

**PREPARING SOIL FOR WHEAT.**

It is best, I am persuaded, to sow wheat rather late, but only on condition that the ground be well prepared. The point is, to get a growth at once rapid and continuous—this to ensure a sufficient coat for protection, and also for a start in the spring.

A dense growth in the fall, of all things, is desired of wheat. If sown early, there is a chance for too much growth—for a stalk to rise, which cannot be thought of. This is avoided by late sowing, however rich the ground may be. It can only form a dense covering—just what is wanted. Then, if there is a proper subsoil, good drainage, no fear need be entertained. Even a body of snow will only pack, not smother nor rot the mass, unless the fall of snow is unusually heavy and lies very late. Then there may be injury. It is remarkable how protective a thoroughly prepared soil is, the ground mellow and lively throughout if stirred, yet compact and sufficiently porous to bear off all superfluous water. Such soil is self-preservative, and will keep unhurt what is entrusted to its care. It will "weather all weathers."

It does not want to be very rich, as is too often recommended. It wants to be in condition, and have a sufficiency of clay and lime. Hence limestone soils are noted for their wheat properties. Clay will make compact, hugging and protecting the root, and giving it health, aided in this respect, no doubt by lime.

We are among those who deprecate the free use of manure on wheat, especially vegetable matter. This last makes the soil too loose. It seems also, not to be the most natural food for the plant. But it certainly aids it when harrowed in with the grain. It starts it, it helps it along, and prepares it for the importance of the season which is to follow. Its effect thus far will have been beneficial, while what may be objectionable will have less influence, the effect having gone into the young grain (which can then bear it,) and the rest is more or less distributed in the soil. Soon, as the season advances, it will almost entirely cease—unless very heavily applied, which would be wrong—and only the under-soil will do the work. If this under-soil is what it should be, all will be right. If there is, in addition, a sod rotted, there will be a further advantage, providing the poverty of the soil requires it. But we are among those who are shy of this kind of manure in the grains, especially wheat, oats and barley. Rust seems to be an accompaniment of sod turned down. This is our experience. But in a poor soil it becomes a necessity, or its equivalent, manure.

In all cases we prefer to trust to the mechanical condition of the soil chiefly, con-

sidering there is sufficient nutriment, with the addition of a top-dressing of some fertilizer, to start well the crop in the fall. By mechanical condition, we mean not only texture, so to speak, of the soil, but the influence of the elements upon the same, while being moved and thrown to the air. Frost, sun, rain, are the grand ameliorators, and particularly for wheat.

We prefer, therefore, to put our soil in the best possible condition, taking advantage of the old-fashioned summer fallow, selecting clayey and limestone soil as much as may be and employing clay and lime where lacking, if practicable. Let this be worked, prepared; if poor, manure added—long, unfermented manure. Such used to be the practice in the older days, and with the best success. Much less good was the success without it.

But when the soil is already good, this is not necessary, as it is only done (summer fallowing) to get the ground in condition. Plow once. That is the true doctrine for much of our stubble soil, if in good heart and condition. Top-dress or not, as circumstances require. Judgment must be exercised here, as it is a waste and a hurt to use much manure indiscriminately. It is seldom a waste in small quantities, as a top dressing.

Where soil is rather loose and light, as is often the case, and wheat is wanted to be sown, the roller and the harrow should be employed—anything to make more solid. Clay in such case added, would be just the thing, but may not be practicable.

We like the trampling of horses, and the pressure of the roller and harrow, on light spongy soil. We like them on almost any soil for wheat.

The point is, compactness, (soil with the feel and weight of sand,) porosity, late sowing, with thrift at the surface. Then, if there is strength enough, a good sub-soil and good drainage, no more is needed, save that the seed be put in drills on a clean soil.

F. G.

**A CRACK IN A HOG TROUGH.**

The following from a recent number of the *Prairie Farmer* is almost equal to Franklin's story of the whistle:

A few days ago a friend sent me word that, every day, he gave nearly twenty pails of buttermilk to a lot of "shoats," and they scarcely improved at all. Thinks I, this is a breed of hogs worth seeing. They must be of the sheet-iron kind. So I called on him, heard him repeat the mournful story, and then visited the sty, in order to get a better view of the miraculous swine. I went into the pen, and, on close examination, found a crack in the trough through which most of the contents ran away under the floor. Thinks I, here is the type of the failures of our agricultural brethren.

When I see a farmer omitting all improvements

because of a little cost, selling all his farm stock, to buy bank or railroad stock or mortgage stock, robbing his land, while, in reality, he is also robbing himself, and his heir, thinks I, my friend, you have a crack in your hog trough.

When I see a farmer subscribing for a half dozen political and miscellaneous papers, and spending all his leisure time in reading them, while he don't read a single agricultural or horticultural journal, thinks I to myself, poor man, you have got a large and wide crack in your hog trough.

When I see a farmer attending all the political conventions, and coming down liberally with the "dust" on all caucus conventions, and knowing every man in the town that votes his ticket, and yet, to save his neck, couldn't tell who is President of his County Agricultural Society, or where the fair was held last year, I "unanimously" come to the conclusion that the poor soul has got a crack in his hog trough.

When I see a farmer buying guano, but wasting ashes and hen manure, trying all sorts of experiments except intelligent hard work and economy, getting the choicest of seeds regardless of cost, and then planting them regardless of cultivation, growing the variety of fruit called Sour Tart Seedling, and sweetening it with sugar, pound for pound, keeping the front fields rich while the back lots are growing up with thistles, briars and elders, contributing to the Choctaw Indian fund and never give a cent to any agricultural society; such a man, I will give a written guarantee, has got a crack in his hog trough, and in his head also.

When I see a farmer allowing loose boards all over his yard, fences down, hinges off the gate, manure in the barn-yard, I come to the conclusion that he has got a large crack in his hog trough.

When I see a farmer spending his time traveling in a carriage, when he has to sell all his corn to pay the hired help, and his hogs are so lean that they have to lean against the fence to squeal, I rather lean to the conclusion that somebody that stays at home will have a lien on the farm, and that some day the bottom will come, entirely out of his hog trough.

A large trade in the importation of wheat from California is going on at New York. Eighty-nine vessels are said to be on their way from San Francisco to that city at present, loaded with cargoes of wheat, aggregating about five millions of bushels.

A new variety of corn, the result of selecting seed and of high culture, has originated in Minnesota. The yield last year was as high as 127 bushels to the acre.

If one only pause now and then in life's "forced march," to count the numbers who have wearied by the way, of those who brushed with him the morning dew, he feels a sort of terror lest he finish his journey a stranger and alone.

To-day man lives in pleasure, wealth and pride,  
To-morrow poor, of life itself denied.