

## THE STORY OF ALFALFA.

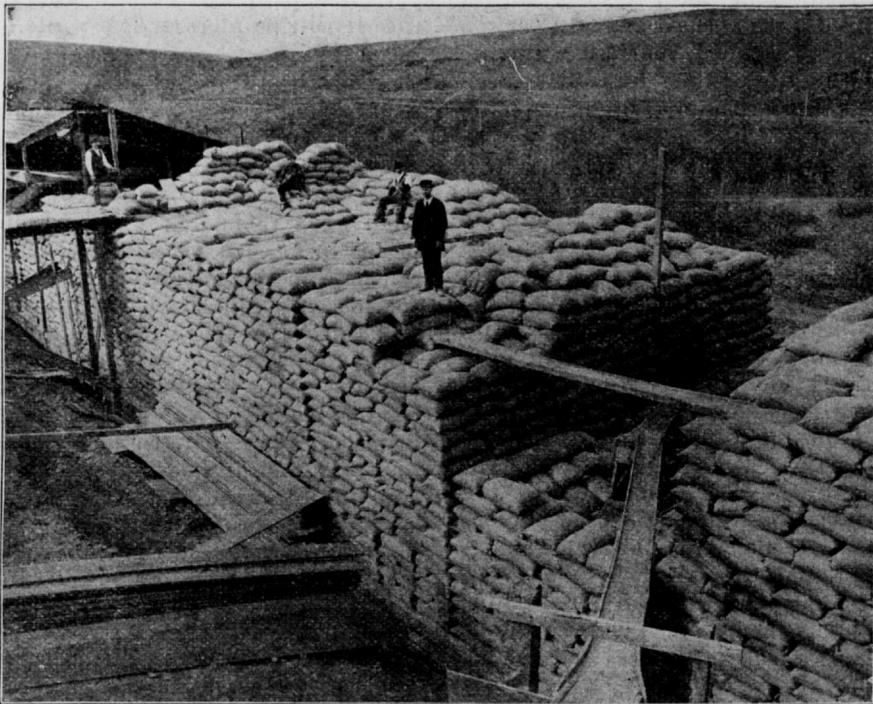
By Lute Wilcox.

Alfalfa is the greatest forage plant the world has ever known, and it should be grown by every farmer who keeps a cow or owns a horse. It is known scientifically as *medicago sativa*, its botanical name. In the Spanish language it is alfalfa, while the French, Swiss, German and Canadian people call it lucerne. It is a leguminous perennial, and properly belongs to the pea-vine family. It is often miscalled a grass. Its term of existence has not been authentically established, but it will last the average age of man, and instead of depleting the soil it has a way, through its root nodules, of constantly replenishing the soil with the nitrogenous fertilizing elements of the atmosphere.

The writer once met a venerable padre of Old Mexico, who said his alfalfa patch had been planted over two hundred years, and had never

It did not reach Colorado, where its growth has attained a state of perfection, until 1862, when a small quantity of seed was brought from Mexico by Major Downing, who planted it in a dooryard in Denver, and from whence it spread until today it covers many thousands of acres in the Rocky Mountain region, and extends out on the great plains as far east as "the Father of Waters." Its progress eastward has been noted as far as New York, and even in New England I have seen very good patches of it.

There is a good deal of misapprehension afloat regarding this or that kind of soil being unsuited to alfalfa culture. As a matter of fact the soil itself cuts but very little figure in the success of the crop, so long as contaminating influences do not come in to work injury to it. Any soil, when properly prepared, will do, so long as it has a porous sub-stratum for proper



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been re-seeded during that time, and had yielded four crops of hay regularly every year. The history of this most wonderful plant is somewhat shrouded in mystery, but the Grecian historians tell us that it was brought to Greece from Media, in Asia, during the reign of Darius, about 500 years before Christ. Its culture extended to Rome, thence to the south of France, where it has been a favorite forage plant. It grows wild with great luxuriance on the pampas of Buenos Ayres. It was brought into Mexico by the early Spanish conquerors, and from thence found its way, about the middle of the present century, to the Pacific coast country, now Southern California.

drainage, and so that there is no accumulation of surface water to injure the crown and root of the plant. Corn land is just the thing for alfalfa—any soil that is of a friable character answers every need of the plant. And carefully seeded, protected and cared for in a common-sense way, failure will scarcely result, and winter killing need not be feared, as the plant is much more hardy than red clover. Bench land is preferable to bottom land, and sandy loam is more desirable than clay, though some clay soils answer well for alfalfa, but the plants require longer time in becoming established.

Where there is a loamy soil, "old land" is best upon which to sow alfalfa, and should be

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