

Agriculture.

The Benefits of Plaster Illustrated.

HOW TO ENRICH WORN OUT LAND.

From a Correspondent of the Michigan Farmer.

In the fall of 1860 I bought a piece of land on which was a field of six acres, bordering on a marsh; the six acres were oak opening land; a part was clay and a part was a gravelly, sandy soil. It had been cropped for over 20 years without manure, clover or plaster. At the time I bought, it would not produce over nine bushels of wheat to the acre under the treatment it had received from its former owner. In fact the land was supposed to be worn out.

In the spring of 1864, or as soon as the ground was settled, I sowed 50 pounds of plaster to the acre; by the middle of June there had a little grass started, which was not fed off but plowed under, to the depth of six or seven inches. The ground was well worked with a drag and cultivator. The 20th of September I sowed white Soules' wheat broadcast and dragged it in.

In the spring of 1865 I sowed 12 pounds of clover and 25 pounds of plaster to the acre; the wheat crop averaged twenty-five bushels to the acre.

In the spring of 1866 I sowed fifty pounds of plaster to the acre, as soon as the ground settled; mowed for hay; first crop was one and a half tons of hay per acre; second crop one ton per acre.

Spring of 1867 I sowed 50 pounds of plaster per acre as soon as the ground settled; mowed first crop for hay, one and a half tons per acre; second crop used for pasture.

Spring of 1868 sowed 50 pounds of plaster per acre; plowed well and planted even. Corn plastered on the hill and well cultivated; crop 80 bushels of ears to the acre; cultivated and sowed Treadwell wheat broadcast and dragged in.

Spring of 1869 sowed 25 pounds of plaster, 10 pounds of clover and 94 pounds of timothy seed per acre; wheat crop yielded 20 bushels per acre; wheat was badly shrunk.

Spring of 1870 sowed 40 pounds of plaster per acre as soon as the ground settled; cut two and one-fourth tons of hay per acre, first crop; second crop saved for seed, one and one-half tons of straw and one and one-half bushels of seed per acre.

Spring of 1871 sowed 50 pounds of plaster per acre as soon as the ground settled; cut two and one-half tons per acre first crop; second crop grew to full six inches and then was pastured off.

In 1872 treatment and crops same as in 1871.

Spring of 1873 sowed 50 pounds of plaster per acre as soon as ground settled; cut one and one-fourth tons of hay per acre; after hay was cut, plowed the ground for wheat, finishing before harvest; after harvest dragged and cultivated thoroughly; 28th day of September sowed Treadwell wheat with a drill.

Spring of 1874 sowed 25 pounds of plaster per acre, also clover seed, but it did not catch; harvested 30 bushels of wheat per acre. After allowing one-third of this crop for use of land, not counting straw, it cost me \$1 per bushel for labor, incidentals and drawing ten miles to market. Have not counted the cost of any other crop.

Spring of 1875 sowed fifty pounds of plaster per acre as soon as the ground settled; plowed and finished planting to corn the 28th day of May; corn was well tended but was not planted early enough; was cut by frost in the fall before it was ripe; harvested 90 bushels of ears per acre, with nearly one-half unsound. The hay and cornstalks have all been taken off the land and one half the wheat straw; the other one half has been eaten and wasted by cattle on the land.

No other manure of any kind except plaster; the plowing, dragging and cultivating has been thoroughly done in every instance; when a second crop of clover has been used for pasture, it has grown full size nearly and then fed off, but never fed close; this, with thorough tillage and the use of plaster, I claim to be the secret of success. What say you?

Let me urge every farmer to plant one-fourth of an acre, or more, of "sunflowers." The leaves are good for forage, green or dry; the seed for oil, horses, hogs and chickens. Plant and cultivate as you would corn.—*Cor. Ec.*

Hen Manure.

Twenty years ago, when our fields were more productive than now, I tried the experiment of manuring corn in the hill with hen manure, in this way:—To one wagon load of hen manure I put two loads of fresh sheep manure, and, when well mixed; two hands, with a basket between them, put a handful in each hill. A hand followed with a hoe, and covered the manure about two inches deep, and another followed with the planter, and the work was done. The manure was sufficient for a five-acre field. The corn came up in fine style, and when from two to three feet high had outgrown the corn of the neighborhood by one-half, and the prospect was fine. But when the tassels and ears began to appear, the growth came to a stand-still, as if the strength of the manure had been exhausted, and there was nothing left to complete the crop. The result was a stunted growth of stalk, and a five-acre field of half-filled nubbins—a complete failure. Comparatively few of the stalks put out brace roots, and none had the hardy, flinty surface that gives strength to the stalk. The plants looked too much as though they had grown in the shade and were not well rooted in the ground outside of the manure. It seems that plants of any kind, with a store of rich manure to live on, will grow finely with perhaps one-third of the roots that the same plants will send out when seeking their food through the soil, and these few roots will cluster in the manure and form a mass of fibers and feeders, but will not spread into the soil beyond it. It was the want of the necessary quantity of roots, rightly distributed through the soil, when the manure failed, that made a failure of the corn crop inevitable. But I have since learned to use hen manure with profit. Sow broadcast, when well powdered, so there shall be no accumulation anywhere, from a peck to a half bushel to the rod, and plow or harrow it in, especially for corn and potatoes. If applied to hills of corn do it after the plants are well rooted and a foot high, and hoe it in of cover it up; the brace roots will find it. If applied to potatoes in the hill at planting, a handful of small, watery potatoes, and a wisp of dead tops in August will be the result; but if sowed when the plants are well started, and worked in while plowing and hoeing, the result will be good.

Stick to the Farm.

A contributor to the *Germantown Telegraph* (H. G. Abbott) has the following to say in regard to the condition of the farmer and his prospects, in Maine:

The hard times, in my opinion, have been brought about by excessive extravagance in nearly every family, and the glowing advertisements to lure the young to run away from the farm and the trades, and all honorable pursuits, and look upon labor as dishonorable.

Those who have been able to survive the surf of this return tide, find themselves at the old farm again, but with less starch in their dickies than when they left. Many of this class are now wholly unfit for the honorable pursuits of life. But these times will set people back upon a firm bottom, and teach them to do with less and take upon themselves more.

The farming community of Maine are well to do; no suffering; they may take courage and apply themselves earnestly to their farms, and produce all they can, for they are sure of a sale at fair prices.

There never was so much encouragement for sheep husbandry as at the present time; good lambs sell in June and July for three and four dollars, and wool for forty cents a pound. Choice cows now sell for fifty and one hundred dollars at two years old; good horses at from two to five hundred dollars, and those that show speed have been sold for two and three thousand, according to the time they make. Hay sells for thirteen dollars a ton at the barn; oats sixty cents a bushel; potatoes from forty to forty-five; butter thirty to forty cents a pound. There is not much corn raised in Maine, but two bushels of potatoes will get one basket of corn, which is better than to raise the corn ourselves.

The Jersey now takes the lead here as a dairy cow, and sells for double the price, side by side with the Shorthorn. But this, however, does not apply to all sections of the State, as for stock purposes the larger breeds are preferable.

Let us now look at the market, in the way of exchange, for the farmer. Four years since a neighbor's wife told me that she always was satisfied when she could exchange one pound of butter for one yard of prints; butter then was twelve cents a pound, and prints twelve cents a yard.

Now see the difference in favor of the former, at present, when one pound of butter will bring in exchange eight yards of prints, which will make a woman's dress suitable to be worn on most occasions. Also, for one dozen of eggs you can get three yards of cotton cloth, or five yards of calico, or other goods in proportion.

Now, in looking over the productions of the farm, to say nothing of the small fruits and apples, and garden truck, which are very profitable in some locations, let me ask what has the farmer to complain of?

Alsike Clover.

On the occasion of a recent discussion at the New York Farmers' Club, a member answered some objections raised by a writer in Texas, as to the value of the Alsike, by saying that in a great many localities, especially in some of the Western States, the Alsike clover has been denounced as a complete failure. But judging from what he has seen, heard and read in agricultural papers, the failure of the Alsike is attributable chiefly to the injudicious management of inefficient farmers who have attempted to raise clover where no sort of clover could be coaxed to grow. One thing he knows concerning the Alsike is that it will flourish satisfactory on any soil which is in a medium state of fertility and which is not too wet to produce remunerative crops of cereal grain. Alsike will grow where any other clover can be raised. Kentucky blue grass will not flourish luxuriantly on any land that has not been kept in a state of fair fertility. If the land consists chiefly of dry, sandy loam, unless the surface is clayey, or muck-ed or well manured, Kentucky blue grass will make only a feeble and thin growth. There are thousands of acres of land in New England, New Jersey, New York and other States, which have been so badly impoverished by injudicious management, that the proprietors cannot get a quarter of a crop of Alsike or any other clover, nor half a crop of grass of any sort, except where the soil receives a generous dressing of manure. As to the reliability of dealers in seeds at St. Louis, New Orleans, Chicago, or any other cities at the West, as at the East, this member said that seeds of all sorts will often fail for the simple reason that the soil is in such an impoverished condition that there is no fertility in the land to promote the growth of seeds after they have appeared in the seed leaf. Persons having trouble in getting good seed in their own localities, by writing to the postmaster of any city, inclosing a stamped and directed envelope, with the request that their letter may be placed in the hands of some reliable dealer in seeds, can as a rule, he thought, have the ends supplied. He does not think the seeds raised at the East are any more likely to germinate than similar sorts produced at the West.

An objection being raised to this reply, on the ground that the member was unacquainted with the peculiarities of the soil of Texas, and therefore unable to judge if the clover will thrive well there, the member answered that wheat is grown in that region successfully, and consequently Alsike clover will succeed, for it thrives well on soil that produces cereals.—*W. F. Journal.*

Travelling Threshing Machines.

The travelling threshing machine seems to be indispensable just now, and yet it is the source of a great deal of vexation and trouble in farming operations. Very few farmers can afford to purchase and own a threshing machine for the sole purpose of threshing the amount of grain they alone grow, and they endure the infliction of a body of eight or ten men, and as many horses, for from one to fifteen days every year. The great evil, however, to which good farming is exposed by these travelling threshers is the carrying of foul seeds from place to place. There seems to be no means of averting this evil. If one farmer grows Canada thistle or red-root, the seeds are sure to be carried and deposited along the road sides and in the yards of other farmers by the threshing machines and clover hullers. The only remedy is for good, tidy farmers to club together and purchase such machines for their own use. The large, or what is termed the mammoth threshers, would not be needed, nor the cumbersome horse-powers that accompany such machines. As long as travelling machines are used from farm to farm they should be brushed and swept from top to bottom before moving from each station. This is the only precaution that can be taken to guard against the dissemination of foul seeds, except the plan above suggested.—*N. Y. Times.*