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THE SOIL IN WHICH YOU PLANT YOUR CORN

NEXT week's issue will be a Corn Special, but we feel sure no one will blame us if we take time by the forelock and talk a little this week about the first factor in the making of a good corn crop—the ground in which it is planted.

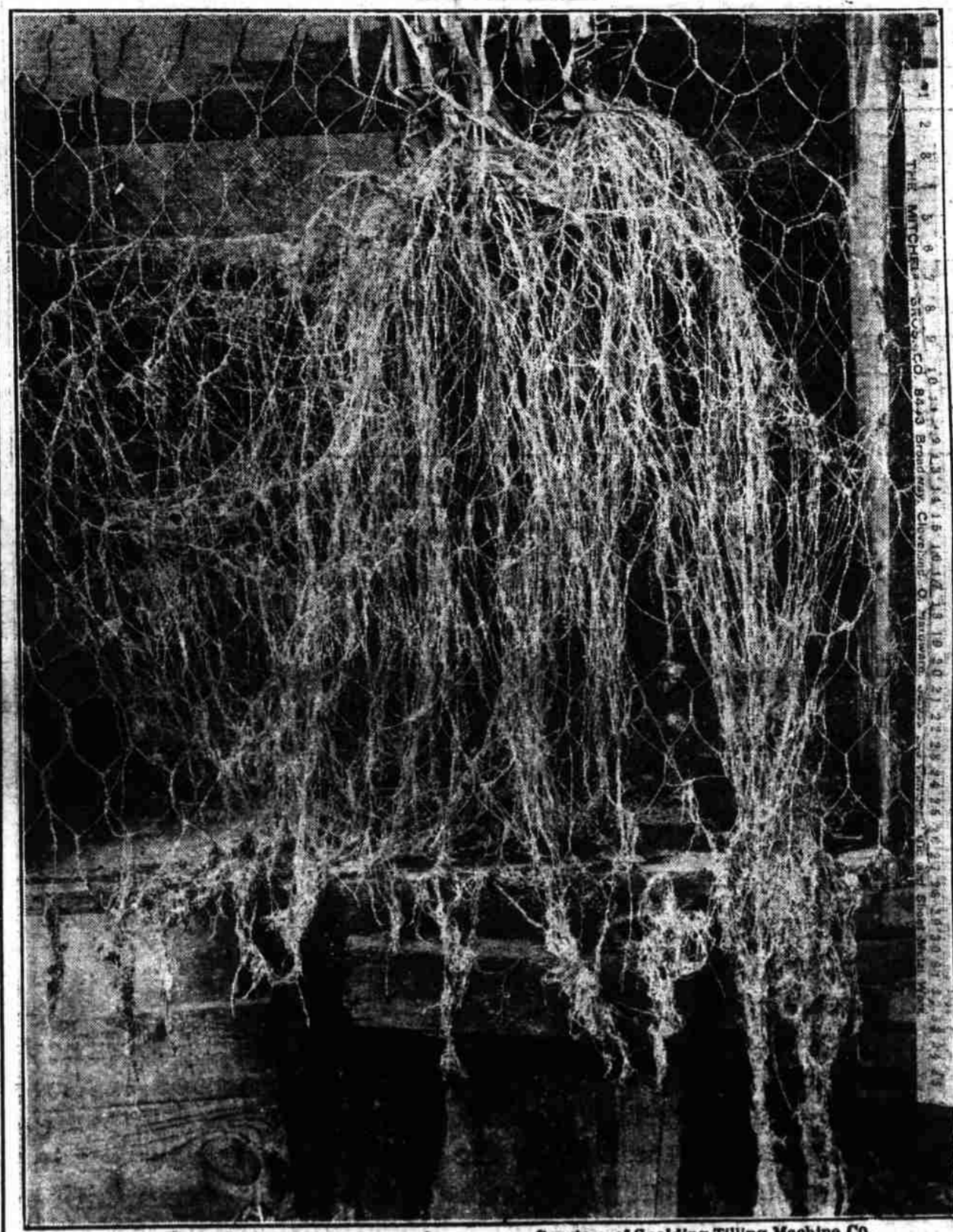
We said two or three weeks ago that it would always be unprofitable to plant corn on poor land, and we repeat it. The average corn crop in the South is not a profitable crop; the average Southern soil is not rich enough to produce a paying crop of corn. Therefore, as the first step toward making his corn pay him this year, the farmer should plant only on land from which he can reasonably expect a fair yield—twenty-five bushels an acre at the very least. If his land will not make this much, he had better plant it in cowpeas or soy beans.

In the second place, the farmer should remember that it requires a lot of water to make a corn crop. It has been estimated that about 300 tons of water are required to produce a ton of dry matter in a corn crop. If the water is lacking, the crop will be cut short; and corn crops in the South are, in all probability, more often cut short by scarcity of water than by the actual lack of plant food in the soil. No matter how much plant food there is in

the soil, it is useless to the plant until it is dissolved in the soil-water. The corn land should have a great water-holding capacity.

This means that the soil should be deep, and well filled with vegetable matter. The man who has a crimson clover sod, or any other green crop, to turn under for his corn this spring is more than half assured of a good crop. The man who has turned under a red clover or grass sod this winter can afford to be confident that he will make corn. The man who is hauling out manure to cover his corn land also has good reason to be hopeful of big yields. But the man who is going to plant corn on land that has been bare since last year's corn or cotton crop, that is deficient in humus, that will dry out quickly if a drouth comes—the man who has such land and who must depend on the fertilizers he applies, rather than upon the soil, for his corn crop, is going to have a hard time making that corn crop yield a profit.

To hold moisture well and give the corn roots a good feeding ground it is necessary, too, that the corn land be well broken. Four or five inches of loose soil on top of a hard-pan is very little space for corn roots to forage in, especially if dry weather comes and pumps out the



Courtesy of Spalding Tilling Machine Co.
CORN ROOTS IN A DEEP SOIL.

moisture the corn needs. The growing corn plant is as hungry as a growing colt or a growing boy; it is all the time looking for food, and the roots are running far and wide—and deep, too, if they can—creeping in between the tiny soil particles, and taking up the food that will go to make the strong plant and good ears.

Four or five inches of soil, and that dried out, and how is the plant to get the food it must have to produce those good ears?

The picture on this page is of some corn roots from which the soil has been washed away. It will be seen that these corn roots grew about and thru a piece of wire netting, so that there can be no question that they really grew down into the soil just as the picture shows. But the soil was loose and fine. The corn roots in the ordinary field do not go down like that. They are practically confined to a very few inches of the top soil.

This, then, is the first essential in making a good crop of corn—a deep, fine soil, well filled with vegetable matter and of a fair degree of fertility. The dead, dry soil, lacking humus, and broken to a depth of four or five inches is not going to make a paying crop of corn, and he who plants corn on such land is not wise.

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