

Washing Away Our Farms.

Dallas Co., Texas.

Farm and Ranch:

Although there are being discussed throughout the State a number of questions concerning the welfare of the people of Texas, one of the most important matters, in the opinion of the writer, that needs attention is seldom discussed by the people or the press. Right at present, as will be shown later, is an opportune time to try to bring this matter to the attention of the public.

As all will admit the prosperity of Texas is dependent very largely upon its farms. And it is practically certain that for many years to come the greater part of the wealth of the state will be produced in its corn and cotton fields. So the fact that every year a large area of farming land in Texas is damaged more or less, and will be eventually ruined if conditions continue as they are, ought to cause every Texan some concern.

There is reason for believing that the intrinsic value of the farm lands of Texas is today several million dollars less than it was a year ago. We have just experienced an unusually wet winter and spring. As one result the farms are poorer by an immense amount of their best soil, now in the Gulf of Mexico and in the beds and valleys of the various creeks and rivers. Some may object that this estimate is unreasonably large. It may be that it is. It is clearly impossible to show just how much the farms in the State

have been damaged, but that a large per cent of the upland farms have been appreciably damaged can be easily proved. Also that a great many farms have been considerably damaged. And the fact can be established that a number of tracts of land that were considered of some value as farms a year ago are now ruined for all time for farming purposes because they can be reclaimed or reseeded only at a prohibitive cost.

It is not easy for the average man to fully realize that a large amount of soil is annually removed from the upland farms. It is not often that a great amount is washed off any one farm during one rain. And usually before the next heavy rain comes, the land has been plowed and the evidence of the wash from the first rain has been largely covered up. The very fact that this continual loss of soil is but rarely so great at any one time to cause alarm makes the danger more serious. It will be harder to get the farmers to try to protect their lands. As stated above, now is an opportune time to discuss this problem. After the recent long and heavy rainy season there is plenty of evidence in nearly every community to show how unprotected land has suffered. In fact, there has been so much evidence in various sections of the State that it seems remarkable that so little has been said about it. Not only people, the newspapers, whose business it is to look out for unusual occurrences, have expressed but little if any concern about this great loss of wealth to the

State. As an illustration of this, one of the large daily papers of North Texas considered it important enough for editorial mention that the roads in its home county had been damaged to an extent estimated to be \$50,000 by the heavy rains. Not a line was written about the damage that the farms of the county had suffered, and the amount was probably several times more than the figure named for the damage to the roads. This soil loss is indeed an insidious evil, and it is high time the public is made aware of its seriousness.

It may be thought by some that the loss can not be prevented if the farms are to be kept in cultivation. The rain water running off is bound to carry some of the soil with it, they will say. The writer is not an agriculturist nor professes to be expert in the matter of farm drainage. I believe, though, that it would not be difficult for an expert agriculturist to show how the rain water falling on any ordinary farm can be drained off without carrying any appreciable amount of soil with it. Or else he could show how the land could be thoroughly protected by terracing, etc. However, it should be much easier to convince any intelligent person that a very large per cent of the soils washed off of the farms in Texas every year could be saved at a very little trouble and expense to each individual farmer. When a man lays off the rows in a field so that they have a heavy grade or slope, how can any one fail to see that the field will wash badly? During a heavy rain each row becomes a small ravine. If the

soil was literally asphalt it would wash some. The average man thinks of Texas as a level country. The per cent of its good upland farms that are so level as to be entirely safe from wash when the rows are laid off with no regard to the lay of the land is small. The per cent of its uplands that have considerable slope is large. It is seldom that the rows in a field can be laid off straight and the loss of soil from wash be reduced to a minimum.

A stranger in Texas would almost be justified in concluding there was a State law like those of the Medes and Persians, "which altereth not," that compelled farmers to plan cotton and corn in straight rows. Or that crops would not grow in Texas unless planted in straight. He would find, with very few exceptions, farmers lay off the rows straight whether they have a heavy grade or not. The rows almost invariably run parallel or at right angles to the fences. With this as a guide, they go up hill and down hill, and seldom around the hills, which they should do.

Straight rows: that is the principal reason that Texas loses every year unnecessarily a large amount of its best upland soil. The remedy is plain. Fit the rows to the lay of the land instead of the fence.

The time may come when a man will not be allowed to cultivate a farm in such a haphazard way that its top and richest layer of soil will soon be washed away and the farm practically ruined for the use of future generations. And he may also be held accountable for aiding in destruction of

the creeks and rivers, causing them to fill up their channels and consequently overflowing more often to the damage of the crops on the bottom farms. Such a proposal would be frowned upon now as a visionary idea by many "practical farmers." Some of the sons and heirs of these "practical farmers" will probably see the day when they will wish that their fathers had been compelled by law to conserve their farms.

The surest and probably the most feasible way now to remedy this evil which is costing Texas dearly is to instruct the farmers and their sons in some of the principles of scientific agriculture. This can be done in two ways: by sending experts out to lecture to the farmers; or by sending the farmers, or their sons, to school to study agriculture and become, in some measure, experts themselves. This latter is undoubtedly the better method and the more expensive one. The cost, however, of taking a regular or short term course in agriculture at A. & M. College is comparatively low now. And still it would doubtless be a good economic policy for the state to expend large sums to decrease the cost and in urging the farmers to take advantage of it.

W. W. LILLARD.

Tobacco Is Curing Good.

Mr. W. Y. Gordon, who was here Monday from the Flat Shoal section, stated that the farmers of his section were curing their tobacco good and that the crop was turning out good notwithstanding the dry weather. We have heard similar reports from other sections of the county.

Watermelon By "Faceful" Too Much For Daughter.

That a colored man or woman likes watermelon by the mouthful is axiomatic; but there is, at least, one colored woman in the city who does not like it by the "faceful" and when anybody serves it to her in that mode she is going to call up "p'lice station" and have the dignity of hers truly and the State appeased.

That colored woman is Daughter Lee. The charge was brought against John Banks, colored, that he had assaulted Daughter with watermelon, not a melon in toto, but just a gob of it indeed, when John pushed the luscious bit of melon into her face, as much of it went into her eyes and nose as into her mouth and good-naturedly she testified that she calmly "gouged" it out.

Daughter said that the melon was cut and that she gave another girl a slice of it and that made John mad and he proceeded to turn the delicacy into a munition of war. The case was dismissed. — Winston-Salem Journal.

Dr. A. S. Mitchell
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