The Sioux County Journal.

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THURSDAY, SEPT. 24, 1891.

Experience With Smudges.

From Homestead.

Since writing the article on smudges in the issue in which the subject was treated mainly from a theoretical standpoint, we have obtained some data that give practical results. Mr. W. W. Barrett, State Superintendent of Forestry and Irrigation of North Dakota, has given to the public his experience in protecting his wheat fields at Church's Ferry, Ramsey county, North Dakota, from which we take the following:

"On the night of Saturday, August 22, and Wednesday, August 26, I was at my farm, near Church's Ferry, Ramsey county, and watched the approach and operation of the frost, and assisted in burning the smudge piles to ward off the danger. That experience was very instructive, giving a good opportunity to study both sides of the question.

Both nights were clear and the sky free from clouds. On the 22d, or properly speaking on the morning of the 23d, at 2 o'clock, the temperature reached its minimum, twenty-nine degrees. We started the smudge fires at 4:48 a. m. (on 23d), thermometer thirty degrees, a light breeze from the south; much moisture prevailing. To all appearance the temperature was much increased by the smoke. The intensity of the frost crystals on the smoked wheat was seemingly much decreased. They melted very quickly in the hand, while the unsmoked wheat retained its cold unchanged. Soon after an immense amount of smoke originating from our and our neighbors smudges covered the grain.

I had similar experience on the night of August 26, but the slight breeze this time was from the west, and but little moisture seemed to prevail. The frost was very severe. The thermometer indicated the lowest point, twenty-seven degrees, at 4:30 a. m. (morning of 27th). We commenced to generate the smoke at this hour, and vast deep clouds spread over the grain. During these two nights some of the wheat was in the milk and some in the dough. The oats were also smoked being in the milk. On the 22d, from 1:30 a. m. until sunrise, the temperature was at and below the freezing point. On the 26th, from 2:12 a. m. until sunrise, the temperature was ditto. Under all the circumstances my tenant and myself were surprised to find to all appearance, the wheat and oats were uninjured. Thus we had presumptive evidence that the smoke had a favorable effect in the protection of the grain from the freezing frost."

The following gives Mr. Barrett's views on the possibility of securing protection by the smudge:

A man may theorize to some advantage, but nothing will give him such a complete knowledge of this subject as actual experience. If his mind is active and fully alive to the great problem, each moment of observation and experimentation will give him the condition and the law of action of the earth, sky and grain, and the operation of cold and heat, and all the various causes involved in the ceaseless changes going on all around him.

I am seeking the truth upon this matter, whether smoke will or will not prevent frost. More knowledge upon the subject may cause a change of my views, but, according to the light I now possess, I cannot but be strong in my conviction that smoke is a sure preventive of frost or of its injurious effect upon fruit and grain and other forms of vegetation under the following conditions: When and where generated and applied in needful quantities and distributed in such a manner as to cover the grain during the entire time of danger from the frost.

SMOKE DURING THE TIME OF DANGER.

On account of an uncertainty as to when the fires should be started, but owing principally to the want of sufficient smudge piles, the fires have usually been set at 2 to 4 a. m. of the night, and generally when the frost has commenced its destructive effects upon the grain. All men know that thick clouds obscuring the sky prevent frost even on very cold nights, because they check radiation of heat. Now suppose a man could control the clouds at will, would he act wisely if he should wait until the frost had actually appeared on the grain, or the temperature had been lowered to near the freezing point? That is just what most of us have been doing in North Dakota. We have made clouds out of smoke, but generally not until the freezing point has been reached.

The evidences are many and strong that smoke can be successfully used to prevent frost. These give promise that in due time practical system will be devised to protect the products of the earth from the injurious operations of this cruel foe.

There were never greater inducements for farmers in the corn-belt to test the smudge thoroughly than now. A few intelligent farmers in each county can, by smudging on the first cold night, render an invaluable aid to the cause of agriculture.

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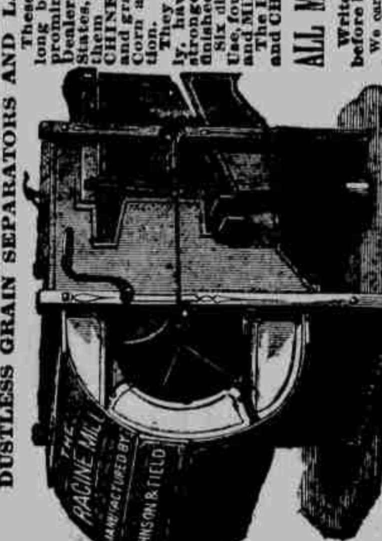

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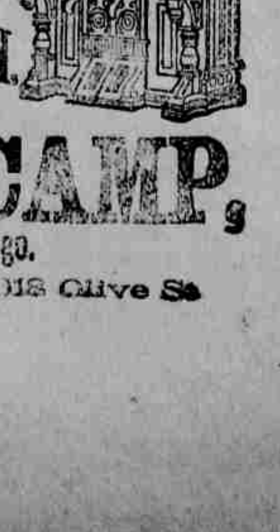

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