PLOW-HANDLE TALKS

PASTURES AND THE CARE OF MANURE.

IN YOUR comment on my article published on page 6 of issue of November 25, I am sure you misunderstood what I said in regard to putting poor and damp lands in pasture. I was writing under the head of a four-field, or four-year rotation, and first intended the reader to get the idea that poor land could be started up cheaper in pasture than any other way.

We all know that many fields in the South have been so depleted of vegetable matter as to render them almost worthless, and in such cases it is too expensive to undertake to build them up to a state of yielding anything like a paying crop of any sort, with any sort of fertilizer. In such cases the droppings of the stock, with what vegetable matter would grow, would put the land in better condition for a cultivated crop. All this could be going on while the lowlands furnish plenty of grass for the stock, and not unsightly "brushes and bulrushes." No wise farmer will allow those things to grow in his pasture. I agree that such is "decidedly poor farming." In north Alabama, there are many low places that will forever pay better in pasture than anything else, on account of the cost of drainage.

Again, I agree with the Editor, that where the low place is of sufficient size to pay for the work of draining, it should be done. I believe a wise farmer will make every acre of his land do its part, even if he has to cut down his fields to what he could till well, and leave the remaining acres to grow up in pine saplings. In time they will make trees, and trees will make lumber.

Now, Mr. Editor, in regard to leaving the manure uncovered as you suggest, I wish to refer you to Bulletin No. "A"-72, issued January 11, 1911, from the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., by Dr. S. A. Knapp:

> "If the manure is left exposed to the elements, the water from rains easily and rapidly leaches out the soluble plant food. On the other hand, if the manure is allowed to heat, a large amount of nitrogen is driven off into the atmosphere; so in order to get the most valuable manure, both of these sources of loss must be avoided. There are several ways of accomplishing this. Probably the best plan where it is practicable is to haul the manure direct upon the land and plow it in, shallow on clay soils, deeper on sandy lands."

This covers the two points that I suggest: (1) do not let it accumulate in bulk or heat; (2) do not leave it exposed to leach out.

W. H. ELROD.

Porterville, Ala.

Editorial Comment: We do not think there is much disagreement between Mr. Elrod and the writer on the first point. Mr. Elrod was using his cattle, feeding them liberally meanwhile, to build up his poor land, a practice The Progressive Farmer has always advocated. The writer was protesting against the too common idea that land fit for nothing else would do for pasture—that is, could be expected to furnish a living for livestock. It was merely a matter of a little misapprehension on both sides.

As to the second point, it may be said, with all due respect to the lamented Dr. Knapp, that his fear that the fertilizing value of the manure would be lost when the manure was spread on the land and left uncovered was entirely groundless. On this point we think practically all authorities are agreed, and we stick to our assertion: The thing to do with the manure is to get it on the land as soon as possible; whether it is covered or not is of little matter.

HOW A POOR FIELD WAS MADE RICH.

I READ with a good deal of interest the letter of Mr. W. H. Elrod in the issue of November 25, and also the "Editorial Comment," and must say that I agree with Mr. Elrod rather than the comment by the Editor.

I have had quite a deal of experience with wet land and also poor hill land. I have some very wet land, fresh and good, but so wet that to cultivate it cost more than the crop was worth, and I turned it out for pasture and never saw better pasture than it is, and it got better the longer it was pastured. I had some ridge land in the same field that seemed to be entirely exhausted of all plant food, and under the same treatment as the wet land it improved also until it is now as fine land as there is in this community.

I will now tell how I treated that field. I was running a dairy on a small scale and had a few fine Jersey cows. Those cows were fed twice a day on cottonseed meal and hulls and most of the time some wheat bran. When I began to pasture the land it would have taken three or four acres to have carried one cow, but after a year or two one acre was more than sufficient for one cow. In the spring, summer and fall months the cows were turned back into the pasture after having been milked at night, and the droppings were equally distributed all over the pasture and hence the reason is very plain why the land got better all the time. The hill part of the field was better in the early spring, but as the weather grew hotter and dryer the wet land held the moisture longer and in the fall the wet land could be cut for hay after pasturing all summer.

It is a well known fact among all students of farm economy that dairying will resuscitate land faster than any other known method, and in all dairying districts the farmers, as a rule, are not only the most thrifty, but their farms are permanently improved.

There is no such thing as getting something for nothing, and if cattle, or any other livestock, are put on a poor pasture and not fed, the stock will not only fail to thrive but the pasture will get poorer rather than better, but on the other hand, as above stated, if the dairy cows are well fed the year round the land will get better all along.

Just as Mr. Elrod says, there are thousands of acres of old tough bottom land that will not make enough to pay for cultivation, that if turned out and pastured by dairy cattle would yield a good revenue for owners, and the milk and butter would bring in money the year round when sold, to say nothing of the fine pigs that could be raised on the sour milk. This kind of management on our Southern farms is really the solution of the boll weevil plague.

JNO L. EVANS.

Florence, Miss.

A BELIEVER IN RED CLOVER.

I AM A strict adherent to the clovers—common red and mammoth. While I am aware of the great value of peas, soy beans, etc., I believe clovers, where they are adapted, are the most economical way of improving the soil. Clover adapts itself to most any kind of soil where there is not too much deficiency of lime in