

## GYPSUM AND PLASTER.

*To the Editor of the Agriculturist.*

SIR,—Although the time for the sowing of gypsum or plaster is, for this year at least, past, pardon my inappropriate application for the solution of a question concerning its real utility,—a question which has not, to my knowledge at least, been satisfactorily answered in any of your issues.—*Does plaster materially enhance the fertility of the soil, or does it act as an exhauster by overtaxing its energies.* I am aware there is a class of individuals who positively assert that farming, conducted without the aid of plaster, is perfect madness; and I am also aware that there is another class who tell us that they have used plaster from year to year without deriving any sensible benefit therefrom. So, Mr. Editor, if you would take the matter in hand, and give us a scientific and chemical solution of the question by examining into the nature of the substance, I think you will give satisfaction to both parties, at least, you will set the question at rest, so far as regards its intrinsic value.

Yours, truly,

Scarboro', June 19th, 1857.

JOHN JACQUES, C. S. F.

REMARKS.—We have frequently given our views on the subject above referred to. Our correspondent desires us to undertake a scientific or *chemical* solution of the question. We would remind him that Davy, Liebig, Johnston, and many other distinguished practical chemists have very thoroughly investigated the nature, composition and action of gypsum upon plants, and upon the soil. All that science can do has probably been done to solve the question, still, we must not limit discovery on this subject, or any other. Experiments carefully made and often repeated, must clear up any doubts or difficulties which the chemists laboratory has failed to remove. We have no faith in the formula, analyses, or dicta of amateur chemists in regard to soils, plants, gases, minerals, &c. There is no branch of chemistry which requires greater skill, knowledge, and patient labor to eliminate truth, than that which undertakes to explain the laws of vegetation, the constituents of soils, and the action of manurial substances. There are probably not a dozen men on this continent capable of making an accurate quantitative and qualitative analysis of any given soil. As we make no pretensions to *practical* skill in this matter, we regret that we shall be under the necessity of declining the suggestions of our esteemed correspondent. We are compelled to refer him to the "books," where he will find far more reliable information than any non-professional investigator will be able to afford him.

Plaster will not benefit all soils alike. This fact was soon ascertained, and it is only another proof that the exercise of judgment and skill is necessary in every agricultural process, if we would avoid disappointment and loss. If, for instance, any soil contains naturally an abundance of lime, we should not expect plaster, which is one of the compounds of lime, to produce much effect. So much chemical knowledge as this every farmer ought to possess. We have used plaster upon clay-loam and light soils, with the most decided advantage to the first and second crop; and as the roots of the clover and other grasses were both larger and more numerous than they