

# The Sioux County Journal.

[ESTABLISHED 1888.]

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L. J. Simmons, Editor.  
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THURSDAY, DEC. 24, 1891.

## Subsoiling as a Preventative of Drouth, Iowa Homestead.

The theory has been presented occasionally for several years past that the most effective safeguard against drouth in the dryer sections west of the Missouri would be to subsoil the land planted to corn and other crops depending on summer rains for their maturity. It has been maintained that rain enough falls in the course of the year to mature crops of corn and sorghum, if it could only be conserved and utilized, that the surface of the soil has been compacted by the treading of cattle and the force of the winds, until it sheds water like the roof of a house, and that when this surface in broken up by cultivation, the water soaks into the ground and the subsequent evaporation gradually modifies the climate giving it a moister atmosphere. It has been maintained that if the land were plowed to the depth of fifteen or twenty inches, bringing to the surface however only the usual depth of soil in ordinary plowing, the effect would be much more marked and the benefits correspondingly greater.

This theory, we learn from the September report of the Kansas agricultural society, has been tested this year by the United States government, at its station at Medicine Lodge, Kansas, and with very flattering results. About forty acres were plowed and subsoiled to the depth of eighteen inches and planted to sorghum; another piece plowed but not subsoiled, was planted to the same variety and both fields given the same treatment. The subsoiled field yielded about eighteen tons of sorghum to the acre, while the best yield obtained on the field plowed in the ordinary way was ten tons. This is a very satisfactory showing. It will be observed that this object of subsoiling is peculiar and different from that prevailing in the eastern states. In the eastern practice it is to loosen up the ground so that the roots of plants may be able to avail themselves of the fertility of the under soil. It contemplates the gradual lifting of the under soil to the surface. In the present instance subsoiling contemplates the loosening up of the under soil in order that it may be a receptacle for water, a sort of storage basin from which the surface soil may be supplied by capillary attraction. The theory looks very reasonable, and experiments so far seem to show that it is correct and practicable. It is worthy of very extensive experimentation, not only in Kansas but along the entire western border. While the soils east of the Missouri seldom lack sufficient rainfall, they are far more liable to exhaustion from dews and wash outs than the soil in the regions of scant rainfall. The trouble in the soils of scant rainfall is not only lack of fertility, but lack of a storehouse of moisture. If this can be obtained by a system of subsoiling, thus, as it were, holding all the water that falls instead of allowing it to go to waste, it will add very greatly to the resources of this region.

We have taken the ground heretofore that the most economical subsoiler in the prairie states is red clover. Alfalfa should do for the extreme west of the prairie region what red clover does for the eastern portion. We believe it will, but, in order to make it a success, where irrigation is not possible, and enable it to get its roots down, the subsoil plow should be used effectively. We therefore venture the suggestion to our readers in the dryer regions, that when they sow alfalfa they should make a thorough trial of the subsoil plow. We never advise any farmer to make an experiment on a large scale. The very term "experiment" implies that there is a doubt as to the final result. The experiments already made, however, justify the farmer in repeating them on his own farm, with a good prospect of success, and we do not believe any farmer in the regions subject to drouth risks anything in going to the expense of subsoiling a few acres and sowing it to alfalfa.

The publishers of the *Homestead*, the weekly twenty-four page agricultural paper of Des Moines, Iowa, edited by a practical farmer, inform us that they will send their paper from now until the 15th of January, 1892, free of charge, to every farmer, not already a subscriber, who will send his name and address, plainly written on a postal card to the *Homestead* Co., Des Moines, Iowa. The copies will be absolutely free, and will be sent to any farmer to enable him to judge for himself the merits of the *Homestead* as a paper devoted to his special interests. On the 15th of January the paper will be discontinued unless accompanied for in due form.

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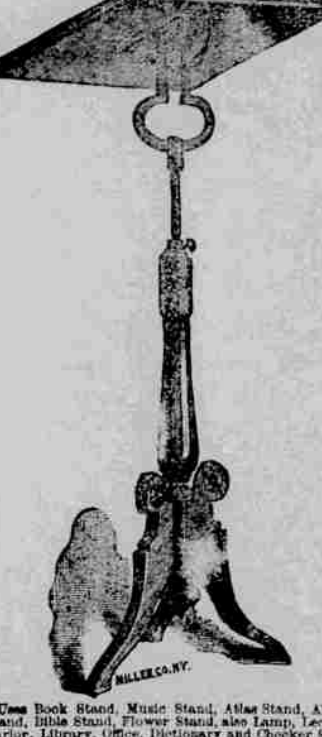
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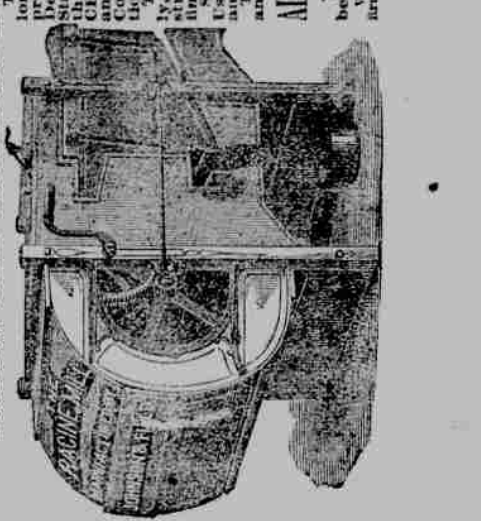
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