

CONSERVATION OF THE SOIL IN DEARBORN COUNTY.

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Since Theodore Roosevelt called the Governors of the several States together to consider the preservation of our forests and other natural resources, the word "conservation" has had a new meaning, not a different meaning, but an intensified meaning. A general awakening is occurring along many lines that were very remote from that considered by the council of the Governors. The recent congress in our own State called by Governor Marshall exhibited the range of the use of the term.

Since boyhood I have been observing the wasting of the land in my native county, Dearborn. The developing of the interest in these lines has stimulated me to more serious thought and has kindled a desire to be of some service in helping in the conservation of the soil in my own county. I believe that every member of the Academy should make himself felt in his own locality at least. The ear of the average citizen is open to the scientific man as never before, for his work is seen on every hand.

Dearborn County is drained by the tributaries of the Ohio River. On the south the Laughery Creek forms the boundary and drains that part. It empties into the Ohio River two and one-half miles south of Aurora. About six miles to the north and running nearly parallel with Laughery Creek is South Hogan, which empties into the Ohio at Aurora. The B. & O. S. W. follows it to Aurora. Between these creeks is a ridge of good farming land. Flowing from this ridge toward either stream are numerous branches. About eight miles further north, measuring on the west side of the county, is North Hogan, which joins South Hogan at Aurora. About the same distance to the north is Tanner's Creek. The Big Four follows it much of the way to Lawrenceburg. The northeastern part of the county is drained by the Great Miami River, the main Indiana branch being the Whitewater. With so many streams of various sizes it is plain to see the county is very hilly, no part of the county has much level land.

Twenty-five years ago most of the hilly land was heavily timbered. Since then, however, the greater part has been removed and the land put under cultivation.

This is where the most serious mistakes have been made. Year after year the hills were planted in corn, barley or wheat. The ground was thereby kept loose and the rains eroded it and transported this rich soil to the valleys below, thus enriching them. As the forests were cleared away the erosion increased until at the present time the rich black soil is largely removed from the hills and the clay beneath it is now being eroded very rapidly and this new soil is being transported to the bottom land and deposited upon the rich soil previously deposited. This not being mixed with humus is not very productive. This is seen on the large bottoms of the Ohio and Great Miami. Twenty-five years ago those alluvial plains produced corn in an extraordinary way, but today their productiveness has greatly decreased.

It is plain to see that the farmers on both the hill lands and also the bottoms have suffered great losses on account of this unfortunate method of procedure. Many of the landowners have seen the error of their way and are changing their method of farming. Alfalfa is now being sowed, and this is protecting the land and at the same time is rendering large profit. Others are sowing to blue grass and using the land for pasture—another wise and productive plan. Still others are setting out locust plants and in this way they are protecting the land and providing for the future realization of profit. Much of the waste land in the county could very profitably be used in this way. Others are clearing away the little timber that remains and planting this to tobacco year after year, and in this way the wasting of the land continues.

A large per cent. of the farmers have never realized the real value of their land. They have so much of it that it makes very little difference to them even if some of it is going to waste. The time is coming when this county will be more densely populated, and some one will be compelled to reclaim this waste land. Many are so selfish that they do not care; but is this a sensible way in which to act?

The greater number of the landowners do not consider how important the soil is. They fail to realize that mankind must look to it as the source of sustenance.

If we could look into the future more and try to see the coming needs it would be better for the present as well as the future generations.

*Moore's Hill,
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