

Our Farm Department

Devoted to the Interest of Those Who Till the Soil

CONDUCTED BY J. M. BEATY

About Cotton and Corn.

The result of the mistake of putting all the eggs in one basket is a thing that is well known, and the smash of all the eggs caused an entire loss to the egg-vendor.

The farmers of the South should not put all of their dependence in cotton, for when they do so there is a possible disaster to be faced. With cotton the main reliance a slump in figures means havoc, and a setting back of the dial of progress.

Diversification has been preached so often, that it is monotonous to repeat it, but still it is only by hammering that the big nail is driven home. The subject is so important that of necessity there must be continued hammering about diversification, and this time it is to raise corn as well as raise cotton, to stock Southern cribs from Southern fields in place of sending West for the corn.

And when corn is raised the farmer is putting himself in the way, not alone to feed himself, but to feed his horses, his hogs, his cows, his chickens. The stalks will do for months for the cattle and horses, the hogs fed with corn will furnish meat for the family. A bushel of corn this fall ought to sell for not less than fifty cents. Therefore, diversify, plant corn, and look out for the hogs, the cows and the chickens, which mean a well supplied table, with a ready market for the corn, the butter and milk, the eggs and the chickens. Have the smoke house at home in place of in the West, and corn is the starting of it, a thing to be remembered also in this day of the advance in the price of wheat, as there is as much blood and bone making substance in an ordinary small sized pone of corn bread as there is in half a loaf of wheat bread, and flour is around eight dollars a barrel.

Don't be terrified at the idea of getting away from an all cotton crop for the result will pan out all right in the end. If the farmer can go no further than to try to raise corn, let him at least combine this with his cotton raising, and there will be big results of work if put behind the corn crop. Talking of the outlook for corn and cotton this year, the Birmingham Age-Herald has the following, which bears directly upon the question at issue:

"Middling spot cotton is worth in New Orleans nearly 10 1-2 cents, and Southern holders will get for about 1,000,000 bales the recent increase in price. The rest of the big crop was parted with at 8 or 9 cents. The man who held cotton will get about \$5 more per bale than his neighbor did who sold earlier in the cotton year.

"The recent rise in price will operate to increase the cotton acreage and outside of some weevil infested districts in Louisiana and Mississippi no one anticipates any considerable reduction in that acreage. The world wants 13,000,000 bales of American cotton, and that is about all the cotton belt is capable of in the average season.

"While it is well to make 13,000,000 bales of cotton, it is also even better to plow deeply and make more corn. No one asks the South to grow corn as a surplus crop, but there is every reason why every farmer should grow his own corn. This has been explained so often it has become trite, but its truth stands erect and eternal. No Southern farmer can be prosperous who refuses to make his own corn."—News and Observer.

The House Fly.

The house fly, which we were taught in our childhood to treat with kindness, has been expelled. It breeds in stables and garbage pails and carries the filth it revels in across the sugar, the butter and the beefsteak. It paddles its horrid feet in the baby's milk. The doctors have declared war on the house fly. It probably disseminates every disease. It is a nuisance. It must be exterminated. It can be driven out of every city. In an age of knowledge, screens and cheap disinfectants, there is no excuse for flies in any household. Clean up your premises and report to the health department your neighbor who does not. Get rid of breeding places of flies and will get rid of the flies, says a learned physician, who knows whereof he speaks.—Blue Ridge Daily Breeze.

Applying Commercial Fertilizers.

In some sections of the country there has grown up a pernicious habit of "saving work" by "shape bedding" and putting the cotton fertilizer at or near the surface of the ground, almost in contact with the seed. The result is that at the time the cotton is fruiting and needs the plant food the fertilizer has dried up, and the plant food is not available. When you hear a fellow complain that his fertilizer does not pay him you may be sure that he is one of those who save work at planting time and thus starve their cotton at fruiting time.

Any intelligent man who will give the subject a thought knows these two facts: that plants can only take up and use the plant food which is dissolved in water, and that the movement of the moisture of the earth except while it is actually raining, is toward the surface. These facts taken together should teach any reasonable man that his commercial fertilizers should be put below the surface where there is moisture to hold the plant food in solution, and that the capillary action of the soil will bring the available plant food into contact with the feeding roots.

Top-dressing oats, wheat, etc., with nitrate of soda is something given as an argument against ledding on fertilizer, but it has no bearing on fertilizing cotton and corn which need their greatest supply of plant food during the hot dry summer months. The nitrate of soda is quickly soluble and sinks a short distance into the ground with the water which dissolves it, and is used by the plant in the spring when the ground is moist to the top. Cotton, on the contrary, needs but little extra plant food in the early spring. It is during July, August and September when the plant is fruiting that it needs help to make a big crop.

I cite two examples which have come under my immediate notice. A few days since a farmer told me that last year he was putting 165 pounds of fertilizer to the acre immediately under his seed. He tried six rows, putting at the rate of four hundred pounds to the acre, and that his cotton was not one bit better on these six rows than on the balance of the piece which had only 165 pounds to the acre. Here is a case where more fertilizer did not pay. It was not the fault of the fertilizer, but of the man who used it. Before the plants had used up the plant food in the fertilizer, it being at the surface of the ground had dried up, and was as worthless as that much sand. All that he applied in excess of what the plant could use while the spring moisture was in the land was that much thrown away. Had he put it in the ground where it would keep moist his cotton could have kept drawing on it through the season and used it all. Then he would have found a big difference where he used the 400 pounds.

The other case was of a neighbor who planted near my house, running the planter immediately behind the distributor. In the spring it was the finest looking piece of cotton near us being on fresh land. In July we had a drouth which dried up his fertilizer. The cotton turned yellow and shedded badly. About August 1st there was a good rain which started the fertilizer. The cotton at once got green and began fruiting rapidly. Another dry spell coming on it again turned yellow and shedded. Had his fertilizer been in moist dirt his yield would have been twice as much. Starvation causes more shedding than sunshine.—Southern Cultivator.

Oh, Yes, Burn off Your Fields.

The evil practice of burning off the grass and vegetable matter that would put humus and fertility into the land seems to be confined to no particular section of the South. The last issue of the Oklahoma Farm Journal says:

"Putting off plowing until spring, raking the stalks and grass together and burning it, listing in the corn without plowing or other previous preparation of the soil, all of these very wrong ways of farming seem to be still the rule in Oklahoma instead of the exception. The vegetable matter which every Oklahoma soil needs so much is consumed by fire and the nitrogen, costing 15 cents a pound in commercial fertilizers, goes up in smoke."—Progressive Farmer.

"Are you a Farmer or Merely a Contractor?"

Every now and then, a thought is flashed from some brain bearing the stamp both of originality and completeness, so that it becomes current from thence on. Just as the government puts the official stamp upon a gold dollar and sends it forth to pass current among all mankind; so these minds stamp the impress of their thought into certain words and send the idea forth to pass as mental currency for all time. All times of unrest and crucial times, cause men to think more deeply, and some minds coin these expressions that afterwards become household words. The struggle of the Southern farmers to get a higher price for their cotton, has been such a "crucial time," and the fact that we did not get 15 cents for our cotton, does not make our cause wholly lost. The causing of the great Masses of our farmers to think more deeply than usual, goes far to compensate us for our failure as to price. We published two such thoughts. They are too good to lose. They will bear repetition. They are a distinct gain to the realm of Southern agricultural thought. No man can put these two ideas more clearly and forcibly than their authors put them. One came from a Tennessee farmer, one from a Georgia farmer. Our Georgia farmer, J. H. Johnson, of Newborn, Ga., says: "I was a contractor once; I contracted with the merchant to grow cotton—for supplies—I was to grow the cotton for the corn, meat, meal and flour that he furnished me during the season. I lost out and now I am changing my method. I am quitting the contracting business and gone to farming." The question is for us all—are we contractors or farmers? How much of the contracting business enters into our system? Can we change our mode to a better system of farming? Whether you are rich or poor, landlord or tenant, this is now a pertinent question for us all. The great unrest among our farmers, shows conclusively that something is wrong. We have been told by our would-be leaders, that the fault, was in Wall street, in our banking system—in our government; in the English spinners' greed, and a thousand outward places, but the truth is that the chief fault lay at our own door; it is in our lack of a true self-sustaining, diversified system of farming. Some minds have gone the round, and like hounds that have been thrown off the track, they have circled round and struck the true trail, and from different points you hear them "opening out," in tones that tell, that they have struck the right trail.

Then comes Mr. W. E. Jenkins, from Tennessee, and says: "All your foodstuff must be grown on somebody's farm; it is presumable that it can be most cheaply grown upon your own." Why? You save the freight; you have no hauling from town, you have the demand at your own door for the stuff, you do not have to pay the merchant's price, you do not have to pay the speculator and the middle man—those two you have been cursing so much. You know the standard of excellence—no impurities—no damaged stuff put off on you and you do not have to pay "time prices." It really seems as Mr. Jenkins says, that something must be radically wrong with your farm and with your system, if you can not grow this corn and meat more cheaply upon your own farms.—The Southern Cultivator.

Do Not Plow Land When Too Wet.

I want to caution our people again, especially those having clay lands, not to plow the land when wet. This warning can not be sounded too often. It makes no difference whether you own the land or not, you will be damaged by wet plowing. The crop you plant this year will be seriously injured if you plow too soon, and you are entailing an unnecessary loss on all who follow you in cultivating this land. I know the temptation to plow is strong, especially when you are badly behind with your work and your neighbor is plowing. Remember that your plowing when the land is wet is not only useless, but worse than useless. You have given the work of yourself and mule in order to do your own self an injury. It is not the man who plants first or lays by first that wins, but the man who makes the greatest number of bushels of corn and bales of cotton. It does not necessarily benefit you to have your cotton up or chopped before any one else in your community, but it does benefit you to have 2 bales or more cotton to the mule than your neighbor has who plowed wet. Wet plowing and cotton rust go hand in hand.—The Southern Cultivator.

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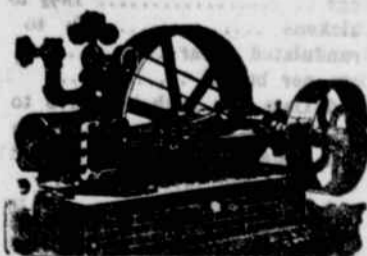
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