

WHAT IS THE MATTER.

Talking with a farmer not long since about the present demands upon the man who tills the soil, he said: "Sometimes I get almost discouraged. It seems as though the colleges and you editors were crowding us farmers along faster than we know what to do. It didn't used to be so. The demands for this and that change are coming thicker and faster."

We do not wonder that some farmers feel like this. The minds of men are getting greatly stirred as to the necessity for more and better knowledge, for better methods concerning the handling of our farms. The very conservative farmer, like our friend above quoted, does not feel just clear about these things are just right, so they feel uncertain. Like honest men, they want to do what is for the best. They do not feel like admitting that they have been wrong in their understanding of their soil. They will confess that it does not act as it used to twenty-five or thirty years ago. Like most men, they incline to the easiest conclusion and say the seasons are to blame. And so they say: "What's the matter?"

To our mind, all these things come to one point, that is, decline in the producing power of the farm; in other words, loss of fertility. All this has taken place unconsciously to the mind of the farmer. He has not increased his knowledge as fast as these disastrous changes have taken place. He has drifted along, doing his farming mechanically, plowing in the same old way, sowing and planting in the same old way, and so it has gone.

Now he is troubled on two sides. (1) By the growing stubbornness of his soil. "It don't act as it used to," he says. "What's happened to it?" (2) He is troubled by the colleges and those agricultural papers that dig down to the reason of things. They keep him stirred up telling him he must readjust his mind and judgment to the changed condition of the soil; that he must do the things that will bring back this fertility that the farm has lost. That worries him. He more than half suspects they are right.

Now all these things would appear more clear and capable of solution if the farmer in days past had devoted some time to a study of the soil. Right now changes must be made, remedies applied, and the farmer feels as did our friend whom we quoted at the beginning, "almost discouraged."

But there is a way out. Thousands of farmers have found it. What is it? Commence at once to make a serious study of your farm with the determined purpose of finding out why fertility has declined. Probably there are a number of causes, but the principal one is that for years more phosphate and nitrogen have been taken out of the soil than have been put back. Hoard's Dairyman has been talking a long time to its readers about the importance of applying two things especially to their soil—phosphate and the right form of lime. Only occasionally have we heard of a neighborhood of farmers who have clubbed together and sent to Tennessee for a car-load of raw ground phosphate. Local dealers do not keep it, and if got, it must be got by the car-load. So it is with ground limestone or marl. It is like pulling teeth to get a farmer to turn under a good crop of clover or alfalfa in the fall so as to add to the humus in the soil. It takes knowledge and then pluck to do the right thing.

Two main things must be done to save our farms. (1) We must know more than we do about the soil. (2) We must have more courage to do as well as we know or may know. That's

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A poacher, surprised at his work and pursued in his escape by a vengefully thrown axe, remarked, as he vaulted a fence: "I have no fault to find with your remarks, but I object to the axe-sent."

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"What you want, I suppose, is to vote, just like the men do." "Certainly not," replied Mrs. Baring-Banners. "If we couldn't do any better than that, there would be no use of our voting."

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An Englishman went to Paris, where he stayed for some time. When he returned to his home a friend asked him how he had liked France.

"A beastly country," he replied, "perfectly beastly. They know nothing there. They don't even know how to talk. Why, they call bread 'pain!'"

"But," his friend said, "that is the French word for bread."

"Oh, I know that. But why should they call it that? It really is bread, you know."

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A New York physician was giving an informal talk on physiology upon the windy, sea-frothing porch of an Atlantic City hotel.

"Also," he said, "it has lately been found that the human body contains sulphur."

"Sulphur!" exclaimed a girl in a blue and white blazer. "How much sulphur is there, then, in a girl's body?"

"Oh," said the physician, smiling, "the amount varies."

"And is that," asked the girl, "why some of us make so much better matches than others?"



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