

FOR THE STAR AND SUN
HARRISBURG
Massachusetts - It has often occurred to me that our common method of preserving (2) nature and restoring it to the soil from whence it is derived, by its use in the soil, is not a very scientific or practical method. In my consideration of this important subject I will endeavor to sustain my objections by accepted facts and such reasoning as may be at least, I hope, meet the consideration of the subject demands. I allude to the practice of allowing the manure to lie in the barn-yard until it is thoroughly rotted, and then hauled into the field to be exposed to an atmosphere for some days or weeks before it is turned under by the plough.

Decomposition, decay, or a Liebig call it *ammoniacal*, (slow combustion) of vegetable substances under ordinary circumstances, commences immediately after the vital principle ceases to affect the organic bodies it pervades, and the particles of which were composed. In the case of manure, this process is hastened by the action of chemical attraction, separate in order to form new combinations of a simpler character than those which characterized it in the living structure. The decay, or slow combustion, is also hastened by the action of ordinary chemical attraction, separate in order to form new combinations of a simpler character than those which characterized it in the living structure. The decay, or slow combustion, is also hastened by the action of ordinary chemical attraction, separate in order to form new combinations of a simpler character than those which characterized it in the living structure.

Vegetables are composed of a variety of compounds called proteids, proteins, which themselves are capable of being broken up into simple elements. The proteid principles of plants are divided into two classes called azotized and non-azotized compounds. The former, called nitrogenous as a constituent principle, and in consequence are capable of generating ammonia, with sulphurated and phosphorated hydrogen, which are recognized by the offensive odor given off during the decomposition of azotized or albuminous substances, all very important properties of vegetables nutrition.

Non-azotized substances, such as vegetable tissue, starch, sugar, oil, etc., do not contain nitrogen as a principle of their composition, and in consequence cannot of themselves produce ammonia, but by decomposition are converted into carbonic acid and water, also most valuable as nutriment in sustaining plant life.

Humus, or vegetable wood, possesses the valuable property of absorbing and retaining ammonia, and even to a certain extent of forming it from the nitrogenous matter in the atmosphere, and at least ten per cent it is absolutely necessary to render soil productive. On an average, soil contains but five per cent of humus, and the best soil contains only twenty-five to fifty per cent of humus.

When decomposition commences, the nitrogenous compounds being of a more complex nature, decompose much more rapidly than the non-azotized compounds, but the ammonia and other volatile, but volatile principles, are dissipated long before the less destructive compounds are consumed. This leads me to believe that we sustain an immense loss of ammonia, and other volatile principles, which it lies in the barn-yard during the first stages of decomposition, and its subsequent exposure in the field before being ploughed under.

The question then presented is, would it not be better to plough under our vegetable material in the spring before the heat and rain of summer have to any extent promoted decomposition, as it is well known that cold very little waste occurs during the winter, and allowing this decomposition to take place in contact with the mineral constituents of the soil, many of which are altered by it.

It is this fact, in my mind, that renders green crops so valuable in improving land when ploughed under in the early part of summer, as the bulk and weight would be little in comparison to the amount of straw, hay, fodder, etc., that enter into the composition of the manure heap, and you are guaranteed to have a more effective manure. Some scientific farmers use plaster or sulphate of iron sprinkled over their manure heap to retard decomposition by means of the sulphuric acid it contains, but quick-acting decomposition and disease ammonia, etc. The greatest plan to overcome its inconvenience, which I will admit, but it can be made appear, that the same material ploughed into the soil and allowed to decompose, is worth three times as much as even one half more than it is in the rotted state, when entering, or to use your own expression, "wide-wake" farmer, would not be willing to put himself to some inconvenience to secure to valuable an improvement.

Window Plants for Winter - There is a great deal of interest in the growing things that cannot be brought to any use as the multiplication table. But it is the duty of all housekeepers to learn every art that can make them pleasant. The watching and taking an interest in birds and plants is worth much to children, and the same hints from the *Ploughman*, that help some of our readers to pretty sitting room adornments.

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