

THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE.

"PERSEVERE AND SUCCEED."

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Wood Ashes as Farm and Garden Manure.

One of the waifs that has come into our possession is a fragment of a report from the Fishery Overseer of the great Northwest. These little waifs that are borne to us on many tides we have sufficient curiosity to peer into, though it may be at our busiest moment. A little twig, once part of a basket enclosing fruit brought from Smyrna, fell into the hands of an Englishman, who, too, had a more than common share of curiosity to know something of the unknown. The little twig he planted, and it became the parent of all the Weeping Willows in the British Isles.

The waif we have now got hold of is not of so much importance, but it is a good subject for a moment's reflection on what our agriculture has been, and what we hope it will be before many years have sped their course.

The inhabitants of the Northwest, we are told, have hitherto been planting on the banks of the Assiniboine river, and as no man ever thought of manuring his fields, they built their cattle houses on the banks of the rivers and streams, or on the slopes immediately above the banks, and they depended on the spring floods for carrying it down to Lake Winnipeg.

No greater value seems to have been placed on manure some years ago in Ontario than in Manitoba. The writer knew, not a score of years since, a *bee* to be assembled to cast away a large heap of manure, the accumulation of many years, that had increased so from time to time that it had become an obstruction to every movement, whether of men or cattle, in the old barnyard.

Farmers have of late begun to think somewhat more of their manure, but we have some doubts of some of them appreciating it at its true value. One of the grounds of this opinion is the low estimate in which one of the most valuable manures is held. Why are not the ashes from our wood fires preserved more carefully, and why are they traded away for bars of soap or peddlars' wares? Every day we see them gathered in town, or brought in from the country, while the farms and gardens to which they should be applied would pay well for every pound of manure given to them.

Some farmers have even expressed doubts of the value of ashes as a manure. Whenever such a doubt could have originated is to us a mystery.—Wood ashes are very rich in the mineral constituents of plant food, and are in the best condition to be available for their support and nutrition. In wood ashes we have a large supply of potash, a constituent of food required by all the plants we cultivate with such care and labor, whether in the field or garden; for some, as, for instance, the potato, it is an element of absolute necessity. Is it desirable to add to our soil phosphate of lime, carbonic acid, and magnesia, we have them in the heap of ashes carefully preserved from our hearth. So it is with other elements of fertilization, as phosphoric acid, silica, oxide of iron, oxide of magnesia. All these have been proved by careful analysis to be stored in the bucket of ashes given away so carelessly, as if for it we had no use.

That wood ashes are rich in the constituents of the best and most easily attainable food for plants, a moment's thought will convince the most sceptical. The tree from which these ashes have been

immediately drawn drew from the soil and atmosphere all those constituents that nourished it and built it up from year to year. These constituents remained with it as absorbed by it during its growth. They were part of it when growing, when grown, when fallen before the woodman's axe, when burning, and when burned they remained in its ashes. They were not lost. Nothing in nature is lost. They remain in the ashes to nourish other plants, if used for that purpose; it may be for the growth of other trees, of vines to make glad the heart of man, of cereals or of grasses—for all they are available.

For many years have I seen the good effects of applying the ashes not only of wood, but also of other vegetable matter—of peat, and even, also, of earth, and I have never known an instance in which they were not of very great benefit to the crops for which they were applied. On a lawn that had become mossy they extirpated the moss, and its place was filled with white clover. Applied to meadows the yield of hay was increased fifty per cent. Fruit trees mulched with ashes bore more fruit, larger and improved in flavor; and for a potato crop there is no better manure.

Even when leached, they are valuable as a manure, but to preserve all their nutritive properties till they give them to the growing plant, they should be kept carefully under cover, or rain would wash away from them much that forms part of their great value. When thrown out uncovered under the rain, they become in a measure leached, and though still valuable, they are less so than if properly preserved.

The Fall Crop of the United States.

Now, as we look back at the winter through which we have passed, we feel some anxiety to know how the long months of hard frost, more protracted and penetrating to a greater depth than in ordinary winters, has affected the fall crops. We can now form some estimate of our prospects for the season. The yield of our crops, it is true, may be lighter or heavier than present appearances indicate; we cannot know what the future may have in store for us; but we can judge what present appearances are, and from them form some opinion of the promises at least, if we cannot speak definitely of their fulfilment.

From the Report of the Agricultural Department of the United States we learn what are the prospects at present of the winter wheat crop in that country. To us Canadians the report is of no little moment, as the markets for breadstuffs throughout the world are of necessity more or less affected by the yield of the crops in each grain-bearing country, and in the United States the area under grain crops is at all times so great compared to her population, that from her more than any other grain is most largely shipped to the English markets.

In this U. S. Report there are great complaints of failures and of partial failures. It is always so at the departure of winter, but the complaints are, it seems, more than in other seasons; however, though there are doubtless failures of crops, with bare fields to be seeded anew, we do not lose heart. Before our subscribers read these lines, many a field, now partly bare and dusky, will have received from the refreshing influence of the genial showers and light and heat of May. Some fields

will have been seeded anew, but though at some loss, they will, it is to be hoped, pay their expense when the harvest sheaves are gathered home.

The fall wheat has, no doubt, passed through a trying ordeal in a winter more than usually severe, and some of it has perished. In some places, the Western States especially, it has perished or has stood the winter badly. On the prairie lands there was no shelter, no wind-break to keep the snow from being blown off the exposed wheat fields. The Canadian knows the value of the snow as a mulching for his wheat crop.

The report gives the area sown with wheat last Fall, as about nine per cent. above the Fall of 1873, being an increase of 1,500,000 acres. This increased area will increase the general produce of the country fully as much as any partial deficiency in yield would bring it below the increase of the previous year. The condition of crop is not favorable on the whole. In some sections the young plant has been badly winter-killed, the latter frosts especially doing much injury. Though the frost was not more intense than in Canada, there was more alternate thawing and freezing, and the ground was not so well covered with snow in the Northern States. The condition as reported in April was below an average, and far below that of last year. In the South the condition gives good promise. In both Northern and Southern States there were exceptions to these general conditions. Making all allowance we are told, for the possible improvements in the North and Northwest, it seems certain that the aggregate winter crop will be materially reduced. Those sections in which drouth prevented early seeding, and sufficient root development before winter set in have been the great sufferers.

The lesson brought before us so frequently, is again presented to us this season. We note especially the destination of the crop—wherever water has been allowed to remain on the fields. Where patches were long covered within the very roots were killed. Furrows well cleaned and water cuts opened where needed; are indispensable in farming. When the farmer has sown and covered his seed he should not leave the field till he has with plow and shovel removed away every obstacle to the running off the water freely.

Every where the superiority of wheat sowed with the drill, and the great advantage of this mode over broadcast are conspicuously apparent.

Plant trees for winter-breaks. Carry off water that would stagnate on your fields. Use the seed drill.

Barley for Feeding—Bere or Bigg.

REPLY TO QUERIES BY A. S., FRONTENAC.

Our subscriber A. S., has, ere now, seen in the FARMER'S ADVOCATE of May a reply to some of the queries we have since then had from him on the prospect of growing barley instead of spring wheat. It is even now too late to enter more fully into the subject, and, unless as a guide for future years, it would be wholly out of season to make the sowing of barley the subject of further comment in our journal. The principal, we might say the only objection to the sowing of barley more extensively in the country is the uncertain prospects of a good demand with paying prices when it would be ready for the market. Not being an article of such general necessity as wheat, it is doubted by