

phate of lime, with a little carbonate, and small portions of salts of magnesia and soda. The remainder is organic matter, which is destroyed when the bones are burned. This phosphate of lime of bones contains 46.0 per cent of phosphoric acid and the refuse bone-black of the sugar-refiners usually affords about 32.0 per cent. of the acid. The different guanos also contain large amounts of phosphoric acid, and that known as Columbian guano is principally phosphate of lime. Various deposits of mineral phosphate of lime have of late attracted the attention of scientific agriculturists. I may mention in this connection the crystalline phosphate of lime or apatite of our Laurentian limestones, phosphatic nodules found in different parts of the Lower Silurian strata of Canada and described in previous Reports.

These mineral phosphates are in such a state of aggregation, that it is necessary to decompose them by sulphuric acid before applying them to the soil. The same process is also very often applied to bones; for this end the phosphate of lime in powder is to be mingled with nearly two-thirds its weight of sulphuric acid, which converts two-thirds of the lime into sulphate, and leaves the remainder combined with the phosphoric acid as a soluble super-phosphate. In this way, the phosphoric acid may be applied to the soil in a much more divided state, and its efficiency is thereby greatly increased.

Even in its soluble form however, the phosphoric acid is at once neutralized by the basic oxides in the soil. Mr. Paul Thenard has lately shown that ordinary phosphate of lime, when dissolved in carbonic-acid water, is decomposed by digestion with earth, insoluble phosphates of iron and alumina being formed, which are again slowly decomposed by the somewhat soluble silicate of lime present in the soil, and transformed into silicates with formation of phosphate of lime. It is probable that alkaline silicates may also play a similar part in the soil. These considerations show that the superior value of soluble phosphate of lime as a manure, depends solely upon its greater subdivision. A portion of the phosphoric acid in Peruvian guano exists in a soluble condition as phosphate of ammonia.

With regard to the nitrogen in manures, it may exist in the form of ammoniacal salts, or combined in organic matters which evolve ammonia by their slow decay. The ammonia which the latter are capable of thus yielding, is designated as potential or possible ammonia, as distinguished from the ammonia of the ammonical salts, which is generally soluble in water, and is at once disengaged when these matters are mingled with potash or quick-lime. Such is the sulphate of ammonia, which is prepared on a large scale from the alkaline liquid condensed in the manufacture of coal-gas. In the peruvian guano a large amount of the nitrogen is present as a salt of ammonia, and the remainder chiefly as uric acid, a substance which readily decomposes, and produces a great deal of ammonia. In fact, the decomposition takes place spontaneously, with so much rapidity, that the best guanos may, it is said, lose more than one-fifth of their nitrogen in the form of ammonia in a few months' time, if exposed to a moist atmosphere.