

THE PRAIRIE FARMER

A WEEKLY JOURNAL OF THE FARM ORCHARD AND FIRESIDE

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"FARMERS, WRITE FOR YOUR PAPER."

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MAKING WASTE PLACES GLAD.

There was a time in the West when land was so cheap, crops were so abundant and prices were so low, that it seemed to make little difference whether the soil was occupied by valuable plants or not. There were thousands of unenclosed acres where stock could range at will and from which they could be secured for keeping them over the winter. What mattered it in those old days if there were patches here and there too wet to be plowed or to produce sweet and nutritious grass? The corn cribs and granaries were filled if there were gravelly knolls that produced nothing and whose earth was never disturbed except by ground squirrels. There might be gullies wearing away hill sides, and hazel bushes encroaching on the plow land, but as nearly every man had more acres than he could till, and most farmers raised more grain than they could sell; why not let the water run as it pleased and the bushes extend their roots as they liked? There was a plenty of everything except money, if only the best soil was plowed and only the thickest of the grain was gathered. But a few years have changed all this. The West is fast becoming a densely populated region of country. If taxes are true indications, land is becoming valuable. We do not have to ride on horseback three or four miles to hunt up the cattle that are pastured on the open prairie; we no longer cut our hay on government land or on unenclosed sections belonging to speculators. Indeed, in the dairy region, farmers are talking of soiling cattle instead of pasturing them; and are raising the question whether it is not best to winter cows on cultivated crops instead of on hay. In spite of railroad charges and warehouse frauds, grain brings a fair price, and there is a market at our doors for all that can be raised. All these things tell us that there should be no waste places on the farm; that every bog hole should be drained; every brush patch grubbed out; every barren spot be made productive. Even on our best farms there are in the aggregate many unproductive acres, or acres that only produce half what they might if slight pains were taken to improve their condition.

An old maxim says "an idle brain is the devil's workshop," and with equal truth it may be said a neglected spot of land is the bane of good farming. Enough weeds will grow in a single fence corner to seed a forty acre lot. There is bare soil enough in nearly every pasture, where five cows are kept, to raise sufficient grass to keep one more. This state of things may be remedied if a little attention is given to the matter. The month of March is perhaps the best time to look after these waste places in the pasture. On every spot where the sod has been broken by the tread of animals, the passage of wheels, or by other causes, grass seed should be sown as soon as the melting snow renders the bare places visible. Advantage should be taken of the peculiarity of each portion of pasture land, to sow on it the seed most likely to flourish there. Red top should be scattered on the lower portions, and white clover on those that are high. Mosses and sorrel may be in a measure eradicated by going over the ground with a harrow as soon as the frost is out, and then scattering grass seed.

In many fields and meadows there are places nearly barren because the soil is almost exclusively composed of sand or stiff clay. If these substances can be mixed, a productive and friable soil will be the result. In many cases it is comparatively easy to do this. A scraper may often be used to advantage, to bring sand from a hill or knoll on to a piece of stiff clay. Even if a cart has to be called into requisition it will often be found economical to use it, since a load of clay can be brought back to the place from which the sand was taken. The reward for this labor may not be gained the first season, as it would be in the case of carting manure, but the benefit would be a lasting one as compared with the advantage of applying barn yard manure. And it may be remarked that this is the only way in which such soils can be permanently benefited. The amount of labor may look large, but the good results may be seen for a life time, and no farmer wishes to have unproductive acres on his estate for the full length of time he is to occupy it.

On many farms there are unsightly, unproductive strips of land between the cultivated fields and fences; that at the end where the team comes out is often irregular in its width. These portions of land yield nothing valuable to the farmer, but are ordinarily nurseries of weeds whose seeds are scattered over the adjoining fields. As a means of preventing this as well as of making these strips of land productive, it would be well to turn a head furrow at a sufficient distance from the fence to afford room for the team to turn, and to allow two or more swaths of hay to be cut.

LEGISLATIVE FARMERS' CLUB.

At the meeting of this club, held at the State Agricultural Society Rooms, Springfield, Tuesday, Feb. 14th, the chairman of the executive committee, Mr. Whiting, reported the following as subjects to be discussed:

Laws in reference to the following subjects (chapters in Revised Statutes): Animals running at Large; Dogs; Texas Cattle; Cruelty to Animals; Canada Thistles; and other Noxious Weeds; Drainage and Levelling; Fees and Salaries; Preservation of Game and Fish; Preservation of Singing and other Useful Birds; Homestead Exemption, &c.; Inclosures—Common Field Fences, Hedges, Division Fences; Surveys of Boundaries of Lands, &c.; Marks and Brands; Revenue—How Assessments shall be made, and how Personal Property Reached; Railroads—Fencing Noxious Weeds on Railroad Lands; Roads—Manner of Laying Out, Method of Working and Repairs; Public Schools; Township and County Organization; Trespass on Timber; Taxes—When to be Collected; Warehouses; Weights and Measures.

The following resolution was offered by the chairman of the executive committee, and adopted:

Resolved, That the President appoint some members to open debate by speaking on the proposed question, and each speaker be allowed fifteen minutes, and all others shall be restricted to five minutes each, and no one allowed to speak more than once, until all have spoken who desire to do so.

Resolved, That the President shall hold every speaker to the subject under consideration.

The subject of stock running at large was taken up and discussed for only a short time by Messrs. Morgan, of Warren, and Mr. Briscoe, of Clarke. A bill for an act for a general stock law was read, but no action taken on it. Mr. Morse moved that in view of the fact that the subject of fees and salaries would come up in the House in a day or two, that we take up that subject and postpone the stock discussion on Stock Law for the present. The convention agreed so to do.

Every member spoke in favor of leaving the salaries of supreme and circuit judges as the new constitution provides. The subject will be continued, as to other state and county officers, on the next evening.

D. B. GILLHAM.

JERUSALEM ARTICHOKE FOR SWINE.

During the last two years I have seen in THE PRAIRIE FARMER many valuable suggestions in regard to the summer feeding of swine; but in my judgment the best method has not been mentioned. The Jerusalem artichoke, in this State, forms a large tuber (those of over a pound in weight being nothing unusual), is wonderfully productive, very nutritious and is well liked by the hogs, even in a raw state.

I planted a few last year to raise seed for this season; and in digging them I found that they had taken entire possession of the ground, so that I had to dig up all the ground between the rows as well as between the hills, and the largest and finest tubers were found deep down in the compact sub-soil where the plow had never reached.

Here I am reminded of the only objection (so called) that I have ever heard urged against the artichoke; which is, that if they once get into a piece of ground they never can be eradicated. This, instead of being a valid objection, is really one of the strongest arguments in favor of its use for the purpose under consideration.

I think that in seeding hog pastures to the artichoke, a division fence should be run through the middle so that one-half could rest each alternate year and not be disturbed during the growing season. Enough, in any event, would be left in the ground for seed, but in this way the tubers would have a better chance to mature.

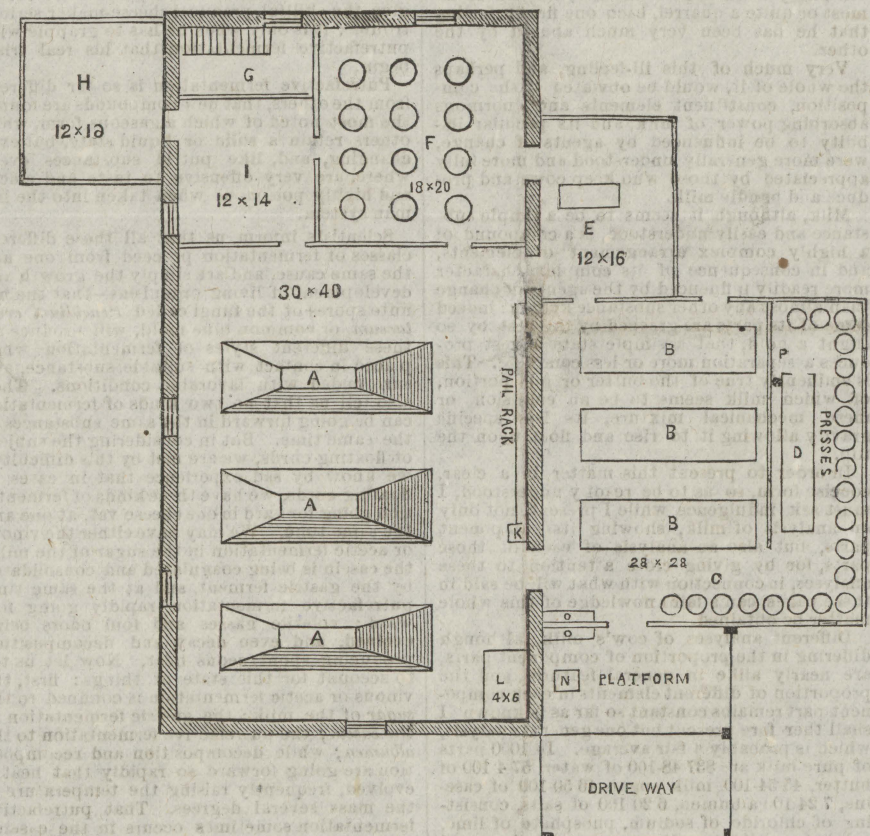
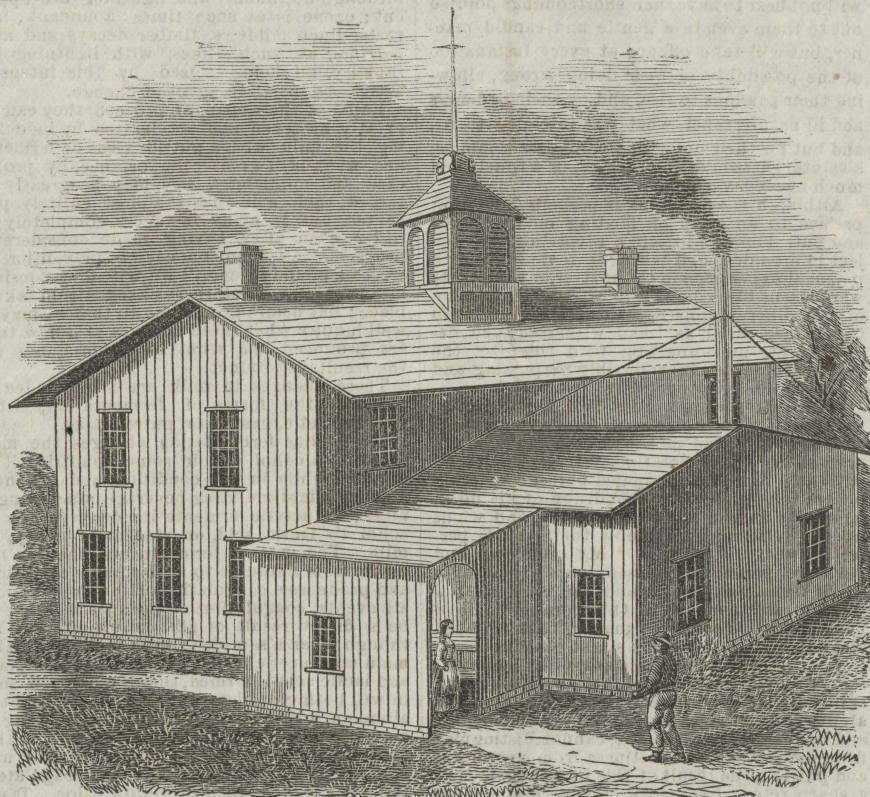
In selecting a piece of ground for hog pasture (if intended to be planted with artichokes) it will be best to take a rich, moist soil, though they will grow in any soil that is suitable for potatoes. Having made the selection with due care and forethought, let that piece be dedicated forever to the artichoke, when it will be seen that the impossibility of its eradication becomes its highest recommendation, for no further labor will ever be required in planting, cultivating or digging; the swine will have plenty of the best of summer food, and they will cultivate it and dig it themselves.

J. W. D.

WAKARUSA, KAN., Feb. 13, 1871.

WHEN TO SELL PRODUCE.

An article written with a very high estimation of the superiority of the writer's opinion over those of others, and a contempt for the opinion and prediction of the farmer,



PLAN OF COMBINED BUTTER AND CHEESE FACTORY.
Awarded Simmons' Prize, \$25, by Northwestern Dairymen's Association at Meeting at Elgin in January.

relative to the time when he shall dispose of his produce to the best advantage, lately appeared in THE FARMER. I consider the article not only a reflection upon, but an insult to the intelligence of every farmer. The writer's language conveys the idea that the farmer is ignorant, has no right to form an opinion of his own, and that from his position he cannot predict the relative value of produce between the present and future; but must yield up his judgment to that of the speculator, whom he says is always posted.

F. G.'s first sentence reads as follows: "Farmers are apt to prophesy as to prices in future; there is perhaps not one that can plead exemption from the vaticination." Now as prophecy and vaticination are synonymous terms, will the gentleman explain whether he intended the above sentence to have sense.

The next sentence contains the following astounding answer, I suppose, to the first, viz: "Now what does this show very clearly on the face? It shows that men are aspiring to what they do not know and cannot get." Then again: "Now the farmer cannot know. If the speculator himself is at a loss and generally 'breaks,' what are we to expect of the less informed farmer—much more of the ignorant farmer—and this includes a very large class of prophesiers." Well, friend FARMER, I shan't quote any more—I am really getting ashamed of myself for being a farmer. I have a great mind to turn "intelligent speculator." Although as an ignorant farmer I am not advised to prophesy, well then, I "vaticinate" that F. G. is one of those "intelligent speculators" who is "posted," whose business it is to be "posted," who generally "breaks" or at least loses a great deal of wind minding other people's business. If I had been guided by the speculator's advice as F. G. advises, I should have sold 800 bushels of wheat for \$480—now I can have \$880. So much for my prediction.

I have always "predicted" that wheat could not be raised for less than one dollar per bushel, and when I could not get that I kept it till I could, and have never failed in that "vaticination." I have also been of the opinion, too, that it is in the farmer's interest to take THE PRAIRIE FARMER and keep himself posted just as well as the speculator, and especially to be posted against the speculator.

C. D.

TREATING LAND FOR GRASS.

A few weeks ago we came along where an old farmer had just finished plowing a lot. It was very mellow, and a great broad compost heap stood, or rather lay, heavy, in the center of the field.

Having occasion to pass that way a few days ago, we saw a most gratifying change; the manure heap had disappeared, and the lot instead of being a nice yellow, was now of a dark rich hue, reminding us of the river flats of the Mohawk valley. Pains were taken to distribute all evenly, so as to get it in close contact with the soil—"get it to be soil"—our opinion exactly.

"What use will you have for this lot in the spring?" we asked.

"I shall sow barley on it in March, or as early as the ground will let me, if it is in February."

"As early as that? But the snows and the frost—there will sometimes be severe weather at that time in this latitude (43 degrees), and there generally is."

"My ground is dry and mealy, and the manure also helps keep it warm. Besides, barley is a grain that must be sown early to do well, to get out of the way of the drought, and to yield a bright straw and a good berry. Such straw, if the grain is cut early and well taken care of, is equal to good hay—I say good hay, not the best. Then you have a chance to sow your grass seed and clover early; and barley will favor its growth. The manure will be sure to help it

as well as the barley, so that at about mid-summer you have a growth of clover knee deep. This I feed down somewhat, and then let lie till spring. There are sure to follow two crops and heavy timothy the year after. This little manure—not more than ten loads to the acre—has a wonderful effect. This it has always. These hills are made, as you see, to do this; you have little manure, but you have it at the right place, where the grain roots, but most where the seeding is to make its growth, giving you a turf on the top like this that we are standing on, only two years old at that; but what manure it will make, turn it down. You want your land, if ever, in good order when you put it to grass and clover; you want deep mellow soil below for the clover, and it will not come amiss for the grass which thickens and deepens down in its roots."

"Is this your mode of treatment for grass, always?"

"I always, or for many years, have treated my land for grass like this. I find it a sure thing; I feed the barley, and sometimes sell it. I find it a most excellent feed for all purposes; and the straw is as good as hay, as I cut early and cure when yet a little green. Stock seems to thrive upon it, especially when you add a little of the grain."

F. G.

RURAL HOMES.

The pioneer generally puts up his first rude dwelling in great haste, intending it to remain only a few years. The imperfections of stick chimneys and log houses should not be severely criticised, as suitable materials for a good house are often hard to get, and the means to buy them very limited; but the owner of many broad, fertile acres, if a good manager, soon feels able to build a larger and more permanent residence. Each member of the family sets to studying and planning. They naturally look at all the houses in the neighborhood and think of others they have seen, call in some mechanic of their acquaintance and agree upon a plan which most likely shows very little originality of design. It may be convenient, economical and tasty, but the chances are otherwise. Certain fashions prevail in limited portions of country. This is shown in the cornice, pitch of roof, size and shape of windows, materials used, color of paint, size and arrangement of rooms. For example, in Chicago and its suburbs, the cheaper houses are stuck up, from two to six feet, on cedar posts. The part above the posts is covered with clapboards. The part about the posts is surrounded by upright boards painted of a color different from the main building. Steps outside lead to the rooms above. This style probably arose from a desire to prevent cottages from appearing too low; and to get the main floor up from the wet ground, once so prevalent in the city. This is still the style, even where the ground is dry enough for a deep cellar and a substantial wall of bricks or stones. The common color of country houses is monotonous—white with green blinds. The remedy for this is to give more thought and observation to rural homes; read the best works on such subjects and introduce something of the kind into schools and seminaries and colleges. The attempt to beautify country houses and their surroundings is the rule and not the exception. The point to get at is, to derive the greatest benefit from the smallest outlay. Study the effect produced by white-washed trees, painted bowlders, green stakes, frames and trellis work for sustaining green plants, large upturned stumps in small yards. Compare in plan and detail, a residence and its surroundings which pleases almost everybody, with one of equal or greater cost which is not so pleasing. Where lies the failure of one, where the success of the other. A small yard may have too many flowers in it, a large one not enough. Trees and shrubs are the cheapest ornament; perennial herbs cheaper than annuals. Many of our native trees and shrubs are preferable to those from distant countries. Too often, people think a tree is not worth a place in their yard—that it is not pretty because it is abundant in their own country. A little money judiciously expended for cheap clothing that is well fitted and well made, will produce a better effect than twice or three times the amount for expensive clothing not well selected. So a little labor upon a house and yard in just the right place, will produce a pleasing effect; while a greater outlay without good judgment, often produces an ill effect. The shrewdest men have long since discovered that no money pays a better interest than that used by skillful hands in making home pleasant. If you wish to sell a place it is sure to pay more than twenty per cent. on the investment; if you want it for a permanent home

who dare say it pays less? More attention to this subject is one of the greatest wants of our thrifty Western farmers. W. J. B.

CO-OPERATIVE STORES.

As co-operative stores are organized on different plans and for various purposes, it is quite essential to have, as nearly as possible, a distinct idea of the objects to be attained, and the plan of operation, before engaging in the practical details of such business.

Having had, formerly, some experience in the management of a union store, which was established for the purpose of supplying the members and others with merchandise at as near wholesale prices as possible, and which successfully answered the purpose, I will offer a few suggestions in answer to the inquiry in regard to such stores in your issue of the 11th inst.

To organize a union store, get eight or ten good men interested, draw up an article of agreement, naming the society, designating officers, their terms of service and duties, amount of capital and its division into shares, manner of voting, disposition of stock in case of death or displeasure of a member, and final winding up at expiration of the proposed time. It is well to begin with a limited number and with limited capital, and increase in both as the members become better acquainted with the practical workings of the business. Choose three good men who are willing and ready to devote a little time for the benefit of others, as directors, with entire control of the business during their term of office. They should rent a room, employ a competent clerk, decide as to amount and kind of goods, &c.

As it is an essential point to gain the confidence of the public, goods should be sold at a uniform per cent. on cost—cost and selling price both being marked in plain figures on them. If it is desired to increase the number of members and the capital, give stockholders an advantage of three to five per cent. over outsiders. Take account of stock annually, paying dividends in cash if desired.

If properly managed, in a few years, membership and capital can be safely increased and the amount per share lessened. In fact, the whole neighborhood will eventually take stock if the benefits are apparent and shares moderate.

The object of an association of this kind should not be to make money, but to save it, by getting goods at wholesale instead of retail, but enough should be realized on sales to pay all expenses and leave a margin besides.

It is true opposition will be met with from merchants in the vicinity, but the wholesale dealer always welcomes the cash. No goods should be taken into a store of this kind and none taken out until paid for.

Modifications of this rule may be deemed necessary, but will certainly endanger the success and stability of a co-operative store. Much might be said on this and kindred subjects. In fact, much for the future of the laboring classes depends upon co-operation.

ROCKFORD, ILL., Feb. 13, 1871. J. ANDREWS.

WHITE WILLOW.

In your issue of 14th inst. you say: "This willow will not make a good hedge which will turn stock."

Let me answer Frank Lomis, of Nebraska, thus:

The white willow is a tree and does not bear dwarfing, and is not, therefore, technically speaking, a hedge plant. But if Frank will thoroughly and deeply prepare a row for his cuttings, plant them about eight inches apart—setting them as cuttings ought to be set—this to be done early in spring, and then for two years cultivate the same carefully, subsequently mulching or manuring, and thus fostering his plants, he will in five or six years have a live fence that "will turn stock."

There are miles of this fence on the prairies of this (Story) county that do turn stock. Besides, in a treeless region, it serves as wind-break, shade, shelter, fuel, and worth ten times its cost of labor and land for either of these purposes.

You may cry "humbug" till you are hoarse—it will not affect those who have seen this fence with the naked eye.

NEVADA, IOWA. JOHN SCOTT.

FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE.—A circular issued by one of the Canadian Agricultural papers contradicts the statement that has been going the rounds of the Eastern papers, that the foot-and-mouth disease prevalent there originated with stock brought from the Dominion. It says that the disease does not exist there at all, and that cattle from there that have died in the states, must have contracted the disease after they crossed the line.