

HOW TO USE BOTTOM LANDS.

Col. J. Washington Watts, of Laurens, Offers a Remedy Against Freshets.

From the Cotton Plant.

I sent myself on this very gloomy morning to write you the long promised article for your interesting paper. I have for a long time entertained the opinion that our people would be forced to give up the bottom land to grass, either for a meadow or pasture; and the late terrible freshet has confirmed me in this opinion. And the earlier they realize this necessity the better for them. Many depend entirely on their fine bottom, for the corn and fodder to feed their stock. If they fail in this, which they do on an average every third year, they have their feed to buy; when, if these lands were well set in Bermuda or Means grass, the crop would have been housed before the rains fall, at a cost of about four dollars a ton—which would be worth from ten to twenty dollars a ton, owing to the market. An acre of good bottom well set will yield from one to two tons at a cutting, and often a second cutting can be had. And then the land, instead of getting poorer by being washed away, would grow richer by holding its own and catching much of what would pass by, by the aid of the grass; and the only chance of losing the crop is to be caught in the rain while cutting, which is very rare, for the crop is soon disposed of and put beyond the reach of rains.

We all know that corn is an expensive crop at best. And, from the length of time it takes to mature, it is exposed to three dangerous seasons, May, August and September; and to lose one in three is a ruinous drawback on the profits. But the grass will wait and take the chance of better weather, and costs so much less. And then, when the barn is well filled the stock are apt to get plenty, which is rarely the case when the principal food is corn and fodder. And again, it all experience proves that horses raised on grass and hay are more valuable than when reared on corn and fodder alone.

It is a great mistake to assume that the grasses can not be grown profitably in our climate. While nearly all kinds do well here, there are two or three that seem to luxuriate in this State, and as far south as Texas, which is as far as I have been and no better hay grasses are known to us; and one is pre-eminently a grazing grass—I refer to the Bermuda; the other is the Means grass, which yields a fine coarse hay, and yields abundantly, and is well suited to bottom lands.

In my opinion, it would be better to depend on the native grasses for pasture and to graze these bottom land with all kinds of stock than to continue the present system, for many an acre that was originally very fertile has been so often plowed and then flooded that all the soil has gone, leaving it too poor to grow corn. If this land were well set with Bermuda grass, it might in a few years be restored to fertility, and make a pasture that would gladden the heart of any farmer who loves his stock as a farmer should.

While writing about the grasses I will put in a plea for the rag weed. Now is the time to cut it; and think as you may about it, I know it makes us as good a hay as anything we feed. I don't except pea-vines and clover. I hope a few more will try it, and be convinced.

J. WASHINGTON WATTS.
Sept. 14th, 1888.

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Tue, Jan 24, 2017