

THE PROGRESSIVE FARMER.

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A Farm and Home Weekly for the Carolinas, Virginia, Tennessee and Georgia.

Vol. XXIII. No. 7.

RALEIGH, N. C., MARCH 26, 1908.

Weekly: \$1 a Year.

Cotton: A Golden Heritage and How we are Wasting It.

To have a practical monopoly of the world's cotton supply—the one great crop for which Nature has provided no adequate substitute; the crop which is not only more valuable than any other American export crop but more valuable than all others combined; the crop which by reason of its pre-eminence in value and importance has made the wide world acknowledge that "Cotton is King!"—this monopoly alone should make and keep the South rich. And it would do so, if properly handled. It is a princely heritage, but we have wasted it in riotous mismanagement, and the object of this "Cotton Special" is to point out some ways whereby wasteful errors may be avoided and the cotton farmer's profits increased.

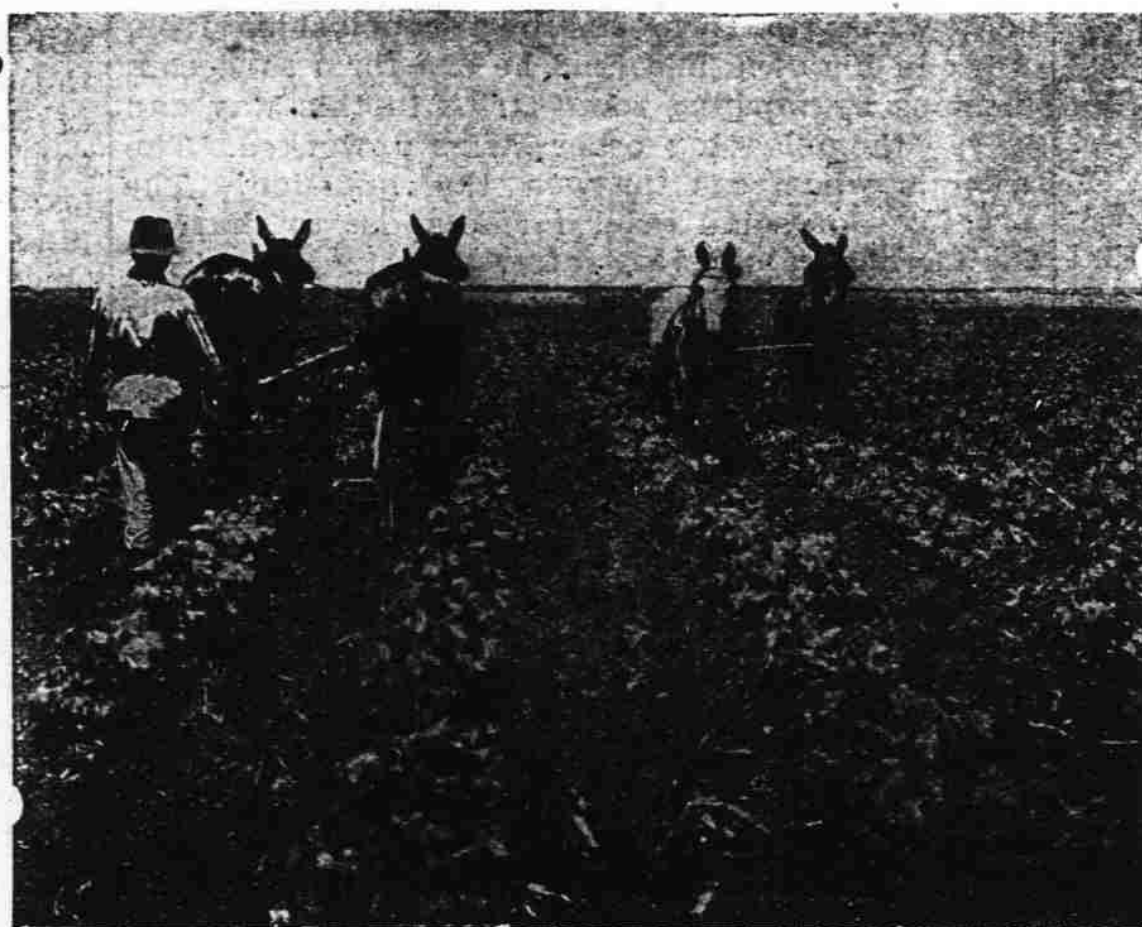
I.

First of all, there is the fearful waste through planting scrub seed. In our boyhood we did not know a single cotton farmer at that time who bought improved seed or even selected his own seed. For planting a fearful mixture was bought from the nearest gin: seed from dwarfed, diseased, starved and degenerate stalks, mixed with whatever good seed may have chanced to get with them; and the farmer was as likely as not planting the product of some negro's six-boll, bumblebee stalks, grown in some grass-ridden patch. Fancy what our corn crop would be if we had chosen seed corn indiscriminately—from half-barren nubbins as often as from good ears! Fortunately, now all this is changed. The large number of our ads of improved cottonseed for planting proves this. And there is no question but that the farmers of the average cotton State, without one extra ounce of fertilizer or one extra lick of hoeing or plowing, might increase their clear profits \$2,000,000 this year simply by using the best breeds of seed cotton instead of average planting seed.

Two million dollars more for every State by improved seed, then. Moral: Let's get better seed. (And this is Reform No. 1.)

II.

Next is the matter of soil management. The folly of the "one crop system" has been so often explained, that its mere mention is its own condemnation. And what a "system" it was! The land seldom adequately broken, a dribble of 8-2-2 strewn in last year's middles, a new ridge



Once again—in the "Cotton Special" as in all other issues—the same old war cry: We need more mules and machinery. We can never make cotton cheaply until we reduce hand labor by using harrows, weeders, and cultivators—beginning before the plants come up and continuing till the final cultivation. The farmer shown herewith has "stopped running his brain with 1-horse power," and he sets an example all cotton farmers should follow.

made, and the cotton expected to flourish in the hard and lifeless soil. So the land famished for want of plant food—in spite of the fact that when seed are fed to cattle and the manure returned to the land, cotton is only one-fourth as exhaustive of fertility as corn or wheat. And even at this good hour farmers are spending millions of dollars for nitrogen for 1908 cotton, when there is \$15,000,000 worth in the air just above every acre of land. And cowpeas and clovers would take it from the air for you free of charge, besides furnishing humus and vegetable matter and making splendid hay crops at the same time.

You own fifteen million dollars' worth of nitrogen with every acre of land. Moral: Quit buying ammoniated fertilizers for cotton. (This is Reform No. 2.)

III.

Then, too, we have thrown away millions by not growing cattle. With two of the finest cattle feeds in all the world—cowpeas and cottonseed—we have imported beef and butter from the North and West. Cowpeas we have neglected and cottonseed we have buried in the land un-

fed. A man would be taken up for insanity if he should fertilize his cotton with corn meal or wheat bran without first feeding to cattle; yet the farmer calmly throws away \$25 a ton feeding value every time he uses a ton of cottonseed meal as a fertilizer. He had as well get twenty-five crisp dollar bills, tear them up and throw them away.

Twenty-five dollars cash feeding value lost whenever a ton of cottonseed meal is used as a fertilizer without first feeding to stock. The millions wasted here would make a small State rich. Moral: Raise enough cattle to get this feeding value. (And this is Reform No. 3.)

IV.

Millions more have been wasted by out-of-date, labor-wasting implements. Well do we recall how it was common a few years ago for one man to open the row, another strew the seed, and another cover—work that one-half the labor may do easily with a planter. In cultivation, too, there has been similar waste: see from the picture herewith to what advantage two horses may be used. Hoeing, too, has been twice the burden it ought to be, and we

know of some farmers who have made good crops entirely without hand hoeing. But more of this on page 2.

With proper implements the cost of cultivating cotton may unquestionably be reduced to one-half the cost under old labor-wasting methods. Moral: Invest in the planters, weeders, harrows, plows, and cultivators. (And here is Reform No. 4.)

V.

Having made the crop there is need of greater care in baling, handling, and marketing—need to bale in better form and distribute sales through a longer period of time; but we need not cover here the ground already pre-empted by the Farmers' Union and the Cotton Association. We ought, too, to encourage the wider use of cottonseed products—a subject to which more attention is given on page 8. But the whole subject of how to get greater profits from cotton may be summed up in a few succinct sentences, and with the policy of "line upon line, precept upon precept," we attempt this herewith:

1. Use seed of improved varieties, and select carefully year after year from the most productive stalks.

2. Better preparation and cultivation of the land. Remember, "there is a new plantation just under the old, wornout plantation you have been scratching over." You own more than three or four inches of top crust; and if so, why not get the benefit of it?

3. Every farmer must have the three C's—"Cattle, Cowpeas, Cottonseed." There is no other way to keep the land fertile—and no farming ever pays that ruins the land. Besides, we must come to see that it is hard, less foolish to bury as fine a cattle feed as cottonseed in the land than it is to bury wheat bran or corn meal.

4. We must reduce the cost of hand-chopping. Our present system was handed down to us from slavery days when labor was cheap and plentiful. We have stayed in the old rut, but there are ways to get out. See page 2.

5. "Cotton is King"—but remember a king is weak and his kingdom imperilled every hour that he must get supplies from beyond his own borders. And cotton will prove a king indeed only when the corn-crib and smokehouse are on the farmer's own place and not in Chicago or St. Louis.

