The Pecan

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The last ten years have seen stress laid on two things that mean probably more for the material prosperity of our farmers than any similar introductions made to the agricultural world during the last half century. One of these is the velvet bean; the other the pecan. As a leguminous crop which is easily grown, and the yielder of a feed for farm animals of almost incalculable value, the velvet bean easily ranks in value with the cowpea; and in some sections is even superior to it. On many farms it is proving to be the deciding factor between profitable and unprofitable agriculture. Suffice it to say the velvet bean will not in the future play second fiddle in the farming operations of Georgia.

The pecan is also coming to the front. A forest tree, attractive as a shade tree, easily grown, subject to few diseases, and the yielder of a nut which ranks above all others in food value, it easily stands at the head of the list in the quality and value of its product.

A thousand pounds of pork properly cured would be a modest estimate of the requirements of the average family for a year. A thousand pounds of pecan nuts will furnish fully as much nourishment as the same quantity of pork, and in a form much more healthful, cleanly and easily digested. And I know whereof I speak when I say that for the average home where there is room to set a dozen or two dozen trees about the premises, a thousand pounds of pecans are more easily produced than a thousand pounds of pork. Furthermore the farm that grows the nuts has its actual as well as aesthetic value enhanced thereby; while the hog at best is a necessary eye-sore that must be endured.

We are a meat eating people. The flesh pots appeal to us. But sometime we will learn that there is too much high blood pressure and arterio sclerosis and rheumatism and the like, all of which are charge-
able in part to our carnivorous habits. Excessive meat eating is not the sole cause of these and many resultant troubles, but it does play a very important part in bringing them about. After awhile there will be a cry raised, the first echoes of which may already be heard, of 'Back to nature.' When this is heeded more nuts and fruits will be used and less meats; and then people will live longer and with a higher degree of efficiency. The advance guard of our civilization has already reached this point, and has demonstrated to their own satisfaction as well as that of others, that a change in our diet along these lines is desirable both from the standpoint of health and of efficiency and economy as well. There is, therefore, an increased demand for nuts which has made a proportionate shortage in the supply of pecans. Here is a reason which appeals to every land owner to grow his annual supply of pecans as religiously as he does his 'hog and hominy.'

We need to take the pecan from the list of luxuries, where most persons place it, and put it in the class of staple necessities where it belongs. This will be done when increased production slightly lowers the price of the better grades of pecans, which will allow the ordinary family to purchase them on the basis of their food value rather than as a luxury.

"Conservation" and "economy" have by the exegencies of the situation become almost twin terms. Whether in war or in peace, it is becoming more and more necessary to make the proverbial two blades of grass grow where only one grew before. Take this fact in connection with the other well known one that the rapid destruction of our forests is beginning to manifest itself in unfavorable climatic and meteorological changes, and we have an unanswerable reason for the extensive setting of the pecan.

Why grow a weed where a flower or useful plant can be just as easily produced? Why plant a poplar or a sycamore or even an oak where a pecan, which makes just as pretty a shade, can fill and more than fill the place of trees grown merely for ornament? Furthermore, the increase in revenue that will come to the average family from a dozen or more trees growing about the home, will in many cases make the difference between a surplus and deficit in profits at the end of the year.

There are many pecan orchards in Georgia containing from 100 to 3,000 acres of trees. Some of these trees are being well cared for and
are, therefore, succeeding. Others are being neglected and consequently are a disappointment to their owners. There are few individuals or companies that will care for a large orchard as it should be. Consequently the majority of the large pecan orchards of the state are not profitable.

And why should they be? The pecan has been over-exploited as a get-rich-quick business. The Creator does not usually work along these lines. If He had made a royal road to wealth, it would be so crowded with physical and intellectual imbeciles that decent people would be pushed aside. In pecans, as in all else, the successful growers are those who do not stint their energies either of body or mind to bring to pass the desirable. These are succeeding with pecans. And the same intelligence and energy bestowed on cotton or trucking or fruit growing or merchandising or banking is also bringing success. The other fellow ought to fail.

It would be useless to urge that every one who has room should have a garden to grow vegetables for home use. The same reason will apply to the growing of pecans. It is not theory, but is based on actual experience and observation, that six to twenty-five pecan trees of bearing age growing about the house, garden or barn will not only beautify the surroundings, and so make the home more attractive, but in addition to furnishing sufficient nuts for family use, will supply a surplus for market, ranging in value from fifty to several hundred dollars. My home lot containing 2 1/8 acres in the town of Cairo is bordered by 22 pecan trees averaging in age about 18 years. For several years the average annual income from these trees has been from $250.00 to $500.00.

Mr. M. G. Maxwell, Calvary, Ga., is a farmer. He has about his home eight pecan trees now in their tenth year. He sold at one time last autumn a part of the nuts from these trees for $65.12.

A neighbor has in his back yard a seedling pecan tree twenty-eight years old from which, after reserving nuts for his own use, he has sold an average of $65.00 worth of nuts per year for the last nine years.

Dr. Dan S. Clanton of Hagan, Ga., has ten trees set February 1908 from which he sold last season more than $200.00 worth of nuts.

These instances, which could be largely multiplied, are given to
show that handsome profits are already being made by those who are growing pecans as a secondary crop.

A hundred thousand hogs might annually be grown and fattened on one immense ranch; but it would be better in every way to do this on a thousand different farms. It is possible for the big pecan companies to succeed; but I am more concerned about the desirability as well as the economy of the profits in pecans going to the farmer and even city dweller who has room for one or more trees. The pecan seems to be a social creature. At least it is at its best when grown in close proximity of our homes. Were it possible to wield Alladdin's wonderful lamp to bring just one blessing to the farmers of Georgia, I doubt if it could be done to greater advantage than to place a few pecan trees about each home. A thousand dollars placed in bank to the credit of each would at best be gone in a few years; but the pecans would make happy every home even unto the third and fourth generation.

But some people are easily scared. The bug-a-boo of over-production frightens them. Do you know Mr. President, that the average annual production of pecans in the United States does not exceed 500 cars of 25,000 pounds each? For the hundred million people in the United States this would give the paltry average of one-eighth of a pound each or but seven nuts the size of these I hold in my hand. Over-production is a needless fear. With the rapidly increasing uses and consequent demand for pecans, neither you, gentlemen, nor even your great-grandchildren, will ever see a glut in the pecan market.

Pecan growing does not appeal to the nervous impatient man. He wants quick profits. To such I respectfully recommend turnips or potatoes or radishes for quick results. But to the man of foresight who is willing to set trees, care for them well, and then wait a few years for results, the pecan is most highly recommended. He may himself gather ample reward for his fore-sight; and when he goes, he will leave his children and children's children a legacy richer than stocks and bonds and life insurance. These latter may soon be spent; but a pecan orchard will continue to bear and bless its owners for a hundred years. In all the realms of horticulture, I know of nothing more promising than the pecan.