

Marvelous Revival of Agriculture in the South.

Increase in Agricultural Production Five Times as Great as the Increase in Population—A Land Where Money Grows in Cultivated Fields—The Farmer's Wonderful Advance in Thrift and Broader Living and How it All Came About, as Told by The Progressive Farmer's Editor in The World's Work for June.

Whatever progress manufacturing has made in North Carolina these last ten years—and it has been marvelous—has not been made at the expense of agriculture. Being (along with her sister State of South Carolina) one of the four States in the Union which made a net gain of three points or more in rank as a manufacturing State in the last census decade, North Carolina (along with her sister States of Virginia and Tennessee) was also one of the eleven States which made a net gain of three points or more in rank in gross value of agricultural products. If the advance of North Carolina manufacturing is more notable than the advance of North Carolina agriculture, therefore, it is only because it is more novel, not because it is more substantial. From 1890 to 1900, our increase in agricultural production was five times as great as our increase in population, and since 1900 our agricultural progress has been further accelerated.

Golden Gardens of the East.

For one thing we are now finding out just what nature intended to make of each section and are working in harmony with her instead of at cross purposes as we once did. Eventually, Eastern North Carolina, for example, is likely to become one vast garden for supplying Northern markets and our own increasing factory population with early vegetables, fruits and berries. It has not been many years since we began to ship strawberries. Yet in two days last year 386 refrigerator car-loads passed through Rocky Mount—2,000,000 quarts, or enough to furnish one cupful to every man, woman and child of every race and color in every city and county in the State of New York. In Wilmington the other day I saw forty acres under cloth, Mr. D. N. Chadwick's immense lettuce crop, his proceeds from this one vegetable having netted him \$40,000. One man who came to Eastern North Carolina penniless, "a tramp," he says, attracted by our climate, has since cleared as much as \$25,000 in one year from truck crops. Even the sand-hill section, once regarded as fit for nothing except "to hold creation together," has trebled in value as its adaptability for growing fruits and vegetables (notably peaches, grapes and dewberries) and its susceptibility to improvement have been demonstrated. "We have the climate, and we can make the land," was a saying of Westbrook, the strawberry pioneer. On our trucking lands the grower is not content with even two crops a year from the same land, one of my subscribers complaining the other day that while he made three crops on the same area in 1906—tomatoes, cabbage and spinach—he was to blame for letting his land lie idle through six whole weeks of the best growing season when it might have made a good crop of millet! "The system of intensive farming is growing more profitable each year," writes Mr. McD. Williams, of Duplin County, in a letter now before me, "the lands becoming more prolific with the rotation, and many of our farmers now ship six to nine money crops a year from farms on which cotton was formerly the only source of revenue."

The Farmer—a Man Without the Hoe.

So much for trucking and fruit growing and the combination of these with general farming. In the cultivation of our staple crops the improvement has been no less marked. Formerly a bale of cotton per acre was regarded as the high-water mark of good farming (the average for the South is only about one-third bale per acre), but in Sampson County last summer, I found more than one farmer who expected to make two bales per acre. Formerly the farmer did not believe he could grow either cotton or corn without hand-chopping, but some of the best cotton in Wake County last year was never hoed by hand, cultivated only with weeders and harrows, and some of the best corn on the Agricultural and Mechanical College farm received no hand-chopping. In wheat farming the modern reaper and binder is replacing the old-time cradle; and similarly we no longer take four men and two horses to plant one row of corn this fashion:

One man, one horse—to open row;
One man to distribute fertilizer;
One man—to drop corn;
One man, one horse—to cover corn and fertilizer.

Instead we now have—

One man, two horses—to open row, distribute

fertilizer, drop corn, and cover—all at one operation, and two rows at the time at that.

Farmers who thought a few years ago the emigration of farm labor to the mills would ruin them, now find the emigration a blessing in disguise in that it has forced the adoption of all kinds of labor-saving machinery. One of the photographs I am sending with this article is that of fifty farm wagons loaded with modern machinery going out from Burlington—and this is but one illustration of the rapidity with which improved farming implements are coming into use.

Learning to Fatten Lean Land.

Fifty years ago, moreover, we wasted our lands—tilled a field recklessly a few years, then cleared a "new ground" and abandoned the old to broom-sage and gullies; but now our land debauchery has ended. Crop rotation and the legumes preserve the earth's fertility. Every season a crop of land-enriching cowpeas can be sandwiched in between the staple crops or cultivated in connection with them; and even as Oklahoma may adopt alfalfa as her State flower, so for our own State many would doubtless favor the cowpea! Farmers no longer scratch over 500 acres to make what intensive culture would produce on 100. "Don't go West to find a new plantation," says a new Eastern Carolina proverb, "deep plowing will find you a new one just below the old one you have been scratching over."

Two stories from real life that have just come to my attention will perhaps illustrate as well as anything else the whole story of the State's farming progress.

"Couldn't Afford to be Gov'ner."

The pivot of our first story is the expression, "You see I could not afford to be Governor," and the man who utters it is not a Congressman nor a capitalist nor a manufacturer, but a humble, slave-born negro farmer—Calvin Brock, of Wayne County. He was talking to the Governor of North Carolina whose salary is only \$4,000 annually, and whose clear profit is minus, while Calvin Brock the year before had made a clear profit of \$2,723.61 on fifteen acres of strawberries alone, besides cultivating fifty acres of land in other crops. The black Cincinnatus indeed could not afford to leave his plow for the salary of the Chief Executive—although he has never seen the inside of a school-house and only learned to read and write by copying and conning a scrawl alphabet which a country carpenter pencilled for him on a new pine shingle!

"I'll Plow Half-Way Down to China if I Want To!"

The other story is that of a white farmer in an adjoining county who paid \$500 for a farm of fifty-three acres in 1899—not quite \$10 an acre. Its former owner had acted on the theory that he didn't own anything except three inches of surface soil, and with such cultivation it took four acres of the land to make a bale of cotton. But that policy by no means commended itself to the new owner. Thoroughly inoculated with the idea of crop rotation and deep plowing, he astonished the soil itself by the energy of his reforms. Hitching a 1,000 pound mule to an ordinary plow, he found the beast unable to penetrate the brick-yard that lay beneath the five or six inches of cultivated upper crust. Then he hitched two horses and they broke off his plow, whereupon Green cursed (in this one case I am using an assumed name), and sent to Chattanooga for a four-horse disc plow. By this time the moss-backed farmers of the quarter-bale-per-acre size had congregated in the seats of the scornful, to-wit, the village goods boxes, and swore that Green would ruin his land forever with his new fangled "book farming" ideas; but to no effect. "I surely can't make money by your plans," he retorted, "and it can't be any worse to try the book-farming ideas, as you call them. And as for ruining the land, it's my own, I reckon, and I will plow clean down half-way to China if I want to!" Of course Green ought to have deepened his seed-bed gradually, for it is not best to bring so much subsoil to the surface at once, but liberal disc harrowing largely overcame his errors here, and the heavy cowpea crop and the barn-yard manure did the rest. The next year indicated the land's upward trend; and in 1901 (proper rotation, observe) he grew a good crop of corn and peas; in 1902 he made a half bale of cotton per acre; in 1903 he grew corn and peas again, and in 1904 a good crop of oats and

peas. By 1905 he had brought up his land until part of it made two bales of cotton per acre, and this year, following corn last year, he hopes for a two-bale average on the entire field. To-day he wouldn't sell his \$9.41 land of 1899 for \$100 an acre—and why should he, since even at that figure the buyer could pay for it with the first year's cotton crop? So it was with Green, as with Goldsmith's immortal preacher, that "those who came to scoff remained to pray;" and his example is but one of thousands that might be cited, and which have proved as contagious as measles.

Advance in Prices Has Made the Farmer Strong.

A dozen distinct forces working together have each contributed to the agricultural advance of which I am writing. Most important of all, perhaps, is the increase in prices of our staple crops. Cotton, our leading "money crop," has more than doubled in value in ten years, and while prices have merely doubled, the net profits, of course, have more than quintupled. Another factor not to be overlooked is that the less ambitious class of farmers have gone to the factories and towns, and as a result of this winnowing, the craft as a whole is to-day more alert and progressive than ever before. In five years the attendance on our Farmers' Institutes has doubled, the number of farm papers read has probably increased 400 per cent, and the number of agricultural students at our Agricultural and Mechanical College has more than trebled. With financial independence, too, the farmer has acquired a deeper dignity and pride in his calling. He no longer owes the merchant, and so much a thing of the past is the old ruinous mortgage-breeding "credit system" of buying supplies, that he has almost forgotten it. To his prosperity is largely attributable the great increase in number of small banks, already mentioned. In Scotland County, reversing immemorial custom, farmers now lend money to the merchants. If the prices in fall do not suit our North Carolina cotton growers, they simply hold \$10,000,000 worth for better prices the following summer. A conservative estimate would probably put the increase in land values during the last ten years at 250 per cent. The cases of two Pender County neighbors have just come to my attention, one refusing \$2,500 for land he bought in 1897 for \$350, while another had sold a tract for \$2,000 which then cost him \$750. In the first instance the profits were unusually large, but the second case is typical.

Feet of Enlightenment Tread Beautiful Highways.

Of the other factors that have been helpful in the remaking of country life in Carolina, better schools, better roads, rural mail delivery and the rural telephone must not be ignored. The mud tax has long been a burden grievous to be borne but we are now mending our ways. Mecklenburg's good roads are famous. Durham's will become equally so, and the \$300,000 Guilford is now expending will leave her roads not inferior to Durham's. With their increasing wealth it will become easy for the Piedmont section generally to macadamize the more important highways, and in the eastern counties the sand-clay system, costing only \$200 to \$300 a mile, is fast winning its way. Where sand abounds, and application of clay is made to the roads; where clay makes travel difficult, it is mixed with sand. This simple operation makes a hard, smooth and durable surface. In Northampton and Guilford Counties the split-log drag, now so popular in the West, has been tried with gratifying results.

The rural free delivery of mails has been of inestimable benefit to the State. No other service the National Government has ever rendered the farmer is comparable to it. Aside from its quickening and elevating influence, the mere increase in land values resulting from its introduction doubtless exceeds its cost. The farmer not only gets more mail, but his interest is aroused, and he demands a better quality of reading matter. With the coming of rural delivery in Wake County the Raleigh postmaster tells me that the once large bulk of fake story papers from Maine and Chicago has dwindled into comparative insignificance. As for the increase in quality of mail matter handled, I recently obtained the statistics for three Raleigh routes which had then been in operation three and one-half years. On route No. 1 I found that the number of pieces of mail handled per month had grown from 952 to 5,032; on route No. 2 from 1,372 to 3,670, and on route No. 3 from 1,553 to 3,531—a total increase of from 3,878 to 12,253, or more than 200 per cent. Another illustration is found in the fact that in five years the circulation of the Methodist organ published in the building in which I write this has

(Continued on Page 3.)