

vances this idea in part. He says: "the residue of putrefaction is the only pabulum of plants—the only substance which should be called manure. Take any substance capable of decomposition, cover it from the rays of the sun, place it in a damp position, and in a still atmosphere, and you will soon find it changing its character, its appearance, and in most cases giving off an offensive smell: in other words, it is rotting. Long litter manure intrinsically becomes more valuable in undergoing this process. Wood will rot sooner in this position than in any other, the hardest brick will crumble and fall to pieces." 2. It will keep the ground moist and permeable to the heavy air, charged with nitrogen, that settles under the covering, which will carry, with its own fertilizing property, the rich gases of the decomposing mass, and mix them with the soil, contributing essentially and permanently to its improvement. 3. By preserving a constant moisture, it hastens the disintegration of the mineral substances and the decomposition of the humus in the soil, by which the earth enriches itself: The writer to whom I have alluded hits the nail on the head when he says, the soil thus treated will "become the food of plants, its colour will be changed, and it will have the appearance as if it indeed had undergone a rotting process." "It is indeed a great fact, [that the covering of soil will improve it], and a glorious one for the practical farmer, worth more to him than forty chapters from Liebig or ten scientific lectures. Let him, then, cover his soil with any thing that is cheap and ready to his hand, and my experience and my word for it, he will find it greatly enriched, and more permanently than by a heavy application of barn yard manure." The same writer continues: "Admit that covering or shading will enrich the soil, and that is all the practical farmer need know. Teach our farmers then to sow clover; to manure upon the surface—[to this I object, as a general thing, for the reasons given above]; to spread their straw

on the barren places in their fields, or where the clover is thinly taken, instead of rotting it in the barn yard or leaving it to waste away in the ricks: to spread or cover, in fact, with any thing which they may have suitable for the purpose; and I verily believe science need labor no more to find out mineral manures for exhausted soils." If this be true, and I believe it is—if it be but half true, then have all the farmers of North Carolina the means at home for bringing their farms into a high state of fertility, and then does this matter rise in magnitude and importance to them above every thing else touching the means and modes of improvement. This plan, I well remember, was clearly set forth and warmly recommended by you, Mr. Editor, some years ago, in your then agricultural journal, the *North Carolina Farmer*, and I have been pleased to see you have repeatedly urged it in the *Arator*. But how many of our farmers have tried it? Why have they slighted such excellent advice? Just because it was simple and within every body's power. Had it been some grand mystery, foreign compound, or artful humbug, all the world, with the furious speed of this fast age, would have been running after it. The principle that operated upon Naman some 3 or 4 thousand years ago, still exists among men: If the Prophet had bid him do some great thing, would he not have done it?

A Va. Farmer assures us that even lands found to be destitute of necessary mineral substances, will, closely and properly covered, in twelve months be greatly enriched; and I will tell him how the necessary mineral constituent gets there to produce the improvement: from the combination of gases evolved and kept from escaping during the process of decomposition of the earth and the substance by which it is covered.

But the result is the main thing. Let our people try it. Every one can make an experiment without the cost of one red cent, and without any excessive labor. Yours, &c. JEFFREYS,
July, 1857.