

CHAPTER XVII.

SOILS AND MINERAL FERTILIZERS.

AMONG the varied resources of Canada none is of greater importance than her fertile soil, the direct support of more than half of the population. Nor is there need of any excuse for introducing here a short chapter on soils, for the connection between geology and agriculture is of the closest character, though it is unfortunately too seldom recognized. The origin and distribution of soils; the cause of their fertility; the source and proper use of minerals to restore the necessary losses incurred in cropping, are questions of a geological character of the first importance to the progressive farmer. To the student, also, the transformation from the hard and barren rock to the loose and fertile soil is of exceeding interest. The uses of rocks in their original, living state are not to be compared with their value to man after old age has overtaken them and death and decay have reduced them to dust. This finely divided rock material, constituting the superficial portion of the earth's crust, is known as soil. It is composed chiefly of very variable mixtures of clay and sand, with considerable proportions of vegetable matter and iron oxid.