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The Centre Democrat.

BELLEFONTE, PA.

AGRICULTURAL.

NEWS, FACTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

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, Penn'a," that other farmers may have the benefit of it. Let communications be timely, and be sure that they are brief and well pointed.

When to Begin Keeping Poultry.

There is no doubt that a well-kept flock of poultry is the most profitable of all farm stock. But a little flock well kept, like a little farm well tilled, brings the most profit to the farmer. Just as many as can be kept without crowding, and with ease and convenience, will be the most profitable. Poultry will not bear crowding any more than sheep or pigs or people, and it is well known that when any of those are too closely kept disease appears and works mischief. It is a necessity of the case, because cleanliness must be sacrificed to necessity.

We would not put more than 50 fowls in one yard, nor confine them in a yard all the time. Success with poultry is totally impossible with close confinement. The fowls must have a run abroad at least half a day and a grass run is the best. There they secure an abundance of insects, as grasshoppers, flies, crickets, beetles caterpillars, ants, and worms, all of which are their natural food. But on a farm the number of fowls must not exceed the limits of ground provided for them, or, like Mr. Micawber's financial condition, it will produce misery. When this gentleman kept his expenses within half a cent of his income his comfort and pleasure were unbounded. The half-cent was a perpetual joy to him. But when he went half a cent beyond his income life was a burden. The debt was a source of misery. The principle applies strictly to poultry-keeping. One hen too few, and health, comfort and wealth abound. One hen too many, and disease, death and loss results. The line may be drawn right there, for it is so narrow and so straight that it is quite as easily overstepped as that.

But as with other live stock, there are good and bad, profitable and unprofitable, fowls. And we should get the best. If a dairyman were to begin business he would buy cows and not calves. In the one case his profits would begin at once; in the other his expenses only would begin, and his profits would be in the future. It is the same with fowls. If one procures a dozen eggs of some good kind to begin with, he must spend a year and some money before any income be made. For the price of two settings of eggs a trio of fowls can be procured, and while the eggs were hatching and the chicks rearing the two hens would lay a hundred or two of eggs and rear 20 chicks themselves. Thus it is easy to get into stock quickly and at less cost by procuring fowls than by getting eggs. And this is the season for beginning. Early pullets can be purchased now quite cheaply, while in the spring no breeder will sell them because they are making him a profit. In January or February they will begin laying, and if a few common hens can be procured for brooders, a large number of chicks can be hatched in March by good management. That is by having a warm place especially for the hens, where they will not be disturbed by anything, and if need be by putting a small stove in it to keep it warm. A large sunny window on the south side is very desirable. Young chicks are susceptible to cold, and a warmth will cover a multitude of mistakes and dangers.

An English farmer says: "I have more than once freed my fields entirely from wire-worms by sowing a crop of white mustard seed. I once sowed a whole field of forty odd acres which had not yet repaid me for many years in consequence of every crop being destroyed by the wireworm, to white mustard. I am warranted in saying that not a single wireworm could be found the following year, and the succeeding crop of wheat was a fine one."

A Discussion of the Best Kinds of Manure.

It is not an unusual question to be asked, especially by those who have small gardens and yards, as to the best kinds of manure for particular plants and crops, and oftener than any other of that to apply to grape vines. To us, who have gone through all those things, the inquiry seems to be about on par as to the best material for making a suit of clothes. So long as they keep us warm and comfortable, all the rest is little less than taste and convenience. In regard to plant food any decaying organic matter is good enough; and when one is on a well managed farm where the manure heap in the barnyard is equal to any demand upon it, we never think of looking anywhere else for the necessary fertilizing substance. Whether it be the corn or wheat crop, flowers in the yard or lawn, vegetables in the garden, trees in the orchard, grapes, apples, pears, or straw-berries—all readily sit and eat at a common table and give thanks equally after meal.

We shall not deny that it is possible that some one manure may be better for one particular or special crop than another. Indeed, as plants all vary in a slight degree from one another, they can hardly be expected to do equally as well on just the same kind of food. Moreover, experiments carefully conducted show that when manures have been varied for the same kind of plant for the same time, some one has been found to do a little more good than another. But after all, these special advantages are not often available in a general way. In fact, for extensive use they are unavailable; or, if to be obtained, they are at too costly a rate. We constantly find that although other things being equal, and some one material or another might be regarded as the best manure, they still fall back upon the old fashioned unmis-
takeable barnyard deposit. Yet after all these questions as to the best manures, they are not the things for those whose knowledge is limited to indulge in. They are only for those who have had considerable practical experience. It is in fact somewhat unsafe for those who are beginning to grow certain crops to think much about what is likely to be preferred at all. They should be content with a moderate degree of success, until their increased knowledge justifies them to expand their operations. We would not, therefore, have our inexperienced friends bother themselves about the "best" manure for grapes, or in fact for any other crops. Take any well rotted, decaying vegetable matter that comes to hand and apply it in moderate quantities at first, until experience teaches how much any crop will bear and it will generally be found to be what they are seeking—the best manure.—German-town Telegraph.

Nitrate of Soda as a Top Dressing for Wheat.

Prof. Cook, of the New Jersey Experiment Station, sowed 275 pounds of Chili saltpetre on an acre of wheat, and by comparison with an acre not thus treated, the grain was 1600 pounds of straw and seven bushels, or 25 per cent. in the yield of grain. From this experiment and a study of others made during the past fifty years Professor Cook feels justified in making the following statements:

Nitrate of soda judiciously used as a top dressing will generally give a profitable increase of both wheat and straw.

If an acid phosphate has been drilled with the wheat, nitrate of soda can be used alone, mixed with twice its own weight of dry soil. To insure a perfect mixture with this soil it is necessary to break all large lumps and pass the nitrate through a coarse sieve. If an acid phosphate has not been drilled with the wheat, English experience teaches that it is best to mix the sifted nitrate with twice its own weight of sifted soil.

From 100 to 150 pounds of nitrate of soda per acre will probably in most cases be a sufficient dressing; larger quantities in some cases have materially increased the profits.

The best time to use nitrate of soda is probably soon after vegetation begins in the Spring, care being taken not to delay too long, as there is

danger that late dressing will delay or cause imperfect ripening of the grain.

If possible, the nitrate should be spread just before a light rain; this will distribute it in the soil, and aid in preventing it from damaging the young plants.

If wheat has been injured by a severe Winter, or if, for any reason, it appears yellow and sickly in the Spring, it is claimed that a light dressing of nitrate of soda will often prove a serviceable remedy.

Pruning Orchards in Winter.

This week's *Country Gentleman* makes some sensible suggestions that farmers at the present season should take to heart. The first has reference to pruning orchards in winter: We have described on a former occasion the mode which we had adopted to much advantage in the winter pruning of neglected orchards, by first marking with chalk the precise line for inserting the saw, and then the workmen who follows to remove the limbs can never make a mistake. Laying out the work, and the labor of cutting, should be two separate operations. The owner stands at one side, and viewing the whole, sees much better what is wanted than if engaged in cutting off the limbs. A rod or pole, with chalk affixed to the end, will enable him to stand on the ground and do the marking rapidly; and then the common mistake need not be made of thinning out the inside and leaving the centre part to become dense with foliage, instead of the correct mode of thinning in from the outside.

RING BONE ON COLTS.—This often comes from permitting the colt to stand on a wooden, concrete, brick or other hard floor any time before attaining about eighteen months' age. Previous to this, they should be kept on pasture of a dry soil during the Summer, and if stabled in the Winter, the floor should be dry, loose earth. If the soil here is clayey, then it ought to be covered several inches deep with sand, ten-bark, sawdust or straw, or coarse hay, the two latter being cut up short in the straw cutter. If this is not done, the straw or hay gets piled up in heaps on some parts of the floor and in others it is left bare, rendering it so uneven as to be uncomfortable and dangerous for the colts to stand on. If suffered to run out in a yard with open sheds the soil should be loose and dry, and free from stone or coarse gravel. Thus treated, colts are pretty certain to grow up with well-shaped, sound, tough hoofs, pasterns, ankles and legs.

Gleanings.

The Milwaukee *Sentinel* thinks that brute force will answer at the forward end of the plough, but that a little intelligence is needed at the after part of the machine.

"White Plume," a variety of celery which blanches without banking, received "honorable mention" at the last meeting of the New York Horticultural Society.

At the Agricultural College Farm, near Lincoln, Neb., ten acres of Honduras sorghum yielded 175 tons of cane, topped, but not stripped. The product was sold for \$2 per ton.

Cull out your stock and get rid of the poorest. Then make the best butter. You can't afford to keep any animal when you can replace it with a better one at a reasonable price.

On pleasant days the cellar windows should be opened. Fruit keeps better if given fresh air than if maintained at a low temperature. The ventilation improves the healthfulness of the house also.

Ohio farmers employ sleds with runners six or eight inches wide for drawing all sorts of loads over bare and muddy ground. They are extensively used for drawing out manure in the Spring. They injure grass sod less than the wheels of wagons and carts do.

All meat animals, whether cattle, sheep or hogs, make the most gain and give the best profits on the food consumed the first year of their growth, and the profit or gain is lessened gradually the longer any animal is kept, and after this, if fed too long, is fed at a loss. It does not pay to keep highly fed steers at a greater age than thirty, or at most thirty-six months. What he gains after this costs more than it will bring. In feeding any animal for the production of meat the farmer's motto should be, "Feed well from the first, and market animals while they are still feeding, at a profit."

I would rather have a calf brought up on skim milk after it has been once started, and is, say, two weeks old, than one brought up on whole milk.

EDWARD BURNETT.