

THE TEST OF THE NATIONAL WELFARE IS THE INTELLIGENCE AND PROSPERITY OF THE FARMER.

Every farmer in his annual experience discovers something of value. Write it and send it to the "Agricultural Editor of the Democrat, Bellefonte, Penna.," that other farmers may have the benefit of it. Let communications be timely, and be sure that they are brief and well pointed.

Thousand Dollar Compost Heaps.

Each succeeding year I am more than ever before convinced of the great value of my heaps of compost manures. They are made about as follows: In the spring when the teams are hauling from the city, every load of very coarse manure is thrown into a heap separate from the other and finer manures, to commence the compost heap for the following year. This is continued through the entire season. As soon as the growing season opens, we begin to gather refuse from the grounds. If it contains anything of value for the pigs, and sometimes when it does not, it is thrown into the different hog pens, some six or seven of them, and is worked over there, and then is hauled out and thrown into the compost heap. Potato tops, squash vines, cabbage stumps, etc., are usually carried direct to the heap. We also get during the year many loads of fish refuse from the dealers in the city. This is of course possible only in the neighborhood of large bodies of water.

We also get the sweepings of the streets of the city. We do not allow weeds to grow, and in fact they do not grow as they do in many places that I visit; still in spite of our efforts to keep them entirely down, a want of help at the proper time, or some other causes, will give them a chance to get a start, and the result is that we have more or less weeds for the compost heap. Still do not imagine that I recommend growing weeds for this purpose. I much prefer not to have them grow; but if they will grow in spite of us, put them to the best possible use. As the heap grows and the summer comes on it will heat, and if not cared for it will be very seriously damaged in value. To prevent this we usually make the heap near water, and when it gets so hot as to begin to dry and burn, as it surely will if left alone, we put on sufficient water to cool it off, being careful not to put on so much as to drain it.

It is sometimes difficult to judge of the quantity of water necessary, and it is well to dig one or more holes by the side of it, and in case the water does drain from it, dip it up and throw it back on the heap. Even if it is some distance to water it will pay well to haul it with a team rather than suffer the heap to be at all neglected. We also have a slop pail some rods from the house. All the slops and refuse of the house is thrown into a trough which carries it to a pit containing fine, dry street manure, or, if nothing else, the pit is cleaned out and contents hauled to the heap. In the winter the slops run out and freeze, on the top of the heap, where it will thaw in the spring, and add its full value to the heap. I have a number of loads of this kind of ice on one of my heaps to-day, and more will be added very soon.

In the fall, when cool weather comes on, we have the entire heap worked over, and heap it up about five or six feet high, fifteen or twenty feet in width, and as long as materials will allow. Leave it about level on the top. We never have sufficient rain here in the winter to do it any harm. It will freeze but little—perhaps none at all during the winter. Early in spring, before the busy season comes on, commence at one end of the heap and work it all over thoroughly. It is now in splendid condition for use. It is surprising how large an amount can be gathered together in this manner during the year. I have two heaps now lying upon my ground that contain at least 100 cords. What are they worth? I do not know, but I would not take \$1,000 for them. They have not cost me that, but if I should part with them I could not possibly get stable manure to replace them, and should not know what else to get that I could rely upon.

Possibilities of Culture.

In practical culture we must adapt our crops to the soil, if we would grow the greatest possible average, and then manage those crops skillfully—here we have much to learn. Undoubtedly there is a way to doctor a soil of known poverty cheaply, so as to produce greatly increased crops. This is a study for all who cultivate farms which have been long under culture; the solution is not the easiest, but still within the bounds of possibility. Ways and means have been frequently pointed out where it has been done, and what has been done may be improved upon. The kind of seed, or the variety, has a large influence on the amount of the product—if we breed stock we natu-

rally select from the best improved breeds, and seek by every known and some unknown means to improve thereon—so we should manage with all our planting and sowing or seed used. If we plant a variety which only yields one ear of corn to two stalks we do not obtain as many bushels as we do if we use seed where two ears are grown on one stalk, and here is where one of the greatest failings of cultivators lies—the selection and saving seed after it is grown. But it cannot be grown, in the first place, unless there is especial pains taken to improve on general practices.

Shading the Soil.

The good effect of covering the soil, either by shade or mulch, is often so marked as to be apparent even to the casual observer. In the case of surface manuring it is questionable which is of most service, the enrichment derived from the manure or its mulching effect, for in many instances by merely spreading over the field old straw, or other coarse litter containing very little fertilizing material, the improvement shown in the grass or clover or grain from such protection will be even greater than where fine manure was used. One has only to trace this question back to find that for all time this has been the principal treatment which nature has given in managing soils, and that under this treatment soils have always improved, although continually growing immense crops of timber or grass, being both mulched and enriched by an annual covering of leaves or grass—also with a mantle of snow in higher latitudes, where more covering is needed—which tends to keep the soil in a light, friable and moist condition.

Man cannot attain to a truer science of agriculture than that which nature will teach him if he will but look and learn, and if he has by bad management, or through ignorance of her laws, allowed his fields to deteriorate even to barrenness, he can find no easier or truer way of restoring them to a healthy condition than to cover with a green crop, such as clover or rye or buckwheat; enriching the land by the mulch which such a vegetable growth affords, and by the amount of vegetable matter given the soil by the green growth ploughed under before maturity; and even our tillage for a growing crop is only an artificial way of keeping the soil in a proper condition for plant growth, which nature will do even better for her products of the soil by suitably covering or mulching instead. We often hear of potatoes growing well without cultivation, simply by covering the soil when planted with a few inches of old straw. The official report of the Kansas potato crop last year was that all those that were mulched yielded much the best.

In the course of my farm management, I have met with some very decided results in favor of shading the soil. A ten acre lot, which had become so poor that I found I must do something to help restore it, was seeded very liberally to the large kind of clover; this after a fine catch grew thick and rank until it was about fifteen inches high, when the wind and rain of a thunder shower laid it all flat to the ground; but it very soon made a strong new upward growth of about two feet before cutting, but when cut I found the butts of clover which lay horizontal since being cast were black and shiny, and the surface of the ground was black. After taking this crop, which was between three and four tons to the acre, the ground was ploughed, covered with manure, and sowed to wheat, which yielded the following year thirty-six bushels per acre, and has produced well ever since. Another very gratifying result of this operation was the complete smothering and eradicating of an acre of Canada thistles which had persisted in occupying the middle of the field in spite of all former tillage; these, growing with the clover, and all being lodged together, the clover grew again so much the quicker as to completely block and kill out the thistles, and they have not made an appearance there since. At another time I allowed a twenty-five acre field of clover to stand without either feeding or cutting off; this gave a fair result, though not so much of an improvement as I had hoped for.

Hungarian Grass.

A quick growing plant is required for the production of a second crop upon the early rye or other stubble, and this is well supplied in the Hungarian grass. If the season is warm and the moisture sufficient, with a rich soil, a large crop of this valuable fodder may be procured in from six to eight weeks. About one bushel of seed is required per acre, to be sown broadcast and slightly harrowed in. From the rapidity of its growth, the Hungarian grass may be safely sown as late as July; but the best results may be expected when sown as early as June. Sown at intervals of a week or so, it will give a succession of excellent succulent green fodder, and that when other green food is often scarce. The plant, when allowed to ripen fully, has a head bearing a multitude of hard, sharp bristles or awns, which are irritating to the stomach, especially those of

horses which have fed abundantly upon it. Trouble from these can be avoided by cutting the crop as soon as the head is formed, and at the same time a better fodder in all respects is obtained. Its excellence as a soiling crop is only equaled by its value for fodder when cured in hay. A few acres of Hungarian grass on any farm is a good index of thoughtful and profitable farming.

Corn Culture on a Large Scale.

Eds. COUNTRY GENTLEMAN.—There is something exhilarating in Illinois farming. I recently passed through the State once more, only to open my eyes, as always before. We entered the State on the Indianapolis, Decatur & Springfield railway, and rode due west to Springfield. It is comparatively a new portion of the State, and the land, as soon as you cross the line from Indiana, ceases to be woodland and becomes prairie. It is almost a dead level for miles and miles, and I judge nearly 80 per cent. is in corn. At every station long corn cribs extend for many rods along the road, full to the very roof, or piled up high without a roof. The corn crop is a short one this year in Illinois (!), but to judge from the corn cribs, one would say that Joseph had been there during seven plenteous years, storing corn for seven years of famine. And so, by the time we reached the Inter-State Convention, we were ready to pardon any Illinoisian for boasting of the resources of his adopted State. We didn't have to wait long. The president of the Pennsylvania Agricultural College was so indiscreet as to intimate that there was better corn in Chester and other eastern counties of his own State than he had seen in Illinois, and that the Illinois farmers would soon need scientific men to tell what elements their soil lacked, and what were becoming exhausted, and how to restore them. Col. William Smith, a member of the Illinois board, and an extensive land owner, took up the gauntlet, and, in a very funny speech, annihilated the poor president, who sat good-naturedly, laughing with the rest. He told him he had come in a bad year—a year of severe drought—and therefore he couldn't judge; that he could show him Illinois land that had borne big corn for 150 consecutive years; that the Lord made the Illinois soil so rich that farmers didn't have to get a chemist to tell what ailed it, or break their backs forking manure. And so on ad libitum. For good-natured brag, commend me to an Illinois "big" farmer, who has made his pile on two or three thousand acres of land at \$1.25 per acre, and then wonders they don't get rich faster in Eastern Pennsylvania on a hundred acres of land at a hundred dollars an acre!

A Few Seasonable Paragraphs.

Ewes after lambing should be allowed rest, quiet and the best of feed. If any of the ewes do not seem to give milk enough for their lambs separate them from the rest, and give them oatmeal gruel, roots, bran slop, and if possible rowen.

It is said that Northern cloverseed, raised in Vermont, blossoms about the time of timothy and redtop. Northern cloverseed from Northern New York and further West blossoms two or three weeks earlier than these grasses, and Southern cloverseed still earlier than the Northern New York. In sowing cloverseed with the late grasses it would be best to obtain Vermont cloverseed, and to sow with the earlier grasses Western seed.

Sutton's British "Amateur's Guide in Horticulture" for 1881 speaks in high terms of the advance made of late in garden products, especially in potatoes, peas and melons. The reduced prevalence of scrofula and scurvy is attributed to a freer use of good vegetables. The foremost improvement cited is the American Wonder pea, which is said to be a delicious wrinkled variety, early, yet bearing pods as large and as numerous, on vines only ten inches high, as those produced by the Champion of England.

It is better to transplant pears, peaches, cherries and plums in the spring than in the fall.

As a rule, the size of the seed will indicate the depth to plant it, starting with the smallest at one-half of an inch, such as celery, parsnips, etc., while peas and beans may be put one and a half inches deep.

Mr. SULLIVAN KILBERTH, Manchester, Me., gives this simple plan for preserving butter made in the flush season till the price improves: "After it is churned, properly worked, and salted, pack in stone jars within an inch or two of the top; then lay on a cloth and fill the jar with best butter salt; place the jar in a clean flour barrel, having previously put four inches of salt in the bottom. Then fill up with salt, so as to cover the top of the jar to the depth of six or eight inches. Place the barrel in a cool cellar. The butter not only comes out sweet, but preserves all the aroma for which June butter is famous, and tastes as if just churned."

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Table with 3 columns: Train Name, Time, Arrival/Departure. Includes Bald Eagle Valley Railroad, Erie Mail, Niagara Express, etc.

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