

Farmers' Column.



Give fools their gold & knives their power. Let fortune's bubbles rise and fall; Who sows a field or trains a flower, Or plants a tree, is more than all.

Late Fall Plowing for Wire Worms.

The term Wire-worm properly belongs to the long, slender, and uncommonly hard larvae of the Elaters—the spring, or click beetles. These, when placed on their backs, suddenly spring several inches into the air, with a clicking sound. The largest of these beetles is about two inches in length, and has two large, round spots upon the upper side of the body, which are often mistaken for eyes. Its surface is covered with a whitish powder. It is frequently found on the trunks and branches of old apple trees during the months of June and July, and from its larger size, peculiar eye spots, and strange manner of springing, it is often mistaken for novices for a new species of bug. The larva is about two and a half inches long, has very strong jaws, and burrows in decaying wood of old apple trees. There are several other smaller species of spring beetles, some of them conspicuous only by the injury they do to cultivated plants.—Those wire worms which live in the soil and feed upon young roots and stems, are the most destructive. So far as their history is known, they live from three to four years. Their injury to the potato, though perhaps no greater than to some other crops, is often ruinous. Indian corn and the grasses sometimes suffer greatly. It is not easily reached with any poison, and the leading remedy is frequent plowing. Wire worms are generally confounded with the cut worms, and in destructiveness may be considered the same. The mature state of the cut worm being a moth, it is easily distinguished from the "click," or a spring beetle. Another group of worms is also often spoken of as cut worms, but the members are myriapods, with many ring like divisions to the long bodies, each of which is provided with two pairs of legs. These, sometimes called the thousand legged worms, are of a dark brown color, and when disturbed coil into a ring. They do not pass from one state to another, like ordinary insects. Some of these false wire worms feed upon the roots of cultivated plants, and do much damage. They may be caught by placing slices of potato, or turnip, upon the surface of the soil. The white grub is also associated with the wire worms in its manner of living, and needs the same treatment. All of these subterranean pests have their natural enemies, the chief among which are the birds.—Late fall plowing is doubly beneficial, as it turns the worms out of their winter quarters, and exposes them to the freezing weather, and also brings them within easy reach of insect-eating birds.—American Agriculturist.

Digging Muck and Peat.

A dry fall often furnishes the best time in the whole circle of the year for procuring the needed supply of muck or peat for absorbents in the sty and stable. The use of this article is on the increase among those farmers who have faithfully tried it, and are seeking to make the most of home resources of fertilizers. Some who have used muck only in the raw state, have probably abandoned it, but this does not impeach its value. All that is claimed for it in "Dana's Muck Manual," published several years ago, has been proved substantially correct, by the practice of thousands of our most intelligent cultivators, in all parts of the land. There is considerable difference in its value, depending somewhat upon the vegetable growth of which it is mainly composed, but almost any of it, if exposed to the atmosphere a year before use, will pay abundantly for digging. This dried article, kept under cover, should be constantly in the stables, in the sties and sinks, and in the compost heaps. So long as there is the smell of ammonia from the stables or manure heaps you need more of this absorbent.—Hundreds of dollars are wasted on many a farm, every year, for want of some absorbent to catch this volatile and most valuable constituent of manure. In some sections it is abundant within short distance of the barn.—The most difficult part of supplying this absorbent is the digging. In a dry fall the water has evaporated from the swamps, so that the peat bed can be excavated to a depth of four or five feet at a single digging. Oftentimes ditching, for the sake of surface draining, will give the needed supply of absorbents. It will prove a safe investment to hire extra labor for the enlargement of the muck bank. It helps just where our farming is weakest—in the manufacture of fertilizers. It is a good article not only for compost with stable manure, but to mix with other fertilizers, as butcher's offal, night soil, kainite, ashes, bone dust, fish, rock weed, kelp and other marine products. Dig the muck now and have it ready.—American Agriculturist.

Jack Richards on the Mule.

"You ask me how high a mule can kick? Don't tempt me, stranger—I did not see it do, but they showed me an old grizzly gray mule in San Antonio that won a bet by kicking a martin box clean off from the gable end of a church.

"I owned a sudden kicker once myself. I sold him to a doctor at Parker Hollow.

"When he took the kinks all out of his mortal coil, I think he could hit a man on the opposite side of the street, but, stranger, mind, I never see him do it.

"Hold a shoe, you ask me! Until that ain't nothing left on the bottom of his foot but iron rust.

"Sam Denver told me he had a roan mule that came from Sierra Nevada, in '67 that had worn the same iron for thirteen years, but, stranger, Sam Denver was a man who, when he told the truth, allowed a good deal of shrinkage, and told things large.

"They carry their age well, you say? You can bury your coin, the whole of it, on this statement, stranger.—Whenever you can tell the age of a salt codfish by counting the bones in his body, you can guess at a mule's existence here on earth by his teeth.

"After a mule has lived eight seasons he never grows any older, not by his teeth.

"Bones are all solid, did you say? This is just as certain as sixteen ounces make a pound. And they never rise, you say? You are close to the bull's eye again, stranger. I have been mixed up with the mule for thirty six years and never saw one yet lay down flat and pull his last breath. A dead mule would scare me as much as the ghost of my grandfather.

"Stumble did you observe? Not if I know the critter. They will slip down the grade as natural as a snake, and when they put their foot down they take it up from the same spot. Stranger, a mule is just as sure with his front feet as his hind ones, and if a man should tell me that he had seen a mule kick a man, ten feet off twice in a second, I wouldn't ask the man to swear to it. I would look upon him as a man of genius—a man of keen observation.

"Balky sometimes are you talking? Now you are getting right down to figures. Balky! I have heard tell of mules which would balk when they were being led to water, and of a pair that belonged to a ranchman near Yuba Dam who balked to an empty wagon, and stood right there from sun up till sun set. The shadow of the wagon was photographed onto the side of the road and could be plainly seen there for six weeks afterwards. I heard this told when I was down to Yuba, but, stranger, I don't back up the announcement only for a limited amount.

"Run away, did you say? Did you never saw a mule, or a pair of them, get skinned and broke for timber?—A mule did, stranger? Then your education has been neglected.

"There ain't nothing but a stroke of lightning or a rifle-ball that can soothe a runaway mule.

"Hitch a pair of mules to the corner of a church, git a good scare on the mules, and you couldn't see that church for the dust it would make going down the pike.

"Stranger, understand me, I have never seen a pair of mules run away with a church, out I don't care what your bet is, Jack Richards always backs the mule.

"Free from disease of all kinds, is it? Well, I reckon so. I have saw a hundred thousand mules in my days, but never saw one yet who had a lameness of any kind. I have heard of mule drivers say they had often had mules attacked by grizzleys, and had all one side of the mules eaten off, but the mules would grow right out again in a few weeks as fresh as ever, perhaps a different color on that side. Stranger, things are getting a little hot with me, and if I should, under the excitement of the moment, offer to bet on the above statement, I should, upon reflection, beg the privilege of drawing the stakes.

"What the Barometer Knows About Weather.

Higher barometer means that the mercury is rising, and lower that it is falling.

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A lower barometer indicates an expanding atmosphere, with greater capacity for holding moisture.

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