

Oiled Floors for Kitchens.

I have for several years followed the plan of oiling uncarpeted floors, in order to avoid the labour of scrubbing them, and I find it works well. You can either oil or paint them, of course, but I consider the oil preferable on the following grounds:

It is cheaper.

You can apply it yourself.

You have not to wait for it to dry.

It produces a pleasanter colour.

It does not show tracks of dust, mud, and such like, and then more, a floor thus prepared does not require frequent mopping.

The oiled floor is better than a plain one in the following particulars:

It looks better.

It does not require scrubbing, which saves your back.

It is never to be mopped in hot water or strong suds, which saves your hands.

Grease spots never hurt it, which saves your temper.

To prepare a floor, I take a quantity of the cheapest and least offensive oil I can secure, and apply it with a common paint brush. I put it on smoothly, so that it will strike in equally all over and not stand in spots on the surface. I do this at night, after the evening work is finished, and find the place ready for use the next morning. Of course, it would not injure the oil surface itself to tread upon it at once, but grease is liable to be tracked from it at first to adjacent parts of the house. A new coat of oil applied once in six months, or even once a year sometimes, is sufficient to keep a floor in perfect order.

One may thus prepare to great advantage the floors of kitchens, pantries, summer dining rooms, back halls, stairways and porticoes, closets, bath rooms and labourers' bed rooms. It is also a good plan in children's apartments, particularly when training them to do their own room work, to leave bare that end outside of the floor on which the bed stands, and oil it. That portion of floor under the bed can then easily be kept free from dust, the sweepings can be more readily removed, and the children will be afforded free scope for their duck-like style of ablutions, without danger to the carpet.—*Ec.*

TO SOFTEN HARD WATER. Long experience proves the following to be successful. "Put cold water to about four quarts of good hardwood ashes, and bring to a boil, then add more cold water and let it settle, pour this off and add still more cold water to the ashes—the result should be about a pailful of good lye, which strain and pour into a barrel of water; let it stand overnight, when there will be found a deposit in the bottom of the barrel, which should not be disturbed in dipping off the water. This water will be found to make a suds as readily as rain water (if it does not there is not sufficient lye), and does not injure the clothes in the least. If the lye is too strong it may make the hands a little tender, but that is the only inconvenience, and the strength can easily be regulated.—*Ec.*

Agricultural Intelligence.

Wheat Crops of the United States—1870.

OFFICIAL REPORT OF THE U. S. AGRICULTURAL BUREAU.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, }
Washington, June 17. }

The natural tendency of low prices to reduce the acreage of wheat has been apparent this year, though not to the extent threatened. I last year estimated the increase over 1868 at more than a million acres, making an aggregate of 19,098,000 acres. I figure a reduction this spring of more than 900,000 acres, or nearly 5 per cent. of last year's acreage. The reduction is greater in Illinois—15 per cent. in winter wheat, and 18 in spring wheat; Indiana, 6 per cent. in winter and 20 in spring; Ohio, 4 per cent. in winter and 7 in spring; Wisconsin and Iowa (spring mostly), each 8 per cent.; Missouri (winter), 7 per cent.; Minnesota, with an increasing population, while threatening to stop wheat growing, claims an increase of 2 per cent.; Kansas also claims an increase of 16 per cent.; and California a gain of 5 per cent.; West Virginia and Kentucky show a larger breadth; North Carolina alone in all the South claims increase, some of the Cotton States failing 20 per cent.; New York appears to have lost 4 per cent., and New England 2 per cent.

EXTENT OF WINTER-KILLING.

"Freezing out" has not been general or very serious in its results. The winter was mild, and comparatively uniform, during its earlier months especially. February and March, the most critical period for injury by freezing, were stormy and cool, with far more of snow than the preceding months, affording protection against the season's changes. In view of the general mildness and openness of the winter, from which severe winter-killing might naturally be expected, the exemption is striking. In many instances this exemption is evidently due to the use of the drill, which plants the grain more deeply and uniformly than the brush or harrow used in broadcast sowing. Abundant testimony has this spring been furnished to prove that the wheat drill is annually worth millions to the agriculture of this country. Draining has also been a means of preventing loss by freezing.

Whenever winter-killing has occurred it has been in isolated patches, not throughout the whole counties or broad belts of country; it has been due more to condition of soil than to extreme or frequent changes of temperature; it has been seen in stiff soils, in hollows where water stands on the surface, in half pulverized soils, and in fields where the seed was scattered upon the surface. Very few good farmers have occasion this spring to complain of the effects of frost; yet there has been some loss, considerable in the aggregate, as there is each year, but scarcely as much as the years will average.

In New England and Northern New York the loss from freezing was small—the most complaint coming from Windsor County, Vt., and from New Haven County, Conn. In New York, Chautauqua suffered most, and among other counties, Niagara, Warren, Steuben, Oneida, Alleghany, Madison, and Westchester report injuries. In New Jersey, Ocean, Morris and Union are most prominent. In Pennsylvania, wheat in many counties was injured slightly—none severely. In Clearfield, the surface was covered with snow

144 successive days. In Maryland the plant was killed in level clay soils, which were under-drained. In Virginia one-fifth was killed in Patrick, and less in Montgomery, Lancaster, Albemarle, Cumberland, Greene, Henry and Loudon. The Southern States, from California to Texas, have a small area, but it escaped winter-killing almost entirely. In North Carolina the plant started vigorously in nine-tenths of all the counties. In Tennessee, Dyer, Fayette and Green suffered most; and in Kentucky, Butler, Calloway, Carroll, McCracken, Gallatin. In Missouri, only one-fourth of stand is found in Lewis and Vernon. Taney and Howard have suffered. The belt between thirty-five and thirty-eight degrees, which rarely has much snow, and often presents a very bad stand of winter grain, shows fewer bare spots this year than usual. Kansas, in this zone, is this year almost entirely exempt from injury.

Among the great grain fields of the West the severest injury from winter-killing was in Illinois. Here, as elsewhere, early drilled wheat on carefully prepared, dry or drained soils, escaped injury. Among the counties in which winter-killing was more or less severe, involving a loss of 10 to 50 per cent. of the plants, are Wayne, St. Clair, Menard, Franklin (killed in prairie, but good in timber), Marion, Jackson, Henderson, Edwards, Peoria, Adams, Crawford, Tazewell, Kendall, Clay, Ellingham, Fulton, Macoupin, Perry, Tuscola, Knox, and Monroe. In a third of the counties of Indiana sufficient loss was sustained to reduce the general condition of wheat below the average. Fully half the counties in Ohio presented in early spring a less than average prospect, with some injury from freezing, in no case particularly severe. North and west of Illinois less than a tenth of the crop is of a winter variety, and that moiety was little injured by freezing. Michigan, an exception in its latitude on account of its insular position, cultivates a large proportion of winter wheat, and has not escaped injury from frost, especially in Montcalm, Barry, Hillsdale, Van Buren, Calhoun, Livingston and Oakland counties. In some counties snow furnished complete protection; in Emmet it was three feet deep on the 1st of April.

LATE SOWING.

The feebleness and unthrifty appearance of the plant, whenever apparent, has almost been universally attributed more to a late seeding than to any other cause. More than half the crop was sown or drilled later than usual. The severe drought in the Middle and Southern States, and the pressure of summer work delayed by the unpropitious spring in the West, together with the habit of delay from which farmers suffer as well as other men, postponed the breaking up of wheat lands; while the unusually early closing in of winter left the plant scarcely above the frozen surface, and in many instances not even visible.

PRESENT PROSPECTS.

The season has been moderately propitious as a whole, though not precisely as farmers would have it in many localities. There have been few showers and much sunshine, pushing the crop into early maturity, but promising a yield not equal to the thirteen or fourteen bushels per acre of last year, and scarcely equal to that of 1868, but with an average of thirteen bushels. In many places the prospect was never better. In some localities there is complaint of too little rain, and in others of too much. The rain-fall of May was quite small in New England, New York, generally throughout the West, and in the Cotton States. In the Atlantic States,