

Professor Massey's Editorial Page.

The Great Need of Southern Soils and How to Supply It.

LONG AGO BECAME convinced that any farmer whose money crop is either cotton or wheat need never buy nitrogen in any form if he farms right in a short rotation and uses the legume crops wisely. The Southern papers are always full of advice to the farmer to diversify his crops and grow his "supplies." The writers in these papers have a very dim idea of what they mean by diversification. Mere diversification and the growing of a variety of crops is not what is needed. It is a rotation properly planned for the increased production in an economical manner of his staple crop. Feed for his stock, of course, every farmer should produce in abundance, but there is no need for his growing a little of everything his climate and soil may produce. While the cotton farmer should not be a one-crop farmer, he should be a specialist in the sense that all his farming should be directed to the increase of the productiveness of his land in cotton, and his rotation of crops should be planned with that end in view.

If he plans a short rotation in which the peas come in often on his land, he can avoid the purchase of ammonia or nitrogen in a fertilizer, and can get it through the peas and the feeding of cattle with these. But there will still be a waste of the mineral matters from his soil. This will be smaller with the cotton farmer than any one else if nothing but cotton is sold from his land, but there will, nevertheless, be a waste of phosphorus and potassium that must be made good. Shall he restore these simply for the production of a sale crop of cotton, or shall he use them more wisely to increase the growth of the pea crop and thus get more forage, and more nitrogen fixed in the soil? It seems to me that the best use of fertilizers, the true use of them, is to thus increase the crop that feeds soil and stock, and in the end will do more towards the increase of the productiveness of his soil rather than to use them on the sale crop direct.

The legume crops, like the cowpea, are greedy consumers of phosphoric acid and potash, and their growth as forage and their work as nitrogen-gathers is greatly increased by a liberal use of these on the crop. The result will be, that the farmer has a larger amount of forage to feed, makes more profit from the cattle and has a larger amount of manure for his money crop. Save half the cost of the commercial fertilizer by leaving out the ammonia and then put on the pea crop phosphoric acid and potash equal in value to the complete fertilizer that would have been used.

In short, the great need of the cotton farmer is cotton grown at less cost, and the cost can be lessened most by the production of legume forage and the feeding of it with the corn crop on the farm. Growing abundance of the best forage and corn and feeding it to live stock, abandoning the purchase of the low grade complete mixtures and depending on the phosphoric acid and potash to make the forage, will do more to cheapen the cost of the cotton crop than anything that can be done. The cotton farms need nitrogen, but they need it in humus-making materials like peas and stable manure, and it can be gotten in this way without cost. Growing forage and feeding cattle and hogs is just as profitable to the cotton farmer as to any other class, and live stock lie at the very foundation of all rational soil improvement, no matter what the money crop may be.

It is interesting, of course, to know how much corn can be made on an acre of land regardless of expense, but I do not think that even Mr. Batts would care to treat his whole crop as he treated the prize acre. Still the fact remains that whenever there is a prize for the largest yield per acre it is always made in the South, and with the Southern prolific corn. But what is more to the point, and more encouraging than a big crop of corn on a single acre, is an account like the following which I have just received from eastern North Carolina:

Prize Acres and Paying Crops.

"I have read with much pleasure Mr. Batts's report in The Progressive Farmer and Gazette of how he made 226 2-3 bushels of corn on one acre. But it appears to me that that 226 bushels of corn cost him entirely too much to make.

"I have made over three thousand bushels of corn this year on about seventy-five acres at a cost of less than 20 cents per bushel on land that four years ago didn't average more than seven or eight bushels per acre. I don't believe there is a single acre on my farm this year but has made over 30 bushels of corn, and this, too, without commercial fertilizer. I have on some of my lands averaged as high as 65 bushels per acre with 100 pounds 16 per cent acid and 25 pounds sulphate of potash per acre, which is the largest amount of commercial fertilizer I have used to corn.

"My motto is to make the very biggest crop possible with the least expense, and at the same time make my land more fertile, and I absolutely know I can add to the fertility of my soil every year and never use any commercial fertilizer unless it is a little acid and potash. On two acres this year I have made five bales of cotton, averaging 565 pounds per bale. For these five bales I got 14 1/2 cents per pound and sold all the seed from the five bales for \$2 per bushel. The two acres netted about six hundred dollars, for I only used about 400 pounds fertilizer to the acre. I only planted 8 acres to cotton this time, but have gotten 29 bales from the 18 acres. The two acres just spoken of will

nearly pay expenses of my entire crop.

"I have been farming only three years, and what little success I have worked out along this line, I must attribute to my close adherence to the principles you are constantly advocating. For myself, I want to thank you out of the fullness of my heart for what you and your labors have done for me."

This is the sort of letter that encourages us in our efforts to improve Southern farming, for it is the making of profitable crops that we need in the South, the making of good crops at the minimum of cost, and the permanent improvement of the land while making them. One friend writes that he would like to have that acre of Mr. Batts's to plant strawberries on this spring. He thinks that he would make more than the corn made with no more fertilizer. It would, of course, be interesting to know what the residual effect of the heavy manuring Mr. Batts made will be on the succeeding crops, and I hope he will test it.

Notes and Comments.

THE EDITOR is right in saying that the making of 150 bushels of corn or more on a single acre by extra fertilization and a prolific corn is valuable as showing what is possible to be done, but it is far more important to show how to make 50 to 75 bushels of corn per acre on the whole of a man's field by good farming and less expenditure.

THE STOCK FEED FRAUD.—Dr. Butler's article about stock medicine swindles goes to the point. When I was chief editor of a farm paper I kicked against the stock feed advertisements, but the owner said: "We cannot afford to drop them, for they pay \$3,000 a year." The Progressive Farmer and Gazette could easily get that, too, if it was disposed to look after the \$3,000 instead of looking after the real interests of the farmers who read the paper. We are trying to make a paper that will help the farmers and not swindle them.

OUR MOST NEGLECTED CROP.—Professor Barrow's paper should be studied. It is applicable not only to South Carolina, but to the whole South, for, as he says, if the increase in crops does not keep pace with increased expenditure for fertilizers there must finally come an end to it all. As Professor Barrow well says, the manure crop is now the most important one for the South, and the success of the manure crop depends on the growing of more forage and the feeding of more forage and the feeding of the cottonseed meal instead of letting it go to be fed in the North and in Europe to enrich other lands.

"You need five drugs," said a foolish physician to a patient: "water, food, air, sleep, and exercise." But the patient sought another doctor, and the foolish physician died poor.

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