

# The CAROLINA

# Union FARMER



Vol. VII.—No. 11.

RALEIGH, N. C., MARCH 13, 1913.

One Dollar a Year.

## TAR HEEL SKETCHES.

BY J. Z. GREEN.

The city man's idea of "good farming" seems to be for the farmer to produce bumper crops so that prices will come lower and lower to consumers in towns and cities. The other day I read a lengthy editorial in a city daily paper purporting to show that the cause of the high cost of living existed in the fact that farmers are not producing enough. In the advertising columns of the same paper I noticed the following retail prices quoted in a grocery advertisement:

"Best granulated sugar, 4 1-2 cents a pound.  
"Fancy potatoes, per peck, 18 cents.  
"Fancy yellow onions, per peck, 15 cents.  
"Quaker oats, three large packages, 25 cents.  
"Three large cans tomatoes, 24 cents."

If you can see any "high cost of living" indicated in these prices, you can beat me. And remember, these are retail prices that include the added broker and jobber and wholesale commissions, retail profits, high city rents, etc. It would be interesting to trace it back to producers of these food products and find out how hard low prices on these products hit them. There is one item quoted above that is destined to be lower, if the farm girls' tomato clubs keep on doing an extensive business, unless these brave and energetic girls begin to protect the marketing side of their business.

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It is remarkable how quickly people lose sight of real farm life conditions after they move to town. I heard a town lady say the other day: "It's so nice to live in the country where your chickens, eggs, and vegetables do not cost you anything." Do not cost anything! Well, doesn't that jar you? Is a farmer's time and labor worth anything? The gross market value of the farm products would not give to the members of the families who labor half the average wages paid for labor in towns and cities. And this reminds me of a whole-page article in a recent issue of a Northern city agricultural paper giving account of what was term-

ed a remarkable record of a farmer—a model farmer. The total output from his farm footed up about \$1,400 in one year. An itemized expense account was produced, and the writer made the statement that it was all done without any cost as to labor—the man had four boys who helped with the work and he didn't have to pay out anything for labor! That certainly affords relief as to the expense account, but it's mighty hard on the boys. About one hundred per cent of those farmer boys will probably move to town later on.

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At Asheville and Hendersonville the members of the Union insisted upon a lecture in executive session only. They seemed to feel keenly the need of confidential advice as to how to go about establishing constructive co-operation, upon which the life and usefulness of the organization depends. "We don't care so much about numerical strength," said a member. "Too much of that kind of strength seems to be unwieldy. We have more than enough members now to start co-operation, and at this stage you will not get the outsiders interested by public discourses, but you've got to show them." And that member's idea is everlastingly right. Sermonizing alone has never yet saved a disintegrating organization. Only tangible constructive work will produce lasting results. And that's why the boys in the ranks want something definite and practical—want to be shown how to proceed to establish real constructive co-operation.

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"I have never in my life advised farmers to buy commercial fertilizers," said a traveling fertilizer salesman the other day. Further remarks from him indicated that there existed a doubt in his mind as to whether the average farmer gets any net profits from the use of commercial fertilizers, when applied to lands that are deficient in vegetable matter. If a correct statement could be produced, it would probably show that farmers lose more money in North Carolina by the injudicious use of commercial fertilizers than is made on lands that are in right kind of mechanical condition to make the

use of commercial fertilizers profitable. I saw dozens of wagon loads of guano being hauled out from a station between Raleigh and Wilson last week and within a few hundreds yards of the station farmers were burning the corn stalks ahead of the plows in the field—burning something the soil needs more than anything else and buying soluble plant food stimulants that cannot be used profitably except on lands where corn stalks or something else has decayed and has been mixed with the soil. Notwithstanding the gospel of better farming has been preached over and over again for a quarter of a century, quite a large per cent of men on the farm still persist in robbing the soil. But they are learning. Improvements that can come only through the slow process of education cannot be developed rapidly.

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Regardless of the well-written advertisements of fertilizer mixing companies designed to convince the farmer that he cannot properly mix his own fertilizers at home, I find that in every section of the State the best-informed farmers prefer their home-mixed product, and have been mixing fertilizers at home. No amount of persuasion will convince them that it is better and more economical for them to use ready-mixed fertilizer, when it is a matter of very simple mathematical calculation for them to figure out the saving of from three to seven dollars per ton that is made possible by home-mixing. If every farmer in the State would do his mixing at home it would amount to a saving in fertilizer accounts in North Carolina of approximately \$3,000,000 annually. And if farmers who do not have the cash to pay for their fertilizers in the spring would borrow the money and make cash payments, the saving would amount to another million dollars. When farmers develop into better business men they will wonder why they have all these years been so stupid as to permit a waste of four million dollars annually on just one item in the cost of production. "Better Business" must be applied. Without it there isn't any prosperity in sight for farmers.