thick, green and various, and from eight to twelve inches high On the "clover land" it was from four to six inches high, thin and sickly. Then came the rain and the conditions changed Though there was probably not twenty-four hours during some part of which the entire field was not dry enough to have been nicely cultivated, yet the alfalfa in the lower part seemed to get smaller, while on the upper part, which is underlaid with gravel, it took on a dark green color and began to grow vigorously, so that by the middle of the month it was from twelve to fourteen inches high and beginning to bloom

Mr. Asa Stabler of Montgomery county had a somewhat similar experience in 1901. He put his alfalfa on a slope which gave perfect surface drainage, but yet when seen in the spring of 1902 the lower part of the slope was absolutely bare of alfalfa, while the upper part was a fair stand. Mr. Stabler attributed the difference entirely to the greater amount of water on the lower slope, which seemed to be too wet for alfalfa, though well adapted to wheat and grass.

Preparation of the Soil.

Alfalfa is a plant of vigorous growth when once it has become established, but when it first starts is very weak and delicate. To insure a crop ample preparation should be made and the conditions surrounding the young plants should be made as nearly perfect as is possible to get them.

The conditions required are a deep soil, a fertile soil, a clean soil, a well drained soil, and if it can be had, a loose open subsoil. Experience has shown that unless proper conditions can be furnished it is useless to attempt to grow the plant in Maryland. It has also been demonstrated that where these conditions can be had, and they can in very many parts of the State, there is nothing in our climate to prevent its successful growth.

As a rule it will be found advisable to get ready for the crop at least two years ahead of the time when it is expected to be planted.

Select, if it can be had, a piece of ground of light character with a porous subsoil, through which all surplus water will quickly descend below the roots of the plants. If such a soil cannot be had, one with a dry subsoil will answer, though not quite so well, provided there be at no time standing water within four or five feet of the surface. Where it is not naturally dry under-drainage must be resorted to. During the preliminary period the ground must be kept in clean cultivated crops—actually, not nominally, clean cultivated—and the manure intended for the alfalfa had best be applied at this time When only a small piece of ground is being prepared it might be used as a truck patch. That would enable the farmer to apply large amounts of manure and fertilizer and make an immediate profit from them, while storing up the residue and cleansing the soil for the alfalfa. Whereas, if the manure be applied directly to the alfalfa it will tend to make it weedy. Where larger pieces of land are required they must still be put into such crops as will demand and receive clean cultivation and heavy manuring, using crimson clover or other catch crops between the seasons.

Where convenient to do so an alternation of smothering crops, as crimson clover and cow peas, with frequent stirring of the surface of the soil, should make an ideal preparation. As, for instance, follow corn or early potatoes with crimson clover; plow the clover down deep, nine or ten inches, the first of May. Roll and harrow with cutaway or spring tooth harrow at intervals till the first of June, then plant to cow peas. Plow down the peas the middle of July, put on 30 bushels of lime to the acre, roll and harrow as before. This will compact the lower soil and stir the upper. It will also kill off weeds and retain moisture to germinate the seed sown the last of August. Alfalfa a fine, firm, mellow seed bed, free from lumps and clods, and having close capillary connection with the subsoil. This can only be where soil has been plowed long enough for it to settle and the underturned vegetable matter to rot. For that reason never sow alfalfa on newly plowed land. If the peas cannot be plowed down in time for them to rot it would be better to cut off the vines for hay and work up the surface only with a disc or cutaway harrow

As even slight depressions, which catch the rain water and hold it for a short time have a bad effect on alfalfa it it well to go over the land with a rubber or smoother of some kind to make the surface even.

When the soil is firm and compact below, fine and mellow above, sow the seed, twenty pounds to the acre. Sow ten pounds first and the other ten pounds crossing the field at right angles to the former direction. This precaution may seem unnecessary but will more than repay the cost in the great regularity of stand. After sowing harrow in the seed with a light slant tooth or smoothing harrow and roll. Put in in this way in a soil well supplied with available plant food, the seed will germinate promptly and the young plants pass quickly beyond danger from weeds and the vicissitudes of the season.

For spring seeding the land should be plowed the fall before ten inches deep. In March it should be given a dressing of thirty bushels of lime to the acre and be thoroughly worked up with harrow, roller and rubber. Plant as indicated above.

Subsoiling.

In stiff clay subsoils, especially where long continued shallow plowing has caused a "hard-pan" to form, it is not desirable that much raw subsoil be brought to the surface by deep plowing, and yet it is necessary that the soil be deeply stirred. In such cases it is well to use the subsoil plow, running it in the furrow made by the turning plow. It should be borne in mind that the best results from subsoiling usually follow that done in the fall because of the length of time required to re-establish close capillary connection.

Nurse Crops.

As a rule nurse crops should not be used with alfalfa. Though fine stands have been secured with them it was rather in spite of than in consequence of them. The young alfalfa plants are delicate and need all the sunlight, food and water they can get. How, then, can they do as well if the lion's share of these are taken from them by stronger and hardier plants. No instance has been reported in this State where a nurse crop was beneficial, but several where it was injurious.

Wing, the Ohio expert, recommends the use of beardless barley with alfalfa when sown in the spring, the barley to be harvested when ripe. Some fine crops have been grown in Maryland from sowing the seed like red clover on wheat land in March, but such a practice is not to be commended. A majority of growers are opposed to it and report best results from both fall and spring seeding without a nurse crop. Among those who report the nurse crop as a drawback are Dr. Augustus Stabler and Mr. Robert H. Miller, of Montgomery county, and Mr. F. A. Posey, of Charles county.

The history of a five acre field of alfalfa at the National Soldiers' Home, in the District of Columbia, a few miles from the Maryland Agricultural College, will be interesting in this connection, as reported by Mr. T. McGrath, the farm manager. The location is on top of a gravel hill. It was for two years used for trucking crops and well fertilized with manure and fertilizer. In the fall of 1899 the land was plowed deep. The next spring it was worked up and the seed were sown in April without a nurse crop. About June 20th, 1900, a cutting of two tons of hay to the acre was made, and thirty days afterwards another cutting of one and a half tons. It was then pastured. In 1901 three cuttings were made and pasturage. Mr McGrath, by the way, thinks the alfalfa was hurt by pasturing. In 1901 an application of four hundred pounds of pure raw bone to the acre was made over a part of it. At the first cutting in 1902 a yield of three tons of hay per acre was made, though the season was so dry that not half a hay crop was made from red clover and orchard grass

It may appear to some that too much importance has been attached in this bulletin to the preparation of the soil, but the experience of Mr. McGrath on the one hand and the contrary experience of many others who were not so particular is sufficient justification for all that has been said.

[To Be Continued.]

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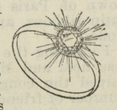

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WHOM TO PLEDGE.—Pledge everybody if you please, but particularly the boys and girls. May God help us to realize our duty to the young people. Form Anti Cigarette Leagues. I want the name and address of every one who will help. The day after the signing send me all the coupons and let me know results.

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FEBRUARY BARGAINS!

Men' Heavy Top Shirts, all wool, we sold for 75c, now....49c
Men's Top Shirts we sold for 50c, now for only....35c
Men's All Wool Under Shirts we sold for 1.25, now....75c
Men's Heavy Fleeced Lined Under Shirts we sold for 50c, now....35c
Men's Fleeced Cotton Under Shirts was a bargain for 50c, now....15c
Boys' Fleeced Lined Under Shirts, all sizes....15c
Boys' Heavy Cotton Sweaters well worth 50c a piece, now....25c
Boys' All Wool Suits, was selling at $3, now....$2.00
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Misses Fine Trimmed Coats....75c to 90c
Ladies' Wool Skirts....19c
Heavy Wool 11x4 Blankets....71c
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Good Heavy Outing that was selling at 10c yard, now....7½c by the piece
33 Different Patterns Flannelette was a bargain at 12½c, now....7½c
A Very Fine Dress Goods, was selling at 12c and 15c, now....7½c

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All Wool Carpet, very fine patterns, was a bargain at 59c per yd. now....29c
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SHOES.

Women's Storm Rubber Shoes....29c
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GROCERIES.

We still are the leaders of cheap groceries, such as
American Granulated Sugar....5c lb
Levering Coffee, always fresh....9c
English Breakfast Tea, sells everywhere for 50c lb., we sell it this month....25c
Grated Cocoanut, per packages....3½c
Seedless Raisons per lb. package....7½c
1 Pound Package Dates....5c
Hand Picked Corn-field Beans, pt....4c
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Men's, Boys' and Children's CLOTHING AND OVERCOATS at a saving of 20 to 40 cents on the Dollar. That means to clear the store of all our Clothing and Overcoats, Men's Pants and Underwear.

MEN'S SHIRTS, Heavy Fleeced, at....39c. Up
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1903. 1903.

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10c buys 12½c Light or Dark Percales, in Remnants.

4½c buys 6c Apron Gingham, in Remnants.

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12½c buys Misses Double Heel and Toe Hose, 5 to 9½; value 15 and 18c.

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Special Discount off for CASH.

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White and Colored, to go at a Discount.

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10c buys Choice of Patterns. 500 to 1000 yards HAMBURG EDGINGS, ranging in value from 10 to 30c yd.

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