

FARMERS' COLUMN

EFFECT OF GYPSUM - A correspondent of the Times writes: - In reading some remarks on gypsum and its application, I noticed a suggestive error in regard to its application upon plants when wet. I learned years ago, by a chance circumstance, that plaster does no good till thoroughly washed in the ground by rainfall. A part of a field of corn was plastered before and after a heavy shower. The part plastered before the shower, where the plaster was washed out of sight immediately, put on a deep green color and grew rapidly, while that plastered after the shower, where the plaster remained in a dry state round the hills, retained its yellow color, and grew more slowly; and although it assumed the deep green, and commenced growing when the other rains came two weeks afterwards, it never overtook the other, the difference being plain to be seen during the summer. The action of gypsum upon plants cannot take place until it is dissolved and has entered the roots. It is very clear then that it cannot be of the slightest use either upon the leaves or on the ground during dry weather. There is nothing whatever about the action of gypsum as a fertilizer that is different from any other fertilizer. It simply supplies some needed matters to the plant when it is dissolved in water and is absorbed by the roots.

OUR ALLIES AGAINST INSECTS. - The Toad. - I had a plant dreadfully infested with wood-lice, and a toad located himself close by as a protector, and in order to be ready in an emergency, he made in the mold a hole all but deep enough to hide himself in but not deep enough to prevent his having a thorough good view of the plant; and when a wood louse, beetle, or anything of the kind appeared near him or the plant, out he came and pounced upon it. "You are mine!" This was wholly his work. I only watched him sometimes, greatly pleased at his success. Another day, as I was walking along a path in the garden, I saw a toad approaching; the pace was quick for a toad, but I soon saw what he was after. Just on before him was a beetle which I expected to see caught, but ere there was apparently time for them to meet, the beetle had disappeared, so quickly that my eye was not quick enough to see it taken, but no doubt it was in the toad's mouth, for I heard a click which told a tale of capture. Two other toads seem to have concerted between them how to act one evening so as to take a border regularly, and in order to do their work well it appeared to be arranged that one of them should go on the border and the other stay outside, having the box edging between them; and so their work of clearing, keeping just opposite one to the other, though they could not see each other, and I watching from the window above. I wish we could all act with good feeling toward such useful creatures. They do much good and no harm. London Gardener's Chronicle.

SPARROWS. - How much longer will there be a sparrow club and sparrow prizes? They must be the result of observation. A new light broke in upon my baillif yesterday as he saw flights of sparrows busily engaged in our field of green peas, appropriating the "louse" which was injuring the plant and stopping its growth. I am a great believer in birds and poultry as farmer's friends, and this belief has been produced not only by reading the opinions and facts of others, but from 30 years of close observation of their habits. My gardener was an inveterate enemy to birds, and destroyed their nests in my shrubbery, and in consequence there was always a complaint of grub and other destructive insects; but when I put a firm veto against the destruction, my garden was well filled with uninjured produce. In fact, if you have grubs and insects in your garden, stock it with birds or poultry, and you will no longer complain. In very dry weather, when worms and insects are scarce, you must protect your fruit. Just now I see lots of my poultry among the young mangold or the tares, "appropriating" my enemies. But I have so often said that my best corn crops are within 50 feet of the fowl house, where the crops from the day of their sowing until harvest, undergo poultry examination, that I will not again trouble you with details. One must have confidence with only a bushel an acre of seed-wheat at their mercy. Let me warn those who do away with all their hedges that there should be belts of shrubberies, not only as breeding places for birds, but also as shelter from strong prevailing winds. - North British Agriculturist.

HOW TO GET PLENTY OF FRESH EGGS. - In a long communication upon the subject of poultry, Mr. E. Dwight, of Hudson, Mich., considers the question, "How to get plenty of good flavored fresh eggs with little trouble," and thinks, if there is any secret in it, he has discovered it, and makes the same public for the benefit of all interested. He says: "Once, thirty years ago, I was troubled just as my neighbor now is. I fed my hens on plenty of corn and got but few eggs. I reasoned upon the matter, and happened to think that the constituent parts of milk and the white of eggs were much alike. Now, it has long been known to milkmen that wheat middlings and bran are about the best of any feed to make a cow give milk; why not then the hens lay. I tried it, and since then they have no trouble. My mode of preparing the feed is to mix about five parts of bran with one of middlings. In the morning I wet up with water about four quarts of the mixture in a large tin pan, taking pains to have it rather dry, though all damp. This I set in a warm, sunny spot, south of their shed, and they walk up, take a few dips, don't seem to fancy it like corn, and start off on a short hunt for something better, but always coming round in a short time for a few more dips from the dish of bran. There is little time during the whole day but what one or more are standing by the pan, and likewise helping themselves. I am careful to mix for them just as much as they will consume during the day. At night, just before they repair to the roost, I usually throw them about a pint of shelled corn, well scattered, so that each one can get a few kernels. If your hens don't incline to eat this feed at first, sprinkle a little of Indian meal on top. I would like all who complain of not getting eggs, to try my plan, and I think they will never be sorry."

STICK TO YOUR FARMS. - The life of a farmer is not an easy one; but when we look around and see the wrecks of fortune made on every hand by men engaged in other pursuits, the farmer has cause to be thankful; if he can support his family, and give his children a good common education. It has been stated, that during the last half century only four merchants, in the city of New York, out of every hundred, have succeeded in making their business profitable. The unsuccessful ones have managed, in many cases, to continue in business for years after they had become bankrupt according to their books; but, of course, finally had to succumb to their fate. These men, while living in good style, and many luxuriously, have carried continually a load of care that no farmer ever experienced; and when the time came that their business must be wound up, their condition generally has been one of poverty, and utterly broken down in spirits. A few recover and resume business again; but the majority are pushed aside to make room for others, eventually to follow in their footsteps, and end their lives in misery and despair. Farmers be contented. You may not be able to lay up money; but if you can pay for your farms and live comfortably, envy not the condition of those engaged in other pursuits. To those farmers who are out of debt, and own good farms, need I say that the apparently wealthy bankers of Wall street might well envy your lot. Nearly every week some one of these firms, owing millions

of dollars, explodes, and its members sink into poverty and obscurity; but the farmer, who is out of debt, owns a bank that can never fail, inasmuch as seedtime and harvest are promised unto the end of time. A word to farmer's sons. - If your fathers own farms which are not mortgaged, don't all abandon your homes. One of you, at least, should remain to carry on the farm when your father's lease of life has expired. You might possibly do better in some other business, but you had better not risk a change. - N.Y. Observer.

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