



Essays on Peat, Muck, and Commercial Manures (Classic Reprint)

Samuel W. Johnson

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Excerpt from Essays on Peat, Muck, and Commercial Manures

In 1856 the writer attempted to turn his chemical knowledge to the use of Agriculture, by examining the commercial fertilizers then offered for sale in the markets of Connecticut and New York.

In a business having such prospects of extension as lay before the trade in manures, in a region where convenient markets largely counterbalance the disadvantages of poor and worn-out soils, it was to be anticipated that frauds would arise, especially since it is so difficult or even in many cases impossible, to judge accurately of the quality of a fertilizer from its external characters.

Chemistry which has done so much for all the practical arts during the last 50 years, and which has made possible the extensive use of artificial fertilizers, fortunately offers the farmer complete protection against every attempt to defraud him by worthless mixtures, sold under high-sounding names and forged certificates; and although there is no scientific merit in analyzing manures, there is great practical use in saving the hard-toiling farmer from profitless and ruinous expenditures.

In the year just mentioned, the writer published in the Homestead a series of papers on the principal fertilizers then on sale in Connecticut. These articles excited much interest among the readers of that Journal, and at the Annual Meeting of the Connecticut State Agricultural Society, in Jan. 1857, the writer was invited to address that body upon "Frauds in Commercial Manures." It was then shown that gross deceit had actually been practised by parties soliciting the patronage of the farmers of this State, and the great facilities for perpetrating further frauds were made the subject of a lengthened exposition. At that time the writer was commissioned on behalf of the State Agricultural Society to make chemical analyses of all commercial manures offered for sale in the State, and to report upon them through the columns of the Homestead.

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