

# THE BEST FARMER WINS REGARDLESS OF LAND.

(Continued from page 1, column 6.)

responsible for many of the good fields of cotton was sure land—that is, land that either by nature or because of treatment given it by the farmer is uniformly reliable. There are some lands which, if the crop is properly handled, are capable of coming through and making a good crop any kind of year, whether it be wet or dry. If there is too much rain the drainage takes care of it and if it is too dry, with proper handling the moisture is retained and, although the crop suffers some, it still makes a good yield. Not only do you find individual farms with such soils, but in some counties there are large acres of such land.

## Marlboro County's Varied Lands.

Take Marlboro county, South Carolina, for example. That part of the county which is famous for its high yields of cotton and its high priced land is generally rolling, but not so rolling as to require terracing. The land has natural drainage and the water runs off easily, but not fast enough to gully the land. In most wet years, therefore, the crops are not badly injured by too much rain. On the other hand the topsoil, which is a sandy loam, is underlaid with a porous clay subsoil, so that it retains moisture, and if the season is dry and the farmer cultivates his land properly he grows a good crop just the same. In fact, some of the biggest crops made in this county are made in years when the seasonal rainfall is precipitation below the average.

In contrast with this are other lands, some of which can be found even in Marlboro county, which are level and low, lacking in the gently rolling topography that is needed to provide natural drainage. In wet years these lands, to use a Southern expression becomes slobbered. The water stands on the land until it is water-logged and then no crop can make a high yield there unless it be the grass crop that farmers don't want. In dry years these lands make good yields, but in such years as 1919 the crop usually fails to pay expenses.

There are still other lands with a sandy subsoil that drain well, but do not hold the moisture. In dry years other lands unless carefully managed, make poor yields. They lack the clay subsoil that holds the moisture close to the surface, and when the water goes down it goes down so far that it never comes back for the use of the plants. Unless the seasons hit these lands just right and they are handled by capable farmers, they are uncertain and make good crops only in extraordinary years.

Thus the first thing that is found in observing the good crops in a bad year like this is that the reliability of the land is a large factor. Farmers who have sure lands have good crops even though the conditions are not favorable. If a man has such lands he is in luck, but if he doesn't have them he is out of luck, that's all—unless he is an outstanding farmer. So whenever I saw a cotton crop that would make a bale to the acre while in surrounding fields there was little cotton but plenty of grass and signs of sobby land, I climbed over the fence and started a conversation with the farmer.

"What makes my crop so good?" a southern South Carolina man said in answer to my query. "Well, I've got my land tile drained. I used to have just such crops as some of these other fellows round here and, believe me, such years as this hit me hard! Sometimes I didn't make enough to pay the fertilizer bill and I tell you when a fellow gets in that kind of a fix it starts the gray hairs coming! I got to reading, however, about the drainage, such as is common out in the Middle West, and I tried some of it. I didn't know much about it at first, but I soon got on to it and now I have most of the wet places on my farm tiled out."

"Well, why didn't you tile drain your land sooner?" I said. "Out in my native State we've been tiling land for over 50 years and it's an old story. A man who doesn't tile drain his land out there when it is needed isn't considered much of a farmer." "I really don't know," he replied. "I find there are some old tile drains in the lower part of this State that have been in for a long time and are still working nicely. But one thing we have lacked here has been a cheap supply of tile and another, somebody to push the movement, I guess we needed that most."

It seems strange that tile drainage, although badly needed, has not made the progress here it has made in the corn belt, but I believe it is coming. Once started, a good thing is sure to spread.

The surest land is not fool proof, I saw fields of cotton on the best of lands that would not make half a crop, while others on like land showed yields of a bale or more to the acre. The difference wasn't in the land. It was in the man on the job. Some lands are fertile and depend-

able while others are poor and risky, and so it is with farmers and all other kinds of men. Some have fertile brains and remarkable energy while others are dull and "do-less." The crop is often but an outward expression of the farmer behind it.

## Early Crop Wins.

I found many farmers who had fertilized well, but who still had poor crops. The application of fertilizers on some farms had cost \$25 or more an acre, yet the yields were poor. Some farmers had turned under cowpeas and velvet beans and applied barnyard manure in addition to the fertilizer and still had poor yields. So I could not attribute all the success either to sure land or to soil treatment and fertilizer applications. I came to the crux of the whole situation however, when I struck the farm of a large cotton planter with fairly sure land, who farms with share croppers. In this case the croppers furnished their own work stock and equipment, while the operator furnished only the fertilizer, each taking half of the crop as his share at the end of the season. The planter

(Continued on page 7, column 1.)

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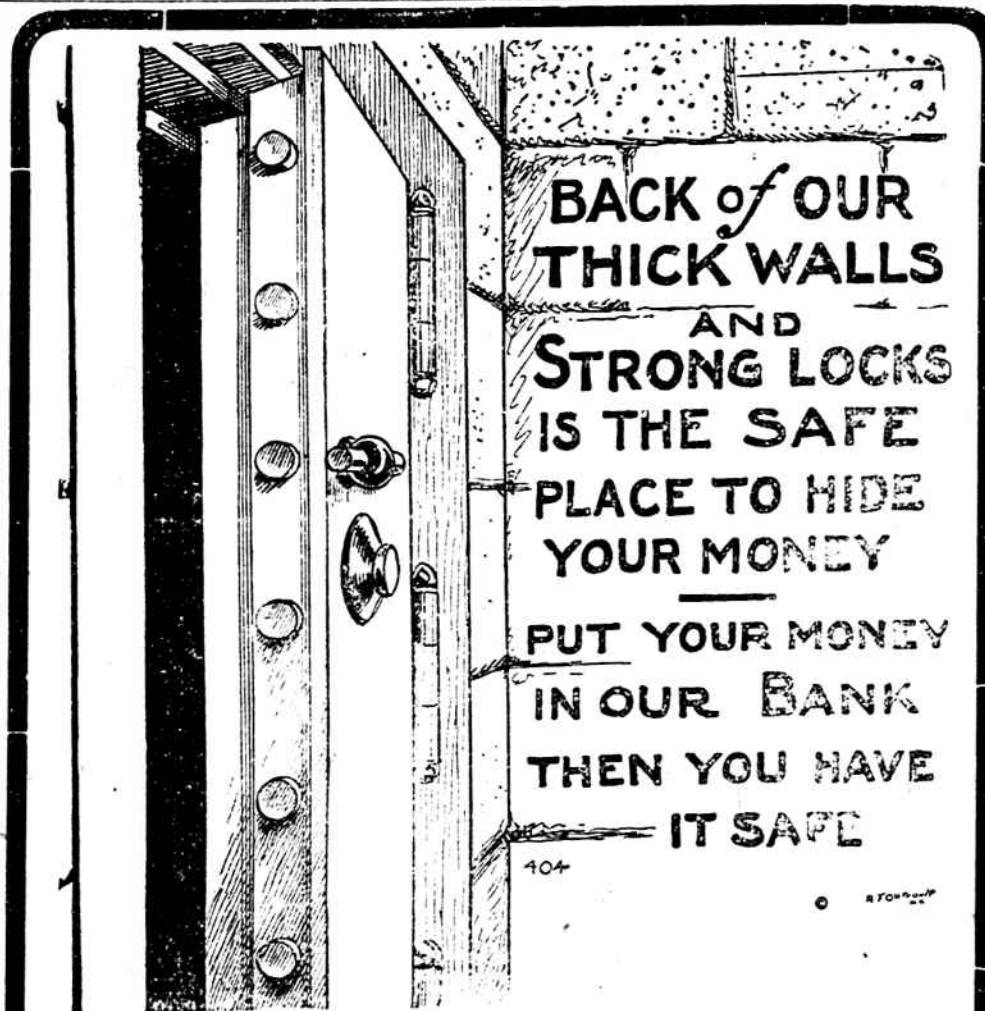
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