

AGRICULTURE.

Let the kind source of every gentle art. And all the soft quality of life.

PRODUCTION OF SILK.

To the Editor of the Richmond Enquirer.

[There cannot be a doubt but that the climate of N. Carolina is as well if not better adapted to the culture of silk, than Virginia.]

It is presumed that the following sketch on the culture of silk will be acceptable to your readers at this juncture, as it is attended with many advantages peculiar to it, which if known may induce numbers to engage in it. It requires no capital; the poorest man who could procure silk worm eggs and access to a few mulberry trees, may make silk. All the necessary labour may be performed by children or superannuated persons; even children of 7 or 8 years old may be usefully employed in it. A crop of silk is the work but of 40 days, the first twenty of which, even where a considerable quantity is contemplated, occasion but little trouble. It yields a quicker return and higher wages, than any other manufacture established among us. It may very confidently be affirmed, that if the leaves of the mulberry trees, that grow spontaneously in this State, were employed in feeding silk worms, they would produce a far greater amount than the revenue of the State, without occasioning any diminution in the quantity of grain produced annually, for the reason above assigned, viz: that the necessary labour may be performed by such as could not be employed in agriculture. Silk is made in large quantities in Connecticut at this time, though its climate is not near so favourable for that purpose, as that of Virginia. It appears from the Custom house books, that a large quantity of silk was exported from Connecticut in the year 1796, and a rapid progress has been made in that business, since that period. There are many pamphlets still extant on the culture of silk, written under the auspices of Dr. Franklin, many years before the revolution, who laboured to induce the people of Pennsylvania, to cultivate mulberry trees; and succeeded so well, that 126 persons were employed in different branches of the silk manufacture, when the British took Philadelphia and cut down all the mulberry trees in that city. If the sage Franklin thought the culture of silk an object of importance, when Pennsylvania was a British province, and the silk sold for a guinea per pound, of how much more importance may it be now considered? Last year some families made a quantity of silk in this county, of which specimens will be sent to you; and will be found equal to that of Europe or Asia, though the situation is far less favorable than the southern or eastern parts of the State.

A silk worm makes the ball about the size of a partridge egg, and will, when wound, yield a thread about 350 yards in length. If silk worms are plentifully fed, and kept in a warm room, they will go to work in 33 days, & some times in 33 days, and give no farther trouble.

The climate of Virginia is well adapted to the culture of silk, and as numbers of mulberry trees grow spontaneously in many parts of the State, it is evident they may be multiplied at pleasure by culture. Genoa, Mantua, and Barcelona, so celebrated for their silk manufactures, are not more favorably situated for that purpose, than the southern and eastern parts of Virginia. In Spain, Portugal, and Italy, especially that part of Italy called the Austrian Lombardy, when subject to the house of Austria, the proprietors of the soil derived a considerable revenue from their mulberry orchards. They had agents who attended every day during the season, to sell the leaves by weight, to the poor; and travellers assure us that the leaves of a tree produced the proprietor about 2 1/2 lb. in a season.

Nothing can be more curious than the different transformations of the silk worm; nor exhibit a more lively representation of the resurrection. After it has finished its ball, in which it lies apparently dead, as in a tomb, it comes out a beautiful butterfly; and during the remainder of its existence, which is several days, eats nothing. An ounce of silk as spun by the worm, will extend about sixty miles; and a hair of the head is a cable compared to it; but inexpressibly fine as it is, it will (if of a good quality) suspend a weight of two ounces; 15 or 20 such threads doubled and twisted will suspend a weight of 50 lb. Good crops of silk have been made by the writer of this sketch, in tobacco houses and barns; in general such a temperature of the air as is usual in May and June, in Virginia, is sufficiently warm for the silk worm. Any degree of heat that is troublesome and oppressive to human beings, is rather unfavorable to the silk worm, which thrives best in a dry, warm, circulating air, and to which a moist, cool, stagnant air is injurious. The white mulberry is best, and is a tree easily propagated, and is known to possess the property of enriching the soil, where it is planted. Its berries are good food for hogs & poultry, & it yields leaves large enough to feed with, in three or four years from sowing the seed. The silk made from the black mulberry leaf is not inferior in lustre, or strength, to that made by feeding with white; but the superiority of the white mulberry consists chiefly in yielding two crops of leaves in a season, and not being so wholly of its leaves, which often happens to the black. Those who gather the leaves of the black mulberry, should never strip it entirely; but should leave some leaves on every branch, which will prevent its dying.

The white mulberry is a native of many parts of Virginia. It is to be found on 2 or 3 farms, about ten miles from Morgantown. In some parts of Asia, the silk worms immediately after hatching, are put on the mulberry trees, and left to shift for themselves; and it is said they practice this in some parts of Connecticut; but that a man armed with a gun, attends all day to shoot the birds. As hatching the eggs may be retarded or accelerated at pleasure, it is very easy by keeping them cold to prevent their hatching, before the air is sufficiently warm for them; persons disposed to make an experiment in the culture of silk, need not incur any expense in preparing a place for the worms; as, if kept from hatching till the latter end of May, a tobacco house, barn, or any waste house, will answer the purpose well enough.

Rats, mice and pisants are dreadful enemies to the silk worm; but their depredations may easily be prevented, by putting some tow dipped in tar round the posts that support the stages on which they are laid and fed.

A silk worm yields about two grains of silk if well fed; and as a pound avoirdupoise weight is 7008 grains, it is easy to calculate how many make a pound. For the first 30 days after hatching, a boy or girl, or old woman, may procure leaves enough to feed 50,000, and during the last ten days previous to their going to work, three or four may be necessary. A woman acquainted with the business, will reel a pound of silk in a day. Numbers who are only directed by what they see in pamphlets on the subject, become expert in reeling in two or three seasons. It is not well practicable to ascertain what number of trees will furnish leaves enough for any given number of silk worms, but it may be affirmed, that a tree, whose trunk is 15 inches diameter, will yield leaves enough to feed 4 or 5000 worms. They are so very minute when first hatched, that they require but little food; though in their last stage they are very voracious. The better a silk worm is fed, the more silk it yields, and the sooner it goes to work. To the rich, the culture of silk will be a pleasing amusement; and to the poor a subsistence.

PHILOSOPHER CUS.

Monongalia county, Va. May 1813.

From the Winchester Gazette.

The following extracts of letters from Judge Peters, of Pennsylvania, to a gentleman in Frederic county, with the reports of N. Farrow of Fauquier County, are papers of too much agricultural interest to require even a simple recommendation.—The elegant and virtuous sentiment of the one, and the useful and almost unexampled progress of the other in Agriculture, exhibits the happiest mirror of peace and plenty, and cannot fail to promote the interest of the cause.

How much it is to be lamented that the most ancient and honorable of all employments should receive the least attention and support from the talents and equities of men. Professions which arise out of the depravity of man are adorned with the utmost elegance & skill and are extended by the most scrupulous research through every variety of action where ambition can bare a sway, or ingenuity meet its reward, while the noble and benevolent fact (that he who makes to grow two blades of grass, where but one grew before, is one of the greatest benefactors of mankind) is almost lost sight of amidst the glare of minor attractions. Let Agriculture then have its honoured champions, and rise from the depression it has so long felt in this southern country.—Associations for the promotion of Agriculture, have at all times ameliorated its condition, bringing to light much valuable knowledge that would have laid dormant or have been so local as to have precluded any general benefit—they have the effect of breaking down error and prejudice—receiving and diffusing information from distant societies. Judge R. Peters, of Pennsylvania, the great advocate of Agriculture in that state, observes—"The spot in which such husbandry is practised (meaning systematic and advantageous) in any perfect degree, would be indeed difficult to mention. But our approaches to it will most assuredly be every where accelerated, by the information of societies for gaining and promulgating information on agriculture and rural economy. The subject has never yet been duly appreciated, though it is the great source and basis of our most important and solid prosperity.—Considering our country as a unit, and not operated by any local prejudices, I rejoice to perceive advances to improvement in any quarter of it. However zealous I may be, I am conscious of only feeble powers to assist in the great work in which I have laboured, but cannot boast of any extensive success. If it could be made fashionable and popular, zeal might be exerted to greater profit. But political and pecuniary speculations in which fairy and commonly seducing, though often deceptive prospects for ambition and wealth are displayed, seem to extinguish any desire to gain Agricultural knowledge. Labour, perseverance and economy, are not relished by those who look only to rapid means of placing themselves at ease. I shall be always, however, ready to assist with my mite in yours, or any other plan for exciting a spirit of patriotism on this subject; which though much overlooked, will be finally found to be far more important than those which generally employ and agitate our countrymen.—But it will take time to dissipate the pained vapours on which they now gaze with so much, though often disappointed delight." A correspondence

with a society in so highly improved a Country as Pennsylvania, might have a happy effect upon our Agriculture—and more—as every sympathy tends to bind still closer our union.

R. K. M.

DEAR SIR. Belmont, April 1, 1813.

I received your letter enclosing an account of Mr. Farrow's farming and rural economy, and thank you for the communication of the encouraging fact. One such example is of more real advantage to the interests of Agriculture, than a volume of either theory, or practice. Those who will not read cannot avoid seeing—Mr. F. is a Klyyogg in our country. But the famous Swiss farmer went on a scale perfectly Lilliputian compared to Mr. F's extensive operations. I suspect, however, that there is more bold and extensive husbandry than neatness of farming. But profit is the great object—and nice farming is only fit for those who have smaller concerns and limited surface. They must do the most on the space to which they are confined. Like Mr. F's I have of turning to account his sod or lay, and ploughing green manures. I have done it often and found the benefit. Indeed it is the only resource where fortuitous manures, or supplies from the yard, or stable cannot be had in sufficient plenty. But I always found that turning in my sod although it benefited a crop, increased weeds and pests. These are only to be destroyed by constant cutting or cleanly and frequent ploughing. I have ploughed in a heavy crop of clover, to the wonder and ridicule of my neighbors. But when they saw its effect, their wonder ceased, and their ridicule rebounded on themselves. Pasture is lost by this sacrifice, and where that is necessary, the sod, only can be afforded. I will send at some time of leisure a drawing of a plough with a wing to the coulter, calculated for turning in green manures. It is to be found in Arthur Young's address to the British Board of Agriculture in 1810 or 11. I have had other contrivances, but this seems the best. It is said that it will turn in a crop of green rye, six feet high. Mr. F's own blacksmith could add the wing to any plough. I have great satisfaction in seeing the astonishing improvements every where originating in the plough. When I recollect that 40 years ago I began with half a wheel, the comparison of modern times with that period seems a kind of delusion. This wonderful result should stimulate every body to perseverance and exertion in their days, and add trust to future events for the profits to be made by those who follow good examples.—If this be not always done, the fault is not with those who lay the foundation.

I send you a communication of mine to our society, on the subject of the scarcity root; whereof, I think, I sent you some seed. I wish you would get Mr. F. (to whom present my very sincere good wishes) to try this root for his dairy and sheep. He would no doubt do great justice to the experiment; I shall lay your letter, and Mr. F's statement before our society, who will be much gratified by the history of a very extraordinary man, and the surprising efforts of industry and intelligence in an art the most important of all others; and yet one in which so very few distinguish themselves. Genius of a particular character is required. It must not be speculative, but practical. I respect a person of Mr. F's qualities, and admire the fruits of his efforts earned by industry, and ripened by good sense more than I do the victories of a conqueror, or the productions of the most fertile, but fanciful imaginations. The one dazzles, and the other delights. But such men as Mr. F. produce comfort and subsistence to thousands who have no relish for the splendour of conquest, or gratification in works of imagination. Alter all a conqueror is a curse to his species, and those who spend their lives in pursuits not practical, afford amusement for high days and holidays; which those who add to the stock on which our subsistence depends, furnish every day gratifications; which our every day wants and necessities require. I shall be always happy to hear of Mr. F's welfare. Having left off farming extensively, I am only a sort of chamber counsel, but shall be always happy in affording the small assistance my experience enables me to render to the promotion of the Art in which I have always taken the most interest, and solid satisfaction. I have often told my Virginia, and Maryland friends, (most of whom have gone to a country where they neither "toil nor spin") that nothing could be more execrable than double crossing with corn and wheat together. Can any thing be more convincing than Mr. F's wheat on corn ground compared with his crops on his clovered, and plastered fields? Very truly yours,

RICHARD PETERS.

Clover-Hill, Fauquier County, January 28, 1813.

Dear Sir—I have this day taken up my pen, to give you a concise statement of my agricultural pursuits from the year 1806, up to the present date. Previous to that time, I followed the same course of farming as that of my neighbours, sowing my wheat after a corn crop, and preparing a small quantity of fallow with the common dutch plough. My crops of wheat averaged about 6 bushels to the acre—7 of rye—12 of Indian corn and about one ton of hay. Since I commenced the use of plaster and clover, my meadows have increased to more than double the quantity they formerly produced, my wheat crop from 6 to upwards of 25 bushels per acre, as per statement—and other crops in proportion to the degree of fertility given to the soil. The improvement and increase of my stock

has been an additional stimulus to the prosecution of a system so agreeable and highly advantageous. Until the year 1809, the mode of a barshare plough was never seen on my farm, and before that period my farming was in the old Virginia style. In the Spring of 1805, I resolved on pursuing a different course of agriculture; sowed 12 bushels of clover seed, on 150 acres of land and 100 bushels of plaster of Paris—in the spring of 1807, 8 and 9, I put on the same ground one bushel of plaster per acre. The fields of clover struck every one with astonishment, it being from 3 to 4 feet high, when lifted up right, and as thick to all appearance as it could well be. In the month of June 1809, I commenced following the above mentioned field with 3 strong horses to a plough, and a boy walk alongside with a stick to keep the clover from chocking it, which enabled the ploughman to go on with much more ease, and perform the work much better. In the month of August I cross ploughed the 150 acres. In September harrowed it down with 3 strong horses to each harrow, they being large and heavy. On the 25th September commenced sowing wheat, at the rate of from 1-2 to 3 bushels per acre; plowing it in with a small shovel plough, as my grounds are very stony and mountainous—the wheat was rolled in plaster, at one peck to the bushel of wheat—finished sowing on the 30th of October. In the spring of 1810, put half a bushel of plaster to the acre—the product of the 150 acres was 3750 bushels weighing 63 pounds per bushel; my corn and wheat added, made for the year 1810, 4320 bushels. To return in the spring 1807, I sowed 163 acres in clover, one gallon to the acre, and one bushel of plaster. In the springs of 1808, 9 and 10, applied one bushel of plaster per acre. Followed in the months of June and July, and treated it in all other respects as my fallow of 1809—product 3680 bushels; wt. 60 pound per bushel; added to 420 bushels; weight 59 pounds from 80 acres of corn ground—makes for the year 1811—4050 bushels.—In the spring of 1809, sowed 150 acres, one gallon of seed per acre, and one bushel of plaster. Plastered and ploughed as usual—and in the year 1812 reaped 4500 bushels wheat, weight 62—34 acres of corn land produced 324 bushels, weight 58 pounds, total 4824. Inexpedient, as it generally is, to forsake a tried and successful system, I nevertheless determined last fall to adopt the clover lay, which is a single bar sharing with as many harrowings as the particular situation of the ground may require; in this mode there is much saving of labor, & a great gain in pasture. My lands being in general very light, I am sanguine in the expectation of a favorable result with the usual smiles of Providence.

I will conclude, sir, with a short statement of my force, and the facilities which enable me to farm it to an unusual advantage. I work in the field 9 able men—have a blacksmith and miller—3 women who spin, weave, &c. and 2 boys who are as yet but a convenience. The labour of the women supply the family with every article of clothing and assist occasionally about the farm. I keep 20 strong work horses, and 2 yoke of oxen. I have a little mill near my house, where I manufacture all my grain of every description, plaster &c. Some of my men are handy at the necessary occupations on which the success of a farm must depend—which relieves me from the expence, and disappointments generally attending the occupation. I do nothing for the public in the way of grinding, sawing, weaving, shoemaking, &c.—My flour I haul principally to market with my own teams, keeping one steadily on the road, and occasionally assisting with another—by their return from market, I get my plaster, which has generally come home very cheap to me. I forgot to mention in its proper place, that I employed additional labor in harvest. I her annex a statement of my crops for the last three years, remarking that the minor crops do not bear the proportionate increase with my wheat; because having been added in general only by the plaster, without the grand and substantial co-operation of the clover. The estimate is as correct as in my power to make from memorandums and memory; and as the great object of communications of this kind is to form and stimulate the indolent, and unbelieving farmer, so I presume it is not criminal the want of the most perfect exactness—and I am sure you will pardon any errors in the communication of a plain farmer.

I am respectfully yours,

NIMROD FARROW.

Memorandum of Crops of the years 1810, 11 & 12.

Table with 2 columns: Year (1810, 1811, 1812) and Crop/Weight. Lists items like bushels of wheat, barrels of corn, and pounds of butter with their respective weights and values.