COMPOSTING MANURES.

The compost heap is a good thing; but it is not what it is often represented to be. For instance, the MARYLAND FARMER, for November last, says editorially:

Wherever stock is housed, well fed, and kept in good condition through the winter, every ten cart loads of manure, saved as it should be with all its enriching salts, will convert twenty additional cart loads of rough fibrous material, woods, earth, &c., into a compost that will be equal, load for load, to the barnyard manure itself, and the properties of this compost will not be fugitive, but will assist greatly in the permanent renovation of soil. Here, then, are thirty loads of first rate manure made upon the farm out of every ten loads piled up in the barn-yard. There are few farms of a respectable size, where a reasonable quantity of stock is kept, that cannot turn out two hundred cart loads of manure annually, and this two hundred cart loads may be made six hundred by collecting an adequate quantity of materials for compost, and converting the whole by fermentation with barnyard manure into a fertilizer of the best quality.

We often see statements like the above published; but they are incorrect, because it is impossible to mix a load of stable manure with two loads of anything, but manure itself, and have the three loads of compost equal in fertilizing properties to stable manure, "load for load." It makes no difference who says it, "Dana's Muck Manual," or any other writer on manures, we say it is not possible.

The benefit, in fact, of composting manures, is to diffuse the fertilizing properties into a larger bulk, in order to render them better adapted to be taken up by the roots of vegetation. For instance, we may mix a barrel of hen manure with two barrels of soil, woods' earth, or muck from the swamp, and when the properties of the hen manure have become thoroughly diffused through the mixture, does any farmer of sound mind believe that these three barrels of compost are equal in fertility, barrel for barrel, to the one barrel of pure hen manure used? There would not be a particle of additional fertility, in consequence of mixing- nothing but the mere diffusing of the fertility of the hen manure among the compost. So it is with stable manure. Its virtues are spread, and the compost is in a better condition to supply plant food, than in a pure state.

Some writers seem to think that muck from swamps is a good fertilizer of itself; but it contains no more fertility, generally, than so much soil from any fertile field. When used alone, as manure in the hill for corn, potatoes, &c., it has showed very little good results, over no manure at all. It is a good absorbent; and that is about all that can be said in its favor. We should not consider it worth anything, to be carted over a half a mile.

The most profitable compost is that made in the barn-yard. The yard should be large, and hollow in the centre, with a clayey bottom, natural or artificial; and here let everything be carted, both in winter and summer, that is valuable to compost, to be mixed with the stable manure, and that dropped by cattle and sheep kept in the yard, and all mixed by the tramp of stock; and in the spring it may either be used on the land, or drawn out, and made into a long heap to further ferment, and destroy the seeds of weeds.

There is more fertility in manure applied to land in the spring, direct from the barn-yard, than when it is drawn out, and heaped up to remain till fall, or the next spring, as the ammonia will escape, more or less, though covered ever so well. Therefore, so far as fertility is concerned, it is better to use manure as soon after it is made as possible; but farmers may well ask the question, "is it not better to destroy the germination of all seeds of grasses and weeds, by letting our manure lie over one season, properly piled and protected?"

In summer a great deal of good compost material can be gathered, and spread in the barn-yard, where the cows should be kept at night, if for nothing more, but to save their manure. Tons of rank weeds on some farms may be cut, and drawn into the barn-yard; and other useless vegetation, which with the droppings of cows at night, will make a respectable quantity of good manure by the time winter sets in. Here ashes, lime, salt, &c., may be spread to advantage.

Ashes, leached or unleached, are valuable to almost every crop. Lime aids vegetable matter in decomposing, and otherwise benefits most soils, which PER SE cannot be said to be a fertilizer. Salt also benefits lands to some extent. A few barrels per acre, spread broad cast, where grain has been sown, before it is harrowed in, will generally increase the crop, more than equal to the cost of the salt, if a cheap, refuse article be purchased, which can sometimes be procured; and which is as good as the most costly quality for agricultural purposes.

Cheese Production.

The New York "Mercantile Journal" publishes in a recent number an interesting article on the subject of cheese production. It is estimated that there are in the United States and Canada, 1,000 factories, the average weekly production of which is equal to 117,250 boxes. The cheese made in the United States and Canada in 1867, reached 215,000,000, and in Great Britain 179,000,000 pounds. The consumption in America during the same period, amounted to 160,000,000, and in Great Britain to 400,000,000 lbs., leaving a deficiency over the joint production of the two countries of 79,000,000. This deficiency was supplied by Holland and Belgium. The principle States engaged in the manufacture of cheese in America, are New York, Vermont, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Ohio, Michigan, and Wisconsin. Western New York, the Western Reserve, and some sections of Illinois and Michigan, enjoy a deservedly high reputation for the excellent qualities of the products of their dairies. Gouda cheese, the best made in Holland, is very pungent, which preserves it from mites, and this pungency is attributed to the fact that muriatic acid is used in curdling the milk, instead of rennet. Parmesan cheese, made at Parma, in Italy, owes its rich flavor to the fine sweet herbage of the meadows along the Po, where the cows are pastured. The best Parmesan cheese is kept several years, and none is sold until it is at least six months' old. Swiss cheese is made in part of skim milk, and is flavored with fragrant herbs. They usually weigh from 40 to 60 lbs each, and are exported in casks, each of which contains ten cheese. Westphalia cheese derives its flavor from the curd being allowed to become sour before it is compressed. Dutch and Swiss cheese contain, according to chemical investigation, from twenty six to forty per cent. of nitrogen matter, considered the most nutritive constituent of food. The best cheese is from twenty-five to one hundred per cent. more nutritious than bread and meat, which contain only about twenty-two per cent. of nitrogen. The superior qualities of cheese have been repeatedly proved by the experience of laborers in those countries where it forms one of the principle articles of food.

HOW I FIXED MY WELL.

The well had been walled up with brick, some of which near the top had crumbled, and especially some of those in the upper course. The platform also had decayed some, and the consequence was that rats and mice had their run-ways here, and further, several mice had been dipped out with the bucket within a few nights. Sow bugs also kept falling in, at least they were dipped out, and knowing these facts, the water did not agree well with the stomach. Clearly the well must be fixed, and this is what I did to it; I took up four feet of the wall and relaid it with water lime mortar, of course discarding imperfect bricks; the well was next thoroughly cleaned by a man who was sent down; after this some of the same kind of mortar or cement was placed on the top of the wall, and the new platform pressed down upon it while it was yet soft. The platform of course had other support than the wall, the platform sills being half an inch higher than the upper surface of the last course of bricks; this half inch of space was filled, and most perfectly too, by the cement after the platform was in position. It was easy to make the curb set close to the platform, and now I think I have made a good thing of it. If any vermin get in now they must get in over the top of the curb, and that I believe they will almost never do, or they must burrow beneath the cement wall, and that, I feel sure, they will never do.

"The best way is cheapest," and if all wells were thus cemented when made, many subsequent cleanings out, and troubles with angel worms, mice, etc., would be avoided. Our water is good now, and I expect it to remain so.

IMPROVEMENT OF SEED WHEAT.

Hon. George Geddes, in an article on the "Culture of Wheat," in a recent number of the New York *Tribune*, gives the following suggestion on the improvement of wheat seed. The same remarks apply with equal force to other grain crops as well:

"I am no believer in the turning of wheat into cheese or any thing else; but I am a believer in clean land and entirely clean and sound seed, and thorough cultivation; and I believe that our wheat crops might be greatly improved in quality and increased in quantity by careful selection of seed. Let a farmer first determine the best variety for him to raise. At or before the time of threshing, set some sheaves on a floor, heads upwards, and then draw out the most perfect heads —those of the greatest length and the best filled —until he has enough to sow an acre. Put this selected seed on land in the best condition in every respect; weed the wheat the next spring. This acre should give him thirty or more bushels of seed for the next year. Out of this again draw the best heads, and sow an acre; and so go on for several years—the longer the better—and by-and-by he will have some seed wheat to sell that he may be willing to have bear his name, and will be a public benefactor."