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Are We Content to Remain Miners Instead of Farmers?

FEW men are able to build for the future. This seems to be a special failing of the present-day American. Perhaps it is inseparable from a land of great and diverse opportunities; but after giving all excuses for the failure of the Southern farmer to use legumes in the building of soil fertility their full weight, we are still filled with wonder as to why Southern soils are not more rapidly improved by the growing of more legumes.

All agree that the growing and plowing under of legumes is the most rapid, easiest and most economical method of increasing crop yields. It is also generally accepted that there is no better feed for livestock than the legumes, that the manure made from feeding them is of high quality and that stable manure has a marvelous effect on practically all soils in increasing crop yields. In short, one may look through agricultural literature, or interview all good farmers and find no difference of opinion as to the value of legumes in our agriculture.

Why, then, are they not more extensively grown? We can conceive of but one reason: The gains are for the future, the returns are not always immediate and direct. We are better miners than farmers, think more of this year's crop and the money to be obtained from it than of future crops.

Anyone who has plowed a crop of cowpeas, soy beans, crimson clover or other legume into an average poor Southern soil, or made a liberal application of stable manure to such a soil knows that the crop is regularly increased from 25 per cent to double the former yields. For instance, Duggar in Alabama obtained an increase in the sorghum crop of 59 per cent or three tons per acre the second year after cowpeas, and 61 per cent or 3.1 tons of sorghum hay the second year after velvet beans. He also obtained an increase of 660 pounds of seed cotton per acre or a gain of 72 per cent, after plowing under velvet beans.

These are not unusual results on our average poor lands. It is not theory, but actual results. No one doubts the facts. Indeed, everyone knows that such increased yields are the common results of the plowing-under of legumes, and yet the majority of farmers continue planting cotton and corn and harvesting yields which are not profitable. One would think that every farmer in the whole Cotton Belt would at once plan to plow under a crop of some legume on every acre to be planted to cotton and corn next year. If the benefits were only on the first crops, this would make the growing of legumes profitable, but, as stated above, the increase in the crop of sorghum hay, even the second year, was from 59 to 61 per cent.

It seems like needless repetition to recount these well-known facts and yet not one-fourth the lands in cotton and corn this year grew a crop of legumes last year, much less had such a crop plowed into the soil. The results will be our average crop of 15 to 20 bushels of corn and 175 to 200 pounds of lint cotton per acre, when two-thirds of the

land would easily grow a larger crop after having one crop of legumes plowed into it.

It is safe to state that in any other business on earth, a demonstration of a method by which the cost of production could be reduced to the extent that the growing of legumes will decrease the cost of producing a bushel of corn or a pound of cotton would be generally adopted. Why then do we not grow more legumes?

Many would be the reasons given were the farmers of the South to be individually asked this question. The two most common excuses are, the difficulty in preparing the land at a time when corn and cotton need cultivation, and the high cost of seed. The first is only valid when we plant too large a proportion of our lands to corn and cotton, and the second is no excuse at all. If the seed are too high, why not grow them and secure some of the big profits? Moreover, when a reasonable and fair proportion of the land now planted to cotton is put to growing legumes, as it should be, it can be prepared, for it takes no more time to prepare the

land for sowing legumes than for planting corn or cotton.

There is but one reason for our neglect of the legumes. We have not yet fully realized the necessity for increasing the productiveness of our soils. We are still satisfied with the low yields of corn and cotton, because these crops, having been our regular crops for so long, are easier to handle and supply our immediate needs.

Grow more legumes, even if the corn and cotton acreage must be reduced, and grow them and plow them under if the livestock are not available to consume them; but by all means and in any event grow more legumes as the one best means of increasing farm profits.



CRIMSON CLOVER AND WHEAT—SEE ARTICLE ON PAGE 4.

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