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Agriculture.

THE VALUE OF LEVEL TERRACES.

Mr. Blacknall Replies to Mr Coolman and Explains Some Points in His Previous Letter.

Correspondence of The Progressive Farmer.

I thank Mr Coolman for his criticism of my article on level terracing. I see that I was not sufficiently explicit. I will now try to be so.

He is right as to its danger. But that is only when it is not properly and thoroughly done. All bad terracing and bad hillside ditching is dangerous. Level terracing badly done is infinitely more so.

In level terracing there must be

A TERRACE FOR EVERY THREE FEET

of fall, the distance between the terraces, of course, being dependant on whether the field slopes gradually or rapidly. The right way is to go to the top of the hill and run one terrace three feet below that apex and so on down every three feet.

Secondly, the terrace

MUST BE ACCURATELY RUN.

Cheaper levels without telescopes can be used, but we use one made specially for the purpose, provided with small telescope, spirit level and adjusting screws. It cost $25, but one would answer for a whole neighborhood, and being most substantially made of brass will last for a generation. I consider it about the best investment made in my twenty-nine years' experience as a business man. So accurate is it that I could set it in one place and run off a ditch or terrace 300 yards distant, detecting a variation of half an inch, or even less.

Thirdly, the banks on the lower side of each terrace must at once be

THROWN UP HIGH AND STRONG

We have at last hit upon an ideal two-horse plow for the purpose. It has a very large swivel wing, which at every turn is swung over so as to throw the furrow down hill. The terrace line marked off with small stakes and then a furrow, begin at this furrow with your hillside plow, plowing backward and forward along the terrace line and above it, throwing each furrow down hill. Mr Coolman and all good farmers understand this. Continue thus until say a dozen furrows are run. Then begin again on the lower side of same terrace and repeat the plowing four, five or six times, plowing two or three furrows wide every time till the bank is two feet high and say twenty to thirty furrows broad.

If practicable each of these plowings could be continued higher up or even to the lower side of the terrace above. This would involve some six plowings of the whole field, which is much more than the average farmer can even think of. Besides, if all done at once, it would leave a strip bare of soil several feet broad just below each terrace, caused by the shifting of soil down hill in the plowing to form the terrace. By plowing the terraces only, five or six times and the intervening spaces once or twice each year, the soil will be gradually shifted down hill and the settling of the water in this bare strip—which it will do more or less as it is more or less of a depression—will little by little make it the richest part of the strip.

Proper terracing involves some outlay for proper implements—the ordinary hillside flow is a toy—and some labor. But its advantages are immense. From all indications it will fully

DOUBLE THE VALUE OF ALL OUR LAND

in less, apparently much less, than ten years. The advantages are so very great over sloping terraces that we are discarding them entirely. Within a few years we shall have our rolling and hilly land a series of level stairsteps, or rather have each strip between the terraces sloping up hill. That is constant plowing, throwing every furrow down hill, will make the upper edge of this strip lower than the lower end, if I may be allowed a Hibernicism. This will, almost absolutely,

PREVENT ALL WASHING,

the water largely soaking into the soil where it falls, to its gradual enrichment. Land thus treated suffers appreciably less from drought, though it cannot, as a rule, be plowed as soon after a rain.

I am sure that an observant gentleman like Mr. Coolman has often noticed the beneficial effect of a chance made natural terrace. He has seen a road or hedgerow run about level around a hill, and the grass and weed selvage of the road catch the soil washed down till it leveled up and became the richest part of the field, while the soil below washed away. This is the end sought in level terracing, only that a series of terraces will leave no part of the field to wash away.

This end can never be attained or even approached by

A FALLING TERRACE

All that can be done is to catch the water at intervals and carry it off more slowly than it would naturally run. The slope between the terraces is little if ever lessened. True the cotton or corn beds can control the water better than our flat strawberry beds and let it down more gradually into the run above the sloping terrace. But washing rains are most apt to come in spring when the land is freshly plowed and before the cotton or corn beds are built up. Moreover, the best system of farming condemns these beds and advises level culture.

Sloping terraces are very much better than none at all. But the ideal system is beyond question that of level terraces.

Now as to

THE STABILITY OF LEVEL TERRACES.

The spring of 1901 saw the most disastrous washing rains that have fallen here within living memory. We had a good deal of land freshly terraced. Where the terraces were incomplete, not properly run, or with too much fall between them, they broke and gave me trouble. Those properly run and completed stood like the house built on the rock. Those terraces with their fringe of grass which we from the first allow to grow three feet wide along the crest—mowing the weeds—will next spring and summer be able to defy almost the weather that Noah saw.

As it happened our completed terraces were on the very worst land we had as to holding. It was both hilly and sandy and the sand inclined to drift. Only one of these broke, and that at a low place caused by an error in running off.

O. W. BLACKNALL.

Vance Co., N. C.

NEITHER THEORY NOR PRACTICE SHOULD STAND ALONE.

No advocate of agricultural education has ever maintained that mere study, even of books on agriculture, will fit a young man for farming. Far from it. We are well aware that nothing can take the place of a thorough apprenticeship in every department of farm work, and that no amount of theoretical, or even practical knowledge of the minutest details can attain success, without good management and the constant exercise of industry, prudence, and economy. What we do maintain is that neither theory nor practice should stand alone; but that they should go hand in hand, and the farm apprentice receive instruction in both. In fact, we are unable to see how any one can doubt the statement that the young man who has chosen agriculture as his occupation, will be benefited by acquainting himself with the experiences of the most successful farmers, by studying their practice and discussing the principles and maxims which guide them on the way to success.—Dr. James Mills, President Ontario Agricultural College.

President Roosevelt has gone on record as opposed to chopping off horses' tails in servile imitation of English cads, and has filled his stables with Hambletonians, with fine flowing tails, such as nature has endowed them with. It is to be hoped that the President's example will be followed by that branch of "society" who sneeze when those in high places take snuff, and the worse than foolish custom of docking will lose caste.—Farm and Ranch.

HARRY FARMER'S TALKS.

LVI.

Correspondence of The Progressive Farmer.

The Civil War closed in April, and we were then old enough to enjoy all the sports of the small boy. It was the Christmas of that year when we had

OUR FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH SANTA CLAUS

We were told how he traveled around with his wagon drawn by a reindeer with long branching horns and would come down the chimney with so many nice things to put in the stockings of the little ones. We just wanted Christmas to come! We commenced preparing for it the last of October.

There were several of us and mother had to knit our stockings. The skeins had to be held while she wound the yarn on the ball, and as we were the oldest boy, it fell to our lot to hold the skeins. In order to keep us from going to sleep, she would tell us the many stories of Santa Claus until we became so impatient for the time to come.

A PIG TO FATTEN.

Two or three times a week we had to count the number of Sundays before Christmas would come. Would it ever come? Could we wait? It was first nine weeks, then eight weeks, then seven weeks and then six weeks before we could notice anything being done for the greatest, grandest and best time of the whole year. The pig to furnish sausage, pudding, spare-ribs and backbone was put in the pen made of nice new rails just out of the long leaf pine. Of course, we had to help. Some of the rails were too heavy for us to lift, but we did all that we could. The first thing done was to lay the floor, after which we made the pen and put in some straw. When the pig was brought and put in. He was a year old or more, for people thought a pig younger than that was not fit to eat. He was a bright cherry red, long and slender, with bristles as long as your hand. We did not dare to go too close at first for he would smack his mouth and make such a terrible groan that it would make the hair rise on our heads, but we had to go to see him a dozen times a day and give him some bread, sweet potatoes, acorns and anything that we thought he would eat. It was a week or more before he would eat while we were near. We thought of Christmas and Santa Claus every time we went to that pig pen.

THE SEASON DRAWS NEAR.

One night mother finished our stockings and we hung it up over the fire place to see how it would look. We wondered if Santa Claus would give any more than he did to other children.

At last the great time was drawing nearer, for the turkey and chickens were caught and put in the coops to fatten. Mother had finished all the stockings and was making our new clothes, which she had just woven in the old loom. We quit counting weeks now and just counted days. We would hang up that new stocking almost every night to be sure to have it all right. We wondered many times how it would look when the many nice things were in it.

THE FINAL PREPARATIONS

We counted again, it was but two more nights, and then the great time would come. The bier was now filled with sweet potatoes to be made into pies. (The people in this section use sweet potatoes, just as people do pumpkins at the North, for making pies.) We would stay around the kitchen, and if perchance a pie was scorched it was given to us to eat. While the cook would hate such a mishap, it only made us happy when we peeped under and saw some black spots. The cooking was done in a large fire place and spiders and ovens were used instead of a stove. We were told to put some wood on and under the oven in which the pies were baked. The cook often scolded us for making too much fire.

Night came on and we were told that Santa Claus did not like children that did not wash their feet at night, so we must try to do this job better than ever. How particular we were that he should not have any reason to miss our stocking! There was one job that we did not like, but it must be done, for its neglect would mar the looks of everything, and that was to sweep the yard. So we hurried off to the woods and gathered some limbs from the low dog wood trees to make brooms. The old oak and hickory trees just seemed to us as if they wanted to scatter more leaves, acorns, hickory nuts and shells over the yard at this particular time than ever before. Before night the leaves and other trash were not to be seen in that yard.

This was the last night before we would hang our stocking to receive the blessed gifts. We went to sleep thinking of Santa Claus. Early next morning we were told that there were many things to be done. The turkey and chickens must be killed and a large lot of wood must be carried to the house. We must not have any work to do on Christmas day.

All of these jobs were finished by night and we were very tired. But look, yonder toward the store! There was a huge ball of fire thrown this way and that way, some times high up in the air. The boys had gone to an old turpentine still and wet a ball of cotton with spirits of turpentine and had set it afire and were throwing it around just like boys throw a baseball. We were too small, or at least too scared, to help in this sport. So after they had burnt two balls of cotton we went home.

CHRISTMAS NIGHT.

It was about six o'clock when we entered the house. Father was in one corner reading. Mother had one of the youngest children in her lap getting him to sleep. Now we had some contention about which nail each one of us should have. At last we agreed and hung up our stockings and went to bed, but not to sleep, for we lay there listening for old Santa Claus. But at last tired nature could hold out no longer, so we were soon in the land of dreams.

About half past three o'clock we waked up and lay there awhile rolling on first one side then on the other. It was not long before we discovered that we were not the only one awake, for one of our brothers asked us if it were not time to get up. We talked in a whisper at first, then out loud; the next thing was to jump out of bed and run into the sitting room and make a light, which was easily done by putting a piece of pitch pine on the bed of oak coals. Yes, there were the marks in the back of the chimney. Now the fire light showed a lot of little stockings full away above the heels.

We hesitated a minute, then took hold and felt to see if there really was anything in them. At last we ran our hand down and drew out a nice red apple, then some raisins, nuts of different kinds, such as English walnuts, almonds, filberts and Brazil nuts which we called "pig toes," and several large sticks of candy, red and white striped. Could we ever eat all of them? The raisins were something new to us, but we tasted one to see if they were good and found that they were one of the best things that we had ever eaten. Then we had to try some nuts. We ate one and counted to see how many we had. After eating awhile we got tired and went back to bed and slept a short nap. Listen, what was that noise? It was the firing of guns. Did you ever hear so many in your life? Then daylight came, then breakfast.

Now we must run over to our neighbors and tell them the wonderful things that good old Santa Claus had brought us. One little boy showed us some fire crackers. He told up to get some fire and touch that little string, that it would shoot "Bang!" And the little red stick was torn all to pieces! We would have willingly given all that we got in our stocking for just one little pack of fire crackers.

We played around awhile and went to our traps, for we had caught a few birds before. Then we ate dinner. The afternoon seemed very long and soon after sunset we went to bed, sick and sleepy, just as thousands of children will do this week.

But we wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

HARRY FARMER.

Columbus Co., N. C.

A STUDY OF VARIETIES.

Correspondence of The Progressive Farmer.

One of the surest ways to success on the farm is to be sure that the right variety is raised so that the high prices which are always paid for the choicest can be obtained. Fruits, vegetables, grains and other farm products show a difference in prices in the market which very often settles the whole question of profit and loss.

One particular variety will bring a cent or two more than any other, and no matter how well we raise the less popular articles we can never hope to equal the popular ones. Thus Danish seed cabbages invariably bring about a dollar a hundred, or a cent apiece more than the ordinary cabbages, and it costs no more to raise them. It is true that a little more is demanded for the seed, but what a difference in the returns when one is selling cabbages in the market by the thousands.

White onions early in the fall invariably bring rather more than red or yellow, and yet on many soils the first produces just as good a crop as the other two. There is an equal difference between Hubbard and Marrow squashes, and between turnips, tomatoes and lima beans.

This difference in the aggregate is so great that if one will take a pencil and paper and figure it out, there will be seen the exact reason why failure instead of success has come. If one saved a few dollars in the spring in the purchase of seed by taking the less popular varieties, he will now have to add to his returns the extra amount that he would have received had they all been of the very best.

A good many farmers go upon the theory that they know all about the qualities of the different farm products, and because they do not think one variety any superior to another, therefore it is not worth paying the extra price for the seed. That sort of reasoning is all right so long as it is confined to products raised for the home table, but the man who is raising farm products for commercial purposes, should not consult his individual preference. It is simply what the market demands. If consumers are willing to pay a little extra for certain variety of fruit or vegetable, it is the farmer's duty to raise that whether or not he considers it better. Some times it is the appearance of a product that causes the extra price, and again it may be a certain flavor or quality which the grower might not like or appreciate. It is to his interest, however, to raise it so long as the demand continues. Therefore, a study in varieties just now might prove a profitable business. Now is the time to consider what varieties command the best prices in the market, so the seeds can be purchased another season in time. A little study of that nature at this time of the year might prove very profitable by another fall.

S. U. ADAMS.

NORTH CAROLINA'S SMALL FRUITS.

Some idea of the importance already assumed by the small fruit culture in this State may be had from a statement just published of shipments the past season of strawberries alone from points below Goldsboro on the Atlantic Coast Line system.

The Carolina Fruit and Truck Growers' Journal, the official organ of the East Carolina Truck and Fruit Growers' Association, contains a tabulation of the total shipments of strawberries last season from the various stations along the different divisions of the Atlantic Coast Line system in North Carolina and South Carolina.

The total number of crates shipped during the season was 331,360, or an aggregation of 10,903,520 quarts. On the W. & W. Road, Mt. Olive leads with 50,326 crates, Rose Hill following with 36,579, Wallace, 34,375, Teachey's, 29,124, Rocky Point, 18,709 and Wilmington, coming seventeenth, with 1,351. Total from W. & W. Road 264,518 crates.

On the W. C. & A. Road Chadbourn comes first with 29,104 crates, Grists, 11,055, Florence, 1,997. Total in all 43,343.

Yadkin Division, Atkinson, 3,990, Currie, 3,242, Montague, 1,695. Total from A. & Y., 15,876.

The total shipment in refrigerator cars was 270,216 crates, express cars, 57,759, and ventilated cars 1,387.

This represents, for this crop alone in that territory largely over one million of dollars income to the growers. Besides strawberries the same section ships various kinds of early vegetables and other fruits, and some portions cotton. With favorable seasons what a garden spot this section is, to be sure.—Raleigh Post.

GROW PECANS.

The moral pointed by the following news item from the Kinston Free Press is obvious:

A number of years ago the State Board of Agriculture was urging the farmers of this State to set out pecan and other nut trees, especially recommending pecans because of their peculiar adaptation to our soil and climate. Tuesday we were shown some of these home grown pecans, bought by a Kinston merchant from a Jones county farmer, and were very much surprised at the size and quality of these nuts. They far surpassed any variety ever seen in Kinston before from anywhere, and sell readily at 20 cents per pound. As one tree will bear several bushels of nuts, one can readily see what a profit a grove of these trees would give to the average farmer without scarcely any labor or expense.

BARRENNESS OF CORN AND WHEAT.

Correspondence of The Progressive Farmer.

One of the greatest factors in the production of corn and wheat is the relative amount of barrenness in the stalks. Every farmer is familiar with fields of either grain which promise an abundant yield, but when the counting of the harvest is made there is a great disappointment. It is found that the crop was deceptive. There was more stalk than grain. Every third or fourth stalk in some fields is barren. When grain gets down to such a low state of productivity it is time that some other farming should be resorted to. Yet not a few farmers face this condition and continue to plant the same and hope for better times. Some will lay the blame to the soil, others to the season and a few to the seed or method of cultivation. In my experience I have found that the seed is more at fault than anything else. Provide reasonably fertile soil, and fair cultivation, and good seed will produce a pretty good crop, but on the finest soil and with the best of cultivation run out seed will simply increase the stalk supply and not raise the yield of grain ten bushels. It is not soil or cultivation that will increase the yield of poor seed, but new and better seed.

Not all of us appreciate the power of running out that is always present in seed. We plant it one or two seasons, and succeed in raising good crops. Unless systematically improved by "breeding" seed, corn or wheat will degenerate at least ten per cent. in a single year. All of our crops have been raised to their present high standard through artificial means of breeding and selection, and they will return to their original state in a short time if not prevented by the very conditions which raised them up. Now the average farmer cannot breed and improve seed. That is not his work, but he can insist that seed be sold to him that has not been run out. By insisting upon wheat and corn that represent the highest possible productiveness, the farmer can increase his yield per acre much better than by spending anxious moments and a good deal of money in fertilizing and cultivating the fields. The one absolute essential is wheat and corn that has been systematically bred to the point where the highest possible returns can be had from every single stalk that comes up. We want no barren stalks, or very few at least.

T. L. RIDDING.