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OLD SERIES]

Nec aranearum sane textus ideo melior, quia ex se fila gignunt, nec noster vilior quia ex alienis libamus ut apes.

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From the New England Farmer.
PLASTER, OR GYPSUM.

Many cultivators have expressed great surprise that gypsum, or plaster of Paris, should operate favorably as a manure on a piece of land for a number of years, and then cease to have any effect. But we do not regard this as at all surprising, for in the first place, we must consider that the soil is deficient in the elements of which plaster is composed, else it would not operate as a fertiliser, or a stimulant; and by applying it for several years this deficiency is supplied, and further applications cease to produce any beneficial effect.

As plaster is composed of Sulphate of lime, or a combination of sulphur and lime, these ingredients may be taken up into the plants, as they constitute a part of most plants, though a small part; and this may account for a small quantity of plaster producing so powerful effects in the production of crops. For although the amount of lime and sulphur is generally very small in plants, yet that small amount is absolutely necessary in their composition.

When the soil has become saturated, or sufficiently supplied with plaster, and no further applications are made for several years, the plaster may become used up, in some measure, either by cultivated crops, or the spontaneous production of weeds, grasses, bushes, &c.; and then a new application may again prove to be beneficial. Or plaster may have a valuable effect on the soil, in preparing to supply food for plants, and after a few years this favorable effect may cease until a further chemical change takes place in the soil, which may after a while become a slow process, so that years will pass away before plaster will again act as a manure.

We have in nature a great many analogous cases. Sand may be added to a clayey soil until there is sand enough, and it ceases to be useful; but after a long course of cropping with corn, herds-grass, red-top and small grains, a large amount of silex or sand is taken up in solution, and a new addition of sand would be beneficial. An animal may be in great want of salt, or some other condiment, and it may be given until it is no longer useful. After a while, the condition of the animal may require another supply. Those remarks may explain some of the facts offered in the following interesting article from the Dollar Newspaper:

GYPSUM AND CLOVER.—For the last 17 years, my attention has, to some extent, been directed to the peculiarity of the different soils of this and the adjoining counties of Maryland much attention has been bestowed on the various modes of improving the soil, more particularly by the use of clover and plaster of Paris. This having been the favorite system for the last 20 years, and indeed long before that time, no other course was considered at all reasonable. I well recollect of seeing in nearly every part of our country the most luxuriant fields of clover, rising at least two feet or more from the surface of the land, therefore furnishing the soil with a most splendid covering, sufficient, when ploughed under to enrich the soil, to make it produce the finest growth of cotton, corn, wheat, or tobacco. Since the time first alluded to, there has been a very general complaint that our lands were not half so valuable as they were first supposed to be, in consequence of our fields not possessing the capacity of yielding their former crops of clover.—One man asks another why this should be so. What has done all this mischief? And, strange to say, no two individuals can agree. Well, now, as we have neither the Ural Mountains of Russia, nor the mountains of New Mexico or California to resort to, to enrich our soils, let us be content to use such means as may be within our power to effect this most desirable object.

It is a fact not to be questioned, that land which once produced fine crops of clover when accompanied with gypsum

or plaster, will now scarcely produce any; at least will not when clover and plaster have been regularly used for 7 or 8 years. Now, my principal object is to learn, why is all this? Is the land tired of cultivation? Or is it that the gypsum is adulterated, and its properties useless to the application of clover? I think not. I believe too much has been infused into the earth. I cannot suppose the clover can in any way be detrimental to the soil. It must be the bad effects of the plaster; for who doubts for a moment that its effects are various, and these principles which have been discovered by which its influence has been traced?—Some salutary correction is needed: but what that remedy is I am at a loss to conjecture. He alone who is familiar with chemistry, and can analyze the soil can point out the constituents necessary to correct the evil. There is, to my mind, a most mysterious agency in plaster as well as lime, and he who can explain it is a benefactor. Can its advantages or disadvantages be owing to the chemical character of the soil, or the kind and quality of vegetation thereon produced? We not unfrequently complain that the land is worthless, it is exhausted; and verily we cannot explain what we mean. For myself, I plead ignorance. I will state, however, a few circumstances which have come under my personal observation. I discontinued the use of gypsum on my clover-land for nearly five years, believing when I again commenced its use, that the best results would accompany the experiment; and so they turned out. My most sanguine expectations have been more than realised.

I sowed this season, (1848,) 40 bushels of clover seed, and the most competent judges have affirmed that it has never fallen to their lot to witness a more luxuriant crop of young clover, the greater part of which is very unusual.—The entire field was well plastered, and when a row happened to escape the action of the plaster, the clover was small and puny. Now, I will venture a prediction should plaster be regularly applied, say for the next five years, that this very land will not produce clover sufficient to make even good grazing. It must now be admitted that I have opened a wide and extended field of inquiry, on a subject which is entitled to at least some consideration from an intelligent agricultural community, without attempting to explain the properties of the mineral mostly used or without any attempt at analysis of the different soils we have to cultivate, for the best reason—my experience in a theoretical point of view does not justify it. What I have obtained has been from long experience, certainly not from theory. What we require is science, fully developed through chemistry; and not till then can the occupation of the farmer rise to that elevated position so necessary for him to occupy, and which it should be his object to acquire.

From the Canada Farmer and Mechanic.
SIMPLE CURE FOR COUGH IN HORSES.

Two years ago, says a correspondent of the Albany Cultivator, one of my carriage horses had an extremely bad cough, which had continued for six or eight months. Different applications were made, without effect. I applied to a man who I knew dealt in horses, and had paid some attention to their diseases, for a remedy. He at once told me that he had never found anything so effectual for a bad cough as human urine, given a few times, by discharging into a bucket of water, and letting them drink it, or on their food and eat it. I directed my driver to do so, and in one week the horse was completely relieved. I have frequently had it tried, with the same good effect.

Remarks by the Editor of the New England Farmer.—We had a horse long afflicted with a severe cough, though several medicines were given but without effect. We then kept him wholly on sheep's orts, some of which were taken up from the manure, where they were covered several inches deep, from feeding under shelter in stormy weather the usu-

al mode being to feed on the snow.—These orts from the manure were eaten in preference to good hay, and the horse soon recovered. The orts had absorbed the urine of the sheep; they had also imbibed the qualities of the dung, which has powerful medicinal effects, particularly in the measles.

From the Western Cultivator.

PLANK FLOORS FOR HORSES.

Why are elevated plank floors in stables injurious to horses feet?

1st. Because they deprive the hoof of receiving certain assistance, which they require for their well being, and which in a state of nature they receive by moisture. The hoofs of horses are a horny, elastic, porous substance, capable of receiving moisture, which is indispensably necessary to their well being. In a natural state they receive it, and in a domesticated state they might, if men would hearken to the mandates of nature. The evils of domestication to the horse are recognised by many intelligent observers and admirers of the horse. In proportion as we vary in our treatment to the horse from his natural way of living, in the same ratio do disease and lameness exist. 'Tis a solemn fact—start not at the idea—that the diseases of horses are induced by the deeds of men. Candid observation will prove the truth of this assertion. The horse's natural floor, the earth, is the best and only suitable floor for him: on that, his hoofs receive requisite moisture: on plank floors they do not. Why? Because it is not there. The plank floors are generally (always I believe, when they are made fashionable) made higher at the fore part than the hind part; consequently, what little moisture there may be from the dung or urine, is drawn away from the fore feet; the effect is, the horse becomes lame in the fore feet, hoof-bound, narrow-heeled, &c., while the hind feet remain sound and healthy. Why? Because the hind feet receive moisture from the dung, urine, &c., when the fore feet fail to receive it. It will be found, upon examination, that nine tenths of the horses that are lame, are so in the fore feet; stage, carriage, road, and hackney horses, that are stabled all the time, (except when in use,) are generally the subjects of such lameness. A majority of writers and farriers acknowledge and deplore the prevalence of lameness in the fore feet; and it is easier to cut a knot than untie it. They say that bad shoeing is the cause of all this lameness. So blind are they to the cause and effect, that they appear to me to know not what they say. They have got the boot on the wrong leg, and I will show it. Blacksmiths are like other men; they have their failings, and may perhaps lame horses occasionally; but because of this, must they bear the blame of all other men's misdeeds? No, no; they should not, nor will not, if we would only seek for the true cause of all this lameness. I am a blacksmith; I stand good for the defence of myself and brethren when falsely accused. The same causes produce the same effects. Horses that are kept up are generally shod all round by the same men and in the same manner. Well, now, if bad shoeing lames the fore feet, why will it not lame the hind ones in the same manner?—Tell us why, you fault-finders who falsely accuse horse-shoers, or else desist; look at the effects of your own bad management, niceness, and false philosophy, and you will find that your dry plank floors are the cause of so much lameness, and not bad shoeing.

2d. Another evil, attendant upon making the stalls higher at the front, is, that it compels a horse to stand in an unnatural position, which is certainly improper, when a horse stands in such a manner, the muscles and arteries of the hind legs are kept constantly on the stretch, frequently producing windgalls, &c. These ideas, if true, may suggest the idea of level stable floors, and of the importance of moisture to the hoof, which may be imparted by washing, daily, the legs of the horse with water, that must of necessity be kept in the stable.

From the Albany Cultivator.

IMPROVED PICKET FENCE.

In many sections of our country the scarcity of fencing timber is beginning to be severely felt, which makes it necessary to economise our materials to the best advantage.

I am building a field picket fence, on a plan which, for ornament, cheapness and durability, and the facility with which it may be removed, where the farmer wishes to alter the lines of his fields, may be well recommended in preference to any other wood fence—requiring only half the number of posts necessary for the common board fence.

In the first place two benches are prepared, about three feet high, and placed about eight feet apart, for the purpose of supporting the scantling, while the pickets are being nailed on. Two scantling, sawed two inches by four, twelve or thirteen feet long, are then laid on the benches, where should be fixtures to keep them to their places. A scantling is also laid on for the upper end of the pickets to rest against while nailing, in order to bring them in line. The pickets are then nailed on with ten-penny nails, two nails to each picket, projecting over the scantling, above and below, about eight inches; the pickets to be sawed in the mill, from three to four inches wide, and then cut across into three lengths, if the stripes are twelve or thirteen feet long, and for field fence nailed on with a spacing board of five or six inches.

The posts are then, if for wet land, well sharpened and driven down with a mallet. A five-quarter hole is then bored through the post, at a suitable height from the ground for the underside of the upper scantling, and a pin of white oak, or other suitable timber, is driven through the post, having a head or projection at the end, on the upper side, sufficient to hold the lapped ends of the lengths as they meet on the posts. The lengths of fence prepared as aforesaid are then taken up, and with a six inch lap, hung or laid on the pins, and a stone rolled against the fence, or a short stake driven down, is sufficient to confine the bottom. In dry ground the posts should be slightly sharpened, and set in the usual way.

The advantages of this fence over the common board fence are obvious. Posts in all moist lands are subject to be raised by frost—some more and some less. In the spring the boards are found more or less split, and the nails broken, without the possibility of replacing the posts by driving them down; but should the posts of a fence built on the above plan become raised, they can, in the spring, while the ground is soft, be very easily driven down, as the weight of the fence only rests on the pins above described. If the posts should decay, and rot off by the ground, they may be replaced by new ones, while the lengths of fence if constructed of oak, hemlock, or chesnut, will last good from fifteen to twenty years.—A length is easily removed for the purpose of passing a team, and as easily replaced again.

It must prove a light and convenient fence for swamps and marshy grounds, also for river flats, which are subject to be swept by floods in the spring. The lengths being light, may be taken off the hooks in the fall, and be deposited on a bank in a place of safety, and readily replaced after the spring freshets. The pickets may be nailed on, and the lengths prepared before they are taken to the field, and iron hooks may be substituted for wood to great profit. The farmer who procures his material, and erects his first fifty lengths of the improved picket fence, will not, if he studies economy, very soon be seen making old-fashioned board fences.

DAVID SILL.

North Argyle, N. Y., March, 1849.

TO KEEP STEEL PLOUGHS FROM RUSTING.—Take a little good lime, and make whitewash; cover the bright steel or iron with it, and put it under cover, where the rain will not wash it off, and not a particle of rust will be found.