

THE PROGRESSIVE FARMER

AND
SOUTHERN FARM GAZETTE

"You can tell by a man's farm whether he reads it or not."

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OUR children will never know enough about farming to make it attractive and profitable until their parents know more about it.

THE North Carolina A. & M. College Farmers' Union local is to have a public meeting for the discussion of the Torrens system. This is an excellent idea and we trust to see other locals take it up. A general discussion and understanding of the Torrens system would result in its enactment into law, not only in North Carolina, but in every other Southern State. Let the Union members study the measure so that they can show other farmers how it would help.

THERE are two letters in this issue calling attention to the State Farmers' Conventions. The man who gets in the habit of attending his State convention each year acquires a habit which adds much to the pleasure, and may add much to the profit of his work. When you start to the meeting next time, persuade one or two of your neighbors to go along. It will do them good. If you have not been going yourself, don't wait to be persuaded but make the start for yourself. It will do you good.

THE army worm is spreading in Georgia and the Carolinas and will do great damage if farmers are not early in the field to dispute possession with him. Use poisons freely. Arsenate of lead, one pound to thirty gallons of water, is best because it will stick so well. Paris green is equally effective, of course, but is more easily washed off. Don't wait for the worms to overrun your fields; get busy as soon as they appear. If you have no sprayer, you can dust the poison on while the plants are damp.

READ what Mr. Jeffers writes this week about alfalfa in Virginia and what Mr. Fant tells about red clover in South Carolina. Southern farmers are learning to grow their own corn, they must now learn to grow their own hay, and we are glad to see such progress being made along this line. It is interesting, too, to note in this connection that Governor Mann, of Virginia, issued a proclamation requesting all farmers of the State to meet August 14 to discuss "The best time and method for the preparation of the ground and the sowing of alfalfa and all the cultivated grasses." A good thing for a Governor to be interested in, but a thing in which it should not require a Governor's proclamation to get a farmer interested.

A MISSISSIPPI Farmers' Union local sends us a copy of a lately adopted resolution petitioning the Secretary of Agriculture to aid Southern farmers to dispose of their cotton crop direct to spinners and thus give the middlemen's profits to the growers. We believe in more direct marketing and we believe that the Department of Agriculture should give more attention to marketing problems, but it is just as well to face facts as they are. Except in possibly a few cases, spinners cannot profitably buy cotton direct from the growers, nor can the Secretary of Agriculture do more than suggest better methods of marketing the crop. The first thing necessary is for farmers to organize, on a business basis, so that their agents, men paid a salary or a commission, can deal directly with the spinners or the exporters. This great problem of economical marketing is not going to be solved by any theory or by political action; it must be worked out by the farmers themselves, and worked out by purely business methods of co-operative handling and selling.

THE North Carolina Geological Survey has issued a press bulletin which every farmer in the Southern hill country should read. Mr. J. L. Holmes, the State Forester, is now in Europe studying conditions there, and the bulletin re-

ferred to contrasts forest conditions in Switzerland with those in the mountain sections of the South. "The first characteristic that strikes the stranger on entering Switzerland," we are told, "is its universal greenness. In every direction there is grass and forest, forest and grass." The lower lands are in grass, the forests extending above to the limits of tree growth. All these forests are under Government supervision and they are handled as permanent investments. The streams which run down from the mountain sides are never muddy and are swollen only at the time of the melting snows. The city of Zurich has a forest which has been properly handled for a thousand years, and it pays a profit of \$20,000 a year, supporting a library and other institutions. Some time this country will learn that it is nothing less than criminal folly to destroy the forests, to let land wash away, and to imagine that these processes of destruction can be left unchecked and the country remain prosperous.

Don't Farm Poor Land.

THE problems of the farmer are many and hard. One of the hardest and the most important of all is the problem of soil fertility.

Fortunate, indeed, is the farmer who has rich land to cultivate. To him, wonderful things are possible. Unfortunately, however, the majority of our farmers do not have rich land to cultivate. The average Southern soil is a poor soil; that is, it does not produce crops large enough to be profitable. The average farmer has to work land like this. Often he has to make a living from land all of this kind. When this is the case, it is evident that he will get only a poor living, no matter how hard he works; and we all know that there are thousands and thousands of Southern farmers who are working steadily and faithfully and getting very meager returns for their labor.

This is an unpleasant fact for us to admit, but it is a fact and we must face it. To attempt to ignore it or to explain it away is not the part of wisdom. It is too big to be ignored. It must be met and mastered. Always the farming of poor land is unprofitable, yet a very large per cent of our Southern lands are poor. The average Southern crop is not a profitable crop—it does not give the farmer a fair reward for his labor.

This being the case, what are we to do about it? Manifestly, there is but one thing. We must quit farming on poor lands. There is but one way for most farmers to do this, and that is, to take the poor land they have and make it good.

This does not sound like an easy thing to do, and it is not. But it is a possible, a practical, a necessary thing to do. It is not a work for one year, or five years, but for all time. Yet five years' or one year's work may make the difference in many cases between profitable and unprofitable crops, between good farming and poor.

If Southern soils are not rich, they can be made rich. We are ourselves largely responsible for the fact that we have poor lands to work. A large per cent of our land was naturally thin, but there was also a large per cent naturally rich which is rich no longer. All that was once fertile, if not washed away, can be restored to fertility, and practically all of our naturally deficient soils can be made more productive than they have ever been.

The process is very simple—on paper. It includes first of all, in the great majority of cases, the addition of vegetable matter to the soil, then the addition of the needed plant foods. Of course, drainage is needed in some cases; in others, the prevention of washing is necessary; the correction of soil acidity is often demanded. Yet, the fundamental plan to be pursued is simple—put vegetable matter into the soil, then add nitrogen and phosphoric acid and, on some soils, potash.

It sounds simple and easy. Any one of us can raise a green crop to plow down, and we are used to buying fertilizers liberally. All of us who have tried it, know, however, that the building up of a poor soil to the point where it will produce paying crops is not as easy as it sounds. It is a work requiring earnest thought and constant care. Often, too, it is slow and hard. Especially is this

the case when the farmer must depend upon this same poor land for a living, while he is trying to improve it, and this is exactly what thousands of farmers have to do.

And they really have to do it. If they go on working poor land, they will continue poor, or become poor themselves. Poor-land farming will not make prosperous farmers, and no matter what else we do, until we get our lands to producing better crops, the agricultural South is going to remain poor, as compared with other sections and other businesses.

This, then, is the great task which confronts Southern farmers. They must settle down to the making of good lands out of their poor ones, with the calm realization that there must be no let-up in their labor, and with the fixed determination to stick to their job until the low average yields of today are things of the past. It is their great opportunity, too; for if soil building is real work, it brings with it the rewards of real work. There is no farmer so poor that he cannot make his farm better; and while the advance may seem slow for a while, as the returns for the work begin to come in he will gradually become able to do more, and as the land becomes better, its improvement will be easier and more rapid. The poorer the land, the more needy the farmer, the greater reason there is for determined effort along this line, and the richer the reward will seem.

It is indeed a task to tax the strength of men—this thing of making good land out of our poor; but the farmers of the South are men and can and will perform it. Failure to do so will mean future hardships for those they love, while its accomplishment will bring a reward richer than most of them have dared to dream.

Don't be a poor-land farmer. You can make your poor land good—not at once, of course, but ultimately,—and whenever you have started it towards fertility and paying crops all the doors of the future are open to you.

Follow Ireland's Example.

WE HAVE heard a great deal in the South about the European agricultural banks, or co-operative credit societies, but the subject has not been thoroughly understood by one person in a hundred. The same thing is true of the co-operative creameries, co-operative poultry societies, etc. The great value of Editor Poe's European letters, therefore, is that he now makes the workings of these organizations perfectly plain, and what he has written should not only be read in our subscribers' homes, but read and discussed in Farmers' Union meetings all over our territory.

We have had a great deal of talk about co-operation; it is now time to do something. As Sir Horace Plunkett said to Mr. Poe, "You don't want the 'co' without the 'operate'." And the best way to begin operating is in the organization of just such co-operative creameries, poultry societies, and agricultural banks as they have in Ireland. Consider, for example, how simple is the formation of an agricultural bank as set forth in a leaflet which Mr. Poe sends with one of his articles:

"First, you could start a rural bank. That is done by thirty or more people joining together in a society; they elect their own committee, who can make arrangements to borrow money for the purposes of the society, and a member who wants a loan to enable him to buy a pig or to get poultry, or anything else out of which he can make a profit, will be able to get the money for about one penny per pound per month (5 per cent), and he will not be asked to pay the money back until he has got his profit out of his loan and can afford to do it. We will supply rules, and show you how everything is done. It is all very simple, and, as this is already being done by laborers in Ireland, you can do it. But, you will have to stick to each other, and admit no one whom you cannot trust, and those whom you won't have at the start because they are ne'er-do-wells, will soon reform when they see the advantages of membership."