

Professor Massey's Editorial Page.

Cotton—Our Greatest Crop.

HERE IS NO crop grown in the United States that offers better profits for good farming than cotton, and there is no crop grown that keeps men poorer, when grown in the old single-crop way than cotton.

These old methods have enriched the fertilizer manufacturers and have made wastes of thousands of acres in the Cotton Belt. They have kept thousands of men in bondage to the merchant and the fertilizer seller, year after year taking up the hopeless task of going in debt to start the cotton crop, and coming out at the end of the season often worse off than at the beginning.

The all-cotton man will tell you soberly that there is no money in anything but cotton, while the fact is, that in most cases he has not found a great deal in cotton. Yet here and there are farmers who have found out what there is in cotton when they farm instead of merely plant cotton. Talking once with a large cotton farmer in South Carolina who generally made more than a bale per acre, he said that he made cotton at a cost of four and a half cents per pound, and that the cured bacon I saw him selling by the wagon load cost him the same price per pound. Cotton was then six cents a pound, and he still had a little margin, but the bacon and hams averaged him fourteen cents a pound, and the feeding of the hogs left something to help his soil.

At that time the all-cotton men were in distress, for they could not make cotton at four and a half cents a pound after being carried by a merchant and paying 100 per cent on everything they bought. The other man kept hogs and sheep and cattle, and made corn and oats and hay and fed them, too, and, of course, he had manure, and with these auxiliaries he was carried, but not by the merchant. He bought for cash all that he needed to buy, and he did not need to buy much, for he did not need to buy fertilizers for his corn, nor a complete fertilizer for his cotton, for it followed after peas and crimson clover. His land was increasing in fertility and productivity, while the all-cotton men were asking what fertilizer to use for corn, oats, wheat, cotton and every other crop, and could not think of planting any of these helping crops without buying more fertilizer for them. Realizing what the fertilizer for cotton costs them, they can not understand that they need not buy a complete fertilizer for every other crop, and they jump to the conclusion that cotton is the only crop they can afford to grow.

What we need to learn is, that commercial fertilizers, properly used, are a valuable adjunct to our home-made manures in the permanent up-building of the soil in humus, but used merely, year after year, for the production of something to sell off the land, they are the ruin of the soil and the farmer alike. And the poorest farms and the poorest farmers in all the Cotton Belt are where the most money has been spent for commercial fertilizers with the one idea of making cotton to sell.

The all-cotton man must spend more money because he has to buy his nitrogen in a fertilizer, while the good farmer gets his nitrogen free, and for the same money gets twice as much of the phosphoric acid and potash he has to buy, and these stay by him till used by the crops, while the nitrogen does not.

The hardest thing to get the average cotton planter to understand is, that the use of a rotation of crops and the growing of legume forage will enable him to reduce his cotton acreage and still make as much, or more, cotton on one-third the land than he has been making on the whole. It is the man who takes five acres to make a bale of cotton who is keeping the Southern soil and himself poor.

But I am glad to know that there is a new spirit abroad in the South, and the day is not far distant when a farmer will be ashamed to tell you that his land is poor, for our people are fast coming to understand that if a man's land remains poor it is the fault of the man who farms it. The

Demonstration Work is doing great good, and when they persuade farmers to carry the demonstration through their whole farm work we will have different times in the South.

I do not believe that we will ever see six-cent cotton again, because the advance of the boll weevil will make the culture too risky for any but those who study the conditions and take the best measures to overcome the difficulty. If the boll weevil ever reaches and thrives in the upper sections of the Cotton Belt, it will be the end of cotton there, for we can not, like Texas and the far South, make an early crop ahead of the weevil. Hence the great importance of getting into a system of farming that will make the farmers of the upper South independent of cotton if they are driven out of its culture.

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FIVE TEXTS FOR COTTON FARMERS.

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two bales to two and a half per acre, have not done it by simply piling on fertilizers, but by adopting a course of soil improvement that has increased the productivity of their land while paying for the improvement.

You must have something besides cotton to sell. You must raise good forage and feed stock of some sort. One young farmer who adopted my advice made seventy-five bushels of oats per acre, and then cut two tons of cowpea hay from the same land before frost. It would take a good deal even of fifteen-cent cotton to pay as well, and at the same time, the growing of these crops was part of the means used for getting his cotton crop up to more than a bale per acre on land that when he begun its improvement would not make a fifth of a bale per acre.

With cowpeas and crimson clover even the Indian corn crop becomes a soil-improver through the feeding of the shredded stover added to the pea hay and the cottonseed meal. It is to the barnyard that we must look for the future, and aided by the barnyard, we can make the South the greatest farming section of the country.

SOME CHEAP DRAINAGE.—Professor Barrow talks wisely about drainage, and where lands are wet drainage is the first thing needed. I saw some years ago at Darlington, S. C., some tiles made there by a farmer, out of sand and rosin that seemed to me to be well adapted to answer the purpose. I have drained land that is still drained after more than 20 years, with skinned pine poles laid side by side in the ditch with a space between and a larger pole laid on top. Pine straw was then placed on, to keep the earth from working in and the whole covered. No water has covered that land since and good clover has been growing where willows grew when the drainage was done.

Good Seeds and Reliable Seedsmen.

IF YOU GET a seed catalog from, say Smith & Jones, and everything in it is Smith & Jones' Special, and there are all sorts of impossible pictures of fields covered over with big watermelons almost touching each other, cabbages of enormous size and not a poor head showing in the lot, potatoes being dug and great windrows of potatoes all over the ground, and everything exaggerated in like manner, that is a good firm to let alone. But if you get a neat catalog, with cuts made from photographs and half-tone pictures showing what may actually be grown, you may consider that here is a firm that tries to be truthful about its stock, and is apt to have better seeds than the man who pictures impossible things.

Then in buying farm seeds, such as clover and grass, avoid the man who offers these below the rates of the best seedsmen, for low-priced clover seed is usually the most costly you can buy. It means that there is a lot of trash and weed seed in the sample and the clover seed in it cost more than in the well cleaned seed, and you will be seeding your land with weeds. My practice in buying clover and grass seed is to send for samples and examine them carefully with a magnifying glass, and to reject any that show foul weed seeds. Then be sure to demand that the seed shall agree with the sample or be sent back. I always buy from established firms who have a reputation at stake, and buy the best, no matter what the price is, for cheap seed means poor seed always.

Tools That Will Make Money For You.

DO NOT TALK ABOUT the scarcity of labor if you are doing all your cultivation with a single mule and a single man to each mule, while a pair of mules to a sulky cultivator will do more work in the crop, and do it better than three men each with a mule and plow. Then in the early stages of the crop, when all around you men are getting in the grass, the man who uses a weeder can get over so fast between rains that the grass has no chance to start, and he does not have to plow and cover. A man gets "in the grass" because of lack of labor-saving implements. But there will always be some who, as Mr. Strupe says, will be too inert to get the implements they might get, and will go on making cotton with a mule and a one-horse plow at a cost as high as cotton often sells for. To make cotton cheaply you must use the labor-saving implements.

Break the crust and kill the grass just starting by running over with the smoothing harrow before the corn or cotton comes up, and again after it is just up well, and then use the weeder till the crop is five or six inches tall, and you will never get in the grass.

THE MOWER KILLS WEEDS.—Mr. Strupe is right. The mower is the best thing on the farm for ridding the land of sprouts and briars. Mow the wheat stubble as soon as the ragweed is tall enough to cut, and you will get less and less ragweed every year the field comes in small grain, for you will get rid of the seed. Mr. Strupe, too, has good ideas as to the care of the mower, and, doubtless, applies them to other farm machinery.

MANURE SPREADER HELPS MAKE MANURE.—That is a good idea of Professor Dodson's that the possession of a manure spreader causes a man to make more manure. It is so handy that one will not only try to make more manure, but will load up every particle and get it out instead of letting it waste around the stables. Get a manure spreader and you will want to have more and more use for it.

The best place to use the home made manure, in my experience, is on the land that is to go in corn, and to get it there as fast as practicable after it is made. Corn can use the fresh manure more profitably than any other crop on the farm, and will leave the residue in the best shape for the small grain crop following it.

An open ditch is always in the way, especially when it cannot be crossed and when its banks are grown up in briars and bushes. Broad, shallow ditches that can be crossed with a team not only makes cultivation easier, but give better drainage.

When large stalk growth is made on land do not waste your money by buying nitrogen.