

Agricultural Notes

By LEE LATROBE BATEMAN

SMALL HOLDINGS IN FLORIDA

The tendency of the present age is, for those who turn to Mother Earth for their means of livelihood, to small farms, rather than to large acreages. In Florida this should, and I trust always will, be the desideratum of all settlers, whether new or old.

Nor is this confined solely to America. The same idea, the same trend of thought, exists among many of the older civilized nations of the world, especially in Great Britain and in France, and the preference for small holdings is becoming daily more universal.

But the cause is not the same. In Europe the old days of landlord and tenant are fast disappearing—that is, the landlord of an immeasurable number of acres with an infinity of tenants. It is a growing feeling of independence—a word so dear to the American—that has gained root among the peasant and tenant class. It is not a revolution for independence, but an evolution from dependency and the old serfdom to greater freedom and individuality. So little by little the old-time tenant is evolving into the owner of the land he tills. He works for himself, not others, and what he earns and gains by that work is for himself alone.

In America the farmer has always been more or less independent. His gains and his losses are his own, and he has been and still is our greatest pioneer. But until quite recent times, as a class, he has never been a good farmer. He has never really gotten out of the soil its full productivity. In the old pioneering days land was cheap, the horizon was broad, and the aggregate of what he made was procured not from so much per acre, but rather from so much per total amount of acres.

The really small yield per acre from his crops, which the farmer seemed only capable of raising, necessitated many acres to reach a point where farming became a lucrative business. It was quantity not quality that filled the purse. Everything was on a large scale except the profits per acre, which were exceedingly small.

Gradually, due in part to a better understanding and a higher aim in farming and due also to the teaching of many an American school of agriculture, to the activity of experiment stations, and to the support and scope of investigations by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, the lesson has been learned that fewer acres well and scientifically cultivated will in the end pay better than many acres farmed in a hap-hazard manner. In the end quality pays better than quantity.

But be all this as it may, what I want to get down to is the question of

small holdings in preference to large acreages in Florida. Nowhere else in the whole of the United States can more money be made per individual acre than in this state, and this is especially the case in the citrus belt.

To earn this amount with any degree of certainty each year, how many acres would the northern, eastern or western farmer have to till and cultivate? That is to say, an average farmer on an average farm. In those sections of the country it is quite an exceptionally good farm that would, year in and year out, yield to the owner \$40 per acre revenue over and above all expenses. It would be better to count on not more than \$20 an acre, clear net profit. A farmer, then, must have at least 100 acres from which to be certain of an annual income of \$2,000, and in those climates no one knows better than the farmer himself what strenuous labor it entails to approximately even reach that amount.

Ten acres in Florida are equivalent to 100 acres in the North, East and West, for if properly and intelligently farmed, the annual net income, clear and above all expenses, from such acreage, should easily reach \$200 an acre.

This is by no means an excessive estimate. On the contrary, it is based on figures showing facts and yields per acre considerably in excess of this amount. But it is based on the supposition that each acre will yield at least two crops in a twelvemonth. Three and sometimes four crops are obtained from one acre of land without any special call for extra strenuous labor. Elsewhere in the Union this feat is an impossibility.

As an illustration of a three-crop rotation on a farm of ten acres devoted just simply to farm crops, leaving out for the moment the question of fruit culture. Commencing in May or June, with the summer forage crops, the owner can raise at the very least one to one and a half tons of hay to the acre, besides a considerable amount of forage for stock if he has any, but of this it would not be out of the way to estimate seven tons of hay for sale, which, at \$20 a ton (a low average price), amounts to \$140 ready cash without taking into account the value of what he has used up for his own requirements, nor the estimated value the crops will have had as soil renovators and improvers. So we will consider the \$140 net profit.

Next, he can get in two crops of vegetables, early and late, as for instance, lettuce followed by tomatoes. It would be a poor crop of lettuce that wouldn't net him \$150 an acre, and a worse crop of tomatoes that wouldn't give him a like amount. What does this total up to? Three hundred and fourteen dollars an acre. Ten acres are enough if you keep at it and have the "know how."

There are so many combinations possible both regarding the various crops and their rotation, and relative to subdivision of even ten acres, that it would be impossible to treat them within the space of a weekly article. In fact, there is material enough for a book. We can, however, consider one of the many subdivisions feasible to a 10-acre tract. This is one-half vegetable and the other half citrus culture.

Put Your Shoulder to the Wheel

Ver0, Fla., Feb. 16, 1914.—(To the Florida Grower)—Many newcomers are poor people venturing into Florida with but a few hundred dollars, and many of them with much less means, thinking it is enough perhaps to get along with, as they term it, to start a grove and make a home.

Here is where the new settler is up against it, for after he arrives here there must be a small home for the family, outbuildings, also provisions until a crop can be raised, and a good deal of hard work before the ground is in shape to plant, which takes at least three months of faithful labor and backbone.

Some of these people do not stop to consider. The raw ground should be plowed up and left to the sun and air a while to sweeten before planting, or sprinkled lightly with lime, which is far better for the new land, then again they perhaps come in with no horses, and the consequences are they must hire all plowing and harrowing done, to get the land ready, which again draws on the small account.

Some of them bring their horses and stock along and nothing to feed them on but the wild grass, which of course is not enough, for a working team should have their grain. After the land is in shape to plant there is the fertilizer to buy, also their plants and trees.

I am sure if they come with good faith and intentions of making Florida their home they can, if they will (for where there is a will there is a way) make good, even if their bank account is not up into the thousands.

I would suggest to those who come here with small means to build a small home, just enough to live comfortably in, until better can be afforded. Go to work and clear and plow enough to plant one or two acres of tomatoes, or some other crop which does well in the new land, fertilize this thoroughly and make a big success of this crop, then when this is sold or shipped you can put in a second crop immediately, and with the money from the first planting get your trees and shrubs and set them in the same place between the rows of tomatoes, or whatever you wish to plant next.

If you cannot get 100 trees at a time, get a dozen; be content to purchase them in small lots, and it won't be long until you can have your foot on the first rung of the ladder, and the rest will be easy.

Remember, that our fathers and grandfathers were settlers once like ourselves, and did not have one-half the means or the machinery or tools

I mentioned earlier in this article the item of life insurance that is probably or should be one of the many calls on a man with a family. With a citrus grove you not only have an endowment policy, but you have an annuity for old age, and furthermore a secured income for life for those you leave behind and for their children's children.

Still keeping to our ten acres, we can subdivide these into two halves—one for citrus fruit, one for vegetables.

Five acres in citrus fruit will commence to yield considerable revenue after the fourth year. It is true there is a waiting time of three years, but that is not long, and in the meantime we have as before the whole ten acres under grass for hay, say \$14 to \$20 an acre net and clear. For the first three years we can have at least eight acres under vegetables, which should net \$1,600 to \$2,000 a year. After the third year we must be content with five

to work with as we have in our days, also remember that Abraham Lincoln was once a farmer lad; put your shoulder to the wheel and if at first you don't succeed, try, try again. Now, then, if you should happen to run entirely short of money and get down to the bread-and-butter end, there are your neighbors, who are sometimes a little better fixed than you are at present, who will want some extra help fencing, grubbing, building and ditching, and while your first crop is growing you can always have a few days' work to spare for the cash it will bring, which will add to the mite remaining.

I have heard and talked to old Floridians who settled here a number of years ago with much less cash than the new settlers of the present time, and who have made a grand success, some of them had the small sum of \$13 after their fare was paid to destination, and they are just the ones who have made good.

I would suggest to all those that did not find an orange grove awaiting them on their arrival, to stick to the ship, and, lo! a few years go by and the citrus grove dreamed of and planned for is yours at last.

Remember every dollar you put into your land will double and treble in the crop you take out, and while we live in this God-given country of flowers and birds, water and sunshine all the year round, surely we have the season and none could be better, and while our northern relatives are burning their money up in wood and coal to keep themselves warm, and their lands are covered with snow and ice, we are planting our crops and enjoying the blessed privileges of an ideal climate.

A poem is running through my mind from somewhere out of the past, and I think it would be a good thing to remember by those who are easily inclined to be discouraged:

Smile and the world smiles with you,
Knock and you knock alone,
For the cheerful grin will let you in,
Where the kicker was never known.

Groan and the way looks dreary,
Laugh and the path looks bright,
For the welcome smile brings sunshine
while—
A frown shuts out the light.

Kick and there is trouble brewing,
Whistle and life will be gay,
And the world's in tune like a day in
June,
And the clouds will roll away.
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acres in vegetables, netting, say \$1,500 (this is not out of the way), and five acres in grove, netting the fourth year some \$200 an acre or say \$1,000, but with an ever increasing revenue year by year. A grove in its tenth year should yield a net revenue of \$500 to \$600 an acre or even more.

Here is your insurance; here is your old age annuity; here is your provision for your family, and your grandchildren. What other state in the Union can offer such opportunities, such certainties for easily gained livelihood. And with it all your home.

This is indeed the climax. Your home. No rent, no need for mortgages, no interest. With such a revenue assured any mortgages raised or capital borrowed with which to make the start can soon be paid off and after that comes the supreme satisfaction of untrammelled ownership. All you have, all your surroundings are yours, your own possession, disputed by no one.

**THE OPPORTUNITIES
OF A LIFETIME
AT
VERO, FLORIDA**