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AGRICULTURAL.



From the American Farmer.

EXPERIMENTS IN THE USE OF GUANO.

We take especial pleasure in publishing the following interesting experiments in the use of Guano with, and without, plaster, by Mr. Thomas E. Blount, of Burleigh, Sussex County, Va. They have been evidently made with accuracy, and with the single desire of arriving at proper results. With these results we are perfectly satisfied—may be delighted, for, so far as they have proceeded, they go to vindicate the great principle for which we have been contending for years.

BURLEIGH, Sussex Co., Va.
Nov. 13, 1851.

To the Editor of the American Farmer,

Dear Sir—The following question—Whether the combination of Guano and Plaster improved the former as a fertilizer of the soil, or whether the "fixed salt," Sulphate of Ammonia, produced by the combination, is an "insoluble one"—has been fully discussed and a good deal of practical matter brought to bear on the subject; yet the agricultural mind appears undecided—which indecision might be removed if the facts in existence were brought to light, and the question at issue thereby speedily determined. Correct reports are sadly wanting—how to obtain them is a question as difficult to solve as that under consideration. Farmers—practical agriculturists—are extremely diffident, and claim to have a great aversion to seeing their names in public print; too large a number are ready to write over anonymous signatures, but these are not wanting. Such contributions leave not that deep impression on the mind that correct reports should make, and if the contributions contain nothing but "the truth—the whole truth," why should they be ashamed to affix thereto their true signatures. Hundreds of farmers in Virginia and Maryland, made liberal use of Guano on their wheat crops in the fall of 1850, and on their spring and summer crops the present year, and doubtless, in numerous instances, it was employed in combination with Plaster. These crops have all been gathered, hoisted, or sold—the action of the Guano, used alone, compared with the action of Guano combined with Plaster, and yet the important question at issue remains undetermined for the want of correct practical reports. Shall the urgent appeals so often reiterated be in vain? There are facts in existence, I am convinced, that would determine this question. Brethren of the plow, let us have them— withhold them no longer. I venture to affirm that the pages of the American Farmer are open for your reports; this is truly an important subject; thousands of dollars are annually laid out for this very active manure—Guano—and large quantities of Plaster are purchased to combine with it. Undoubtedly then, it is the part of wisdom to learn the most judicious mode of application. This information can alone be obtained through faithful reports from those who employ it liberally. Therefore, for your own sakes, et pro bono publico, you should speedily cast in your mites.

With deep interest I have read the many contributions on the question at issue, published in your journal of agriculture, pro et contra, and as I informed you in my letter dated July 6th, had instituted experiments on the Cotton crop, also on a small lot of pumpkins and water melons; the two latter was a perfect failure, owing to the severe drought experienced during the summer months. These experiments were made to satisfy my own mind on this important question in agriculture. Yet, I am not fully assured of the most judicious mode of applying Guano—but I have

“a very particular leaning” to the combination of Guano and Plaster in equal quantities. The experiments made on the cotton crop were (as remarked in my letter of July) on two distinct species of soil, which I shall designate in this report Lot No. 1, clay mould, Lot No. 2, light sandy soil (excellent cotton land, but too poor at present.) Neither soil was analyzed, consequently their component parts are unknown to me. Both lots were broken up early in April (average depth of furrow eight inches) and well harrowed—allowed to remain in this state, in order to settle until the 8th of May, when the drills were laid off about seven inches in depth, for the reception of the manure. Twenty rows were selected through the centre of each lot for the experiments.

Lot No. 1—Clay Mould—5 rows, stable manure, Ashes and Plaster.
“ 5 rows, 23 lbs. Guano.
“ 5 rows, 25 lbs. Guano and 25 of Plaster.
“ 5 rows, 25 lbs. Guano and 5 of Plaster.

The portion of this lot selected for this experiment was identically alike as regards quality and texture of soil, so far as the eye can determine without an analysis—and in order to be as accurate as possible, the Guano and Plaster were weighed separately for each row, and as fast as drilled covered with the single turn-plow, forming the cotton ridges, the cultivation the same throughout the lot; an accurate account was kept of the number of pounds of cotton picked from each of the five rows, which I now copy from my “farm recorder.”

5 rows, 28 perches, stable manure, ashes and plaster, Sept. 15th, 31 lbs.; 30th, 72 lbs.; Oct. 14th, 44 lbs.; Oct. 29th, 20 lbs.—total of pounds, 167.
5 rows, 28 perches, Guano, 25 lbs.; Sept. 15th, 34 lbs.; 30th, 79 lbs.; Oct. 14th, 55 lbs.; 29th, 12 lbs.—total of pounds, 160.

5 rows, 28 perches, Guano, 25 lbs., Plaster, 25 lbs.; Sept. 15th, 33 lbs.; 30th, 65 lbs.; Oct. 14th, 40 lbs.; 29th, 20 lbs.—total of pounds, 158.

5 rows, 28 perches, Guano, 25 lbs.; Plaster, 5 lbs.; Sept. 15th, 34 lbs.; 30th, 64 lbs.; Oct. 14th, 36 lbs.; 29th, 18 lbs.—total of pounds, 152

On lot No. 2—Sandy Soil—I cannot give a correct report, as I was absent from home when the first picking was made, but will remark, that if there was any difference in the twenty rows selected, it was not discernible throughout the season in the growth or opening of the crop. The quantity of Guano and Plaster applied was the same to the row as that used on lot No. 1.

What inferences shall we draw from the experiments detailed above? First, it is conclusively shown that the salt produced—Sulphate of Ammonia—by the combination of Guano and Plaster, is not an “insoluble salt,” for its action is nearly equal to that of Guano alone—and if Plaster is acknowledged to be a “fixer” of ammonia, or to exert a “conservative influence on Guano,” then it must be acknowledged that when the combination takes place, a more lasting, if not a more (present) powerful manure is thereby produced—but enough of this. Let the experiment speak for itself, and your readers draw their own inferences, for “little boats should keep in shallow waters.”

It has been asserted by the “knowing ones” with peculiar confidence, in the different agricultural journals, “that if Guano and any species of seed were placed in contact, that the vitality of said seed would be certainly destroyed.” This is untrue, in every instance; for I have wheat now growing, seeded early in October, that was soaked some four hours in strong brine, taken out and rolled immediately in Peruvian Guano, seeded and ploughed in immediately. I have seeded seven acres in this way; putting one bushel of wheat to the acre, rolled respectively in 200, 180, 150, 125 pounds of Guano to the bushel. P. H. Goodloe, Esq. of Albemarle, Va. states in the Oct. number of the Southern Planter, that in the fall of 1850, he used Guano in this way on a part of his wheat crop—the wheat was made perfectly wet, and mixed with Guano, at the rates of a bushel and a half of wheat to two hundred pounds of Guano, and this quantity applied to one acre. We only mixed as fast as the seedman used it, as we were apprehensive the wheat would be injured if allowed to remain but a short time in a bulk of damp Guano. The wheat treated thus, grew beside wheat on land where the Guano was ploughed in and unmixed with the seed—he says, “there was no very perceptible difference—all came up equally well,

and grew off most luxuriantly.” The editor of the Planter, F. G. Ruffin, Esq., remarks—“Having seen Mr. Goodloe’s crop at several stages of its growth, we can testify that there was no difference in the appearance of the different parcels.” This is strong evidence against Guano destroying the vitality of seed—and upon the strength of it we tried the experiment with one acre of wheat, which came up in a few days so beautifully, that six more acres were seeded down in the same way. As yet we have no cause of complaint. There are many advantages in applying Guano in this way—it is more regularly distributed on the land—is not carried off by every breeze, and my word for it, the seedsman will make you a “low bow” at the end of the day’s labor, as it saves him many a “weary step,” as both wheat and Guano is sown on one operation.

Truly yours,
THOS. E. BLOUNT.

From the Working Farmer.

Good Old Fashions.

How often do we hear of “the good old fashions!” and when the adage is applied to communities who have become less moral, less economical, and less patriotic, we too can grieve for the loss of “the good old fashions.”

But when we hear the saying applied to the perpetuation of ignorance despite well established light, it seems to us to be as much misapplied, as to say, good old milk, or good old butter, despite the acidity of the one or the rancidity of the other. We should not be surprised to hear some self-constituted sage of a farmer object to having a good old mortgage paid off from his profitless farm, the interest on which had accumulated from his inertness. Why do not these wisacres for good old things, continue to use the good old wooden mould-board plow? Their grandfathers thrived by it, and why not they? Simply because the grandchildren of some of their grandfather’s neighbors have seen fit to use “good new iron plows,” and with them can do more work at less cost with less personal labor.

It is true that we have fanatics in agriculture as well as in politics or religion, but still all the farms are not in possession of such men; and some who are not fanatics have raised large crops at small cost, and not by “the good old way,” but by improved methods which have been tested by many and proved to have merit beyond the former methods—but still we hear “the good old way” trumpeted as an argument against the use of any improvement. My father, says one, was a good farmer, and I recollect he told me forty years ago, that four inches was deep enough to plow, and he was an experienced man—he had then farmed for fifty years. Say to that individual that forty thousand farmers have since decided otherwise after careful experiment, and he will simply answer that he thinks his father knew as well as any of them, leaving you to infer that he knew as well as all of them, and he rather thinks he will follow “the good old way.” Tell such a farmer that five bushels of bonedust properly prepared will raise more turnips than ten loads of stable manure, and at a cost of less than the cartage of the manure, and he will tell you that he prefers to raise his turnips with dung. The turnip crop of England having been doubled both in quantity and quality by the use of super-phosphate of lime, is no argument with him.

Many farmers have never yet used lime on soils requiring it, while others who had enterprising fathers, and who made themselves rich by the use of lime when the soil required it, has left a son who ruins the farm by continuing to apply lime long after it has ceased to be needed, and he on being told that the lime has used up all the vegetable matter in the soil, and that he must renew it by applying muck, coolly answers that to apply lime is “the good old fashion,” and he thinks his father knew, when he taught him to do it. Why do not such farmers use good old style shoes, six inches long, such as they used when they were boys? Why make all the changes consequent upon age, and treat their farms as if nature had stood still since their boyhood? We have some farmers, and some legislators too, who hug the good old fashions too closely for the interest of themselves and the community;—we have editors too, whose files record antiquated processes averaging ten years behind the times, but we also have farmers, legislators, and editors, who are willing to resign old fashions as rapidly as they become convinced of the superiority of new fashions,

preparing themselves to judge of their merits by the facilities afforded by study. We recollect hearing once of an old fashioned salt dealer who smuggled a cargo of salt on shore on the east end of Long Island, after the duty had been taken off, and brought it to New York in wagons. Probably this was an old fashion of his, which has since been altered by others. What is the average crop of corn per acre in the United States? Do not more than ten thousand farmers raise double the average crop raised on similar soils to their own, by superior culture? Do they follow the old fashion to do it, or do they adopt some improved method, and if so, is not ten thousand a sufficient number to authorize some one old style farmer to alter his plan? Not always, for like fishermen on a bridge who throw their lines in the very spot the last fish was caught from, they move west where the large crop was raised, sooner than render their own farms capable of doing the same thing, at an expense scarcely greater than their traveling expenses in looking for a new farm.

These are not dreams, but truths; there are now thousands of farmers who will not believe a truth after it is printed, and do not take an agricultural paper nor read an agricultural book. It is a sorry truth that not one farmer in ten throughout the country read anything on politics, and trust to papers for an understanding of the whole science of government, but not for the science of farming.

Why do not these admirers of good old fashions in agriculture, prefer doctors, lawyers and divines who never read anything but politics? Any of these pursuits may be as easily followed properly without reading as farming, still none of the old fashion phalax would employ them if unread in their separate studies.

Let us beg of our readers who are philanthropic, to give a small portion of their time to those of their good old fashioned neighbors who do not read, and induce them to attend Farmers’ Clubs, and if practicable to read. Every increase of crop adds to the general property of the nation, and it is a duty we owe to our common country to advance her best interests. We do not write for profit, as all those who ever published an agricultural paper and paid their bills must have discovered, but we do write under the hope of exciting many engaged in farming to improve their methods, and this can only be done by our readers acting for us with their non-reading neighbors. Help us, we pray you; help yourselves and advance the common good of all.

A Peculiarly Favored Pursuit.—The pursuit of agriculture, in all its branches, offers to a liberal mind, opportunities for research and experiments, which is denied in almost every other department of science. The perfection to which all other professions and sciences have arrived, leave nothing to the follower of them at the present day, but study and toil, in acquiring a knowledge of the discoveries and inventions of others. By some accidental circumstance, like that which revealed to Newton’s mind the eternal law of gravitation, some new discovery in astronomy may yet be made; but to the devotee of science who starts with the determination of laboring till he discovers some new principle by which the heavenly bodies are governed, there is little to be anticipated for the reward of this enthusiastic toil, but disappointment and sorrow at last; while the same labor and investigation bestowed on subjects connected with the culture of the soil, would probably have revealed some fact unknown before, or at least might have gone far to arrange and classify the discordant facts with which the annals of agriculture abound. While the rules that govern the planetary system have been recorded with the most scientific exactness, so that every star, and every star’s motion is known and recorded; the laws that rule the productive powers of the soil, and a knowledge of which seems the first and most natural tendency of the human mind, have been but dimly and obscurely traced. Upon what does the claim of agriculture, to be considered an exact science rest? The answer is, upon a thousand contradictory facts and opinions handed down from the earliest period of history, and augmented till the present day, so that they now form a heterogeneous mass, which requires and invites the study and attention of scientific minds to separate truth from error. Let the laws that govern the soil and its powers be observed—let every fact received as a canon, be subjected to the test of philosophy and exact experiment, and at last be classified

and arranged, and then we may boast of having brought agriculture to the rank of a science.

GREEN OLD AGE—“Plant Trees.”—This appeal is frequently made to the young man, that he may be enabled to partake of their fruits; but how many who are between two and three score years regard their prospect so small of eating the fruits of trees set at that age of life that they leave the work for others. But such is not the feeling of every one, as we have a noble instance before us. One of our estimable citizens recently received four russet apples, fine specimens of the product of a tree in the garden of John McClintock, Esq., in this city. A billet in Mr. M.’s handwriting, we understand, accompanied the present, which stated that “these apples are the product of a tree which I planted when I was eighty-five years of age.”

Here is an example which will encourage even extreme old age still to plant trees. How do we know that life is not sometimes prolonged by the interests taken in such matters?

Mr. McClintock is now in his ninety-first year, is the naval officer of the port of Portsmouth, is regular in attendance on the duties of his office, and in full enjoyment of all his faculties. He may yet hope to partake the fruit of the trees he may this year have planted.

Providence Journal.

LITTER, AND LIQUID MANURES.

LITTER is, in many ways, indispensable to the farmer; it is indispensable to the health and comfort of his stock, by affording them good warm beds in winter, and maintaining them in a proper degree of cleanliness. Again, as regards the formation of manure, it is of the utmost importance; it not only moderates the activity that in pure dung is too great for some soils, but it renders the hauling and spreading of the manure much easier.

Those vegetable substances most generally used as litter are straw, leaves, weeds, &c. But straw is usually preferred, as it is a better absorbent of the liquids, and is more readily decomposed.

The value of manure diminishes in proportion to the quantity of litter employed after we reach a certain point; but still it is best to use it with a liberal hand.

Urine is the most valuable portion of manure, and should always be saved with the utmost care. It should never be applied in a pure state, as its great activity would be hurtful to vegetation.—*Ibid.*

CULTIVATION OF THE SWEET POTATO.—When the season is sufficiently long to mature them, the potato may be most conveniently planted by cutting the seed into slips, and laying them six or eight inches apart in the place where they are to mature. Large potatoes divided into pieces of a proper size, are better for seed than small ones uncut. These should be covered about two inches with light mould. When they begin to sprout, the plow may be run close to the rows on either side, to remove the earth and allow the full benefit of the sun and air to the roots, and as the plant advances in its growth, the earth may be gradually restored to them by the plow and hoe. Where the vines are so large as to be injured by the plow, the hoe alone should be used. The hill or drills may then be made broadly around the plants, hollowing towards them, to afford a full bed of rich, mellow earth, and to retain the rain which falls. They are fit for gathering when the vines are dead.

When the season is short or early potatoes are wanted, plant on a hot bed, made of warm manure, with a covering of four inches of fine mould. After splitting the potatoes, place them on this and cover with three inches of light earth. As the sprouts appear, draw and transplant after a rain, in the same manner as before suggested with the roots. When early vegetated, a bushel of seed will, in this manner, supply plants for an acre.

The preservation of the sweet potato through the winter is often difficult. A careful seclusion from air and light, and the absence of frost, and absolute dryness seem to be essential to their preservation. They are frequently kept, by piling in heaps on dry earth, which are still more secure with a layer beneath of corn stalks or dry pine boughs, six or eight inches deep. On this, pack the roots in piles six feet in diameter. Cover with corn stalks and dry earth, and protect this with a roof of boards, and a ditch deep enough to carry off all water.

There must be a hole at the top, slightly stopped with straw, to permit the escape of heated air, and to preserve uniformity of temperature. There are numerous varieties of the sweet potato, white, red, yellow, &c. They yield from 200 to 300 bushels per acre, and under favorable circumstances, sometimes double this quantity.

Allen’s American Farm Book.

Venice.

A foreign correspondent of the New York Commercial Advertiser, gives an interesting description of this ancient and world-renowned city, from which we extract the following facts:

“Venice contains 28,000 houses, and is built on 72 little islands, united by bridges. In the ducal library I saw a chart of these islands as they appeared before the foundation of the city, and they were so small that they looked like eggs floating in the water.

The canals of Venice would be fatal to drunken men; after every holiday it would be necessary to fish for their bodies.

Venice is connected with the main land by a bridge of stone, two miles and four hundred and sixteen yards in length, containing two hundred and twenty-two arches. The soil of the bottom of the lagoon, where it is built, is entirely mud. The foundation is formed with piles, driven into the bed of the lagoon; 80,000 larch piles were used in the foundation, and in the bridge itself twenty-one millions of brick, and 176,437 cubic feet of Istrian stone. The work cost \$933,330, and was built expressly for the new railroad from Padua and Verona which daily traverses it.

The undertakers of Venice are dressed in scarlet, and the massive candlesticks used on funeral occasions are painted scarlet. The pharmacists, like the hotels, have generally some style or title. One pharmacy I noticed styled “Pharmacy of the Six Lilies,” with a corresponding number of lilies painted over the door.

In this intricate city, a stranger is liable to become bewildered and go astray; to obviate this, a white marble streak is placed in the walks and bridges so that if it be followed it will conduct from all quarters to the square of Saint Mark, which is in the heart of the place. This answers the same purpose as the string spoken of in the laboratory of Rosamond.

The censorship of the press is, as might be expected, very arbitrary. A teacher, preparing a class book for his pupils, was very desirous of introducing the great sentiment of Aleeus, so beautifully represented by Sir William Jones. The censors corrected it by crossing out fifteen lines of the twenty, so that when published it stood thus:

What constitutes a state?
[three lines omitted.]
Men, high-minded men—
[three lines omitted.]
Men who their duties know,
But know their rights, and knowing
dare maintain,
[two lines omitted.]
These constitute a state.
[three last lines omitted.]

The wonder is, that they permitted such a piece to be published, even in a mutilated form. The same author prepared a liberal article on the growth and prospects of the United States, which experienced a similar fate.

The images, in statue form, of our Saviour, are so much kissed in the churches and in the street, that the toes, and sometimes half of the feet, are kissed off. In the church of the Frari, after the service of the mass, as the priest was retiring from the vestry, some little children ran after him, touched the hem of his garment with their hands, and then kissed them.

The castle system of the feudal ages still prevails in Venice. If you call at a house and pull the bell, you are asked by somebody from an upper story window what you wish. If your answer is satisfactory, the door is opened. If you wish merely to leave a card, or note, a small basket is let down by a string to receive it.

A Hotel 62 feet by 32, with four stacks of chimneys, and furniture undisturbed, was moved a mile and a quarter in nine minutes, on the Spring-Quarter in Worcester Railroad, a few days since. The road had a double track and two platform cars were put on one track and two on the other, and the house placed on them by means of rollers, and by means of the locomotive, rapidly removed to its new place.