

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

Manures.

SIR.—With your permission I will offer a few remarks on the lengthy letter of the Hon. Donald Ferguson, on manures, which appeared in your last issue.

In my previous letter, I said that phosphates were of no use on mussel-mudded land, and asked Mr. Ferguson to state the reason why. He says: "The cause was probably in the quality of the phosphates, and not in the fact that the land had been previously mussel-mudded." He acknowledges other fertilizing matter in mussel mud besides lime; yet he assumes that they are all dissolved the first year. His reasons for assuming this he does not give; yet it seems strange that they should all dissolve the first year, and soluble phosphates remain so long in the soil. He speaks of a pamphlet in the Legislative Library, containing the analysis of three samples of mussel mud. What else they contain besides lime I do not know, but I have the analysis of mussel mud before me. I don't know who the analyst is, but it at least contains a large supply of phosphates. From that analysis and from experience with superphosphate on mudded land, I am led to believe that mussel mud supplies sufficient phosphates for the use of crops for a long period of time. I might say the land I used them on was mudded eighteen years ago. I have cut one crop of grain and two of hay since applying it, and I am positive it was of no benefit. I tried some on two other fields at the same time with like results. The phosphates used were ceres superphosphate, purchased from Mr. Auld, at a cost of \$6.50 per bag.

Mr. Ferguson also tells us "that carbonate of lime is held by all good authorities to be an excellent companion in the soil for soluble phosphoric acid." I believe that is right, according to chemistry. But the reason is that superphosphates, by reason of its solubility, is readily distributed through the soil, and that it is too acid in its character to enter into the circulation of plants, but the lime in the soil, coming in contact with it, changes it into a bi-calci phosphate, and so it is reduced into a less soluble condition. Now, according to that, and that is on the authority of Professors Lawson and Tanner, it is not fit to apply to land that has not previously been dressed with lime or mussel-mud; and it has been proved by experience that it is of no use on land that has been dressed with mussel-mud; and pray where are we going to put it?

Mr. Ferguson's quotation from Dr. Wall's report simply proves that when land is deficient in lime to supply the wants of the growing crop, that super-phosphates cannot supply the want, and that is only common sense.

In regard to potash, he thinks it an open question whether some of the lands of Prince Edward Island do not contain sufficient quantities of it, that old lands often produce 700 bushels turnips, (I suppose he means per acre), and that they remove about 200 lbs. potash from the soil. I agree with him there. But at the same time I would draw his attention to the enormous amount of organic matter, and also lime, used to liberate that amount from the clay part of the soil, and ask him whether it is good economy to do so, and how long would light soils stand that treatment? Some farmers are getting a taste of that now, that every successive dressing of manure has got to be heavier than the last, to produce the same results.

Before closing about potash, I would here mention that while potash is a compound, the single element potassium, is the one chiefly sought after; and as Mr. Ferguson has kindly informed me as to the percentage of nitrogen in ammonia, I would ask him to inform the public the percentage of potassium in his sulphate of potash, and also the percentage of ammonia in the sulphate of ammonia.

In regard to the nitre beds I asked him to explain, I must say his description quoted from Professor Tanner's work is not applicable in this case at all. I mentioned artificial nitre beds, or compost heaps, the object being the manufacture of manure, not only of nitrate of potash, but nitrate of soda, nitrate of lime, etc.

Good earth contains all of the eleven inorganic elements necessary to the growth and maturity of any crop, and when good earth is mixed with stable manure, or any vegetable matter containing nitrogen, if lime and potash are also present, with a certain quantity of water, the decomposition of the nitrogenous matter sets the nitrogen free, and also liberates the oxygen from water, and in the presence of potash and lime they have a tendency to unite, and form nitric acid. On the other hand the lime and potash assists in the liberation of the inorganic elements contained in the earth, potash, soda, lime, magnesia, etc., and they in turn unite with the nitric acid, forming nitrate of potash, nitrate of soda, etc., or in other words complete plant food. (I am quoting now from memory, as the authority is not at hand, and if astray I am open to correction.) The reader can compare the above way of manufacturing manure with Mr. Ferguson's idea of producing nitrate of potash, (and mark, it is only nitrate of potash alone he claims to produce) from manure under cover, without lime, and trodden down to prevent fermentation—as I understand that is the way he uses his manure—and then judge for himself which is the best way to follow.

There is several other matters I desire to call attention to, but fearing this letter

The one chiefly sought after; and as Mr. Ferguson has kindly informed me as to the percentage of nitrogen in ammonia, I would ask him to inform the public the percentage

FARMER. Lot 48, March 26th, 1889.

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