

FARMERS' COLUMN.

**HEALTH OF FARMERS.**—Health is usually considered as an accompaniment to an out-door life; and justly so, perhaps, as all who have experienced the good effect of life in the open air know, to their pleasure. The statistics of the Massachusetts registration reports how also that the farmer's chances for life are larger than are the other occupations. Thus the average age at death of 31,832 farmers who are recorded from 1843 to 1873 is 65.28 years; while for all classes and occupations are but 50.9 years, and of 3,435 clerks the average age at death was but 25.93 years. A person may live long, however, and yet be a sufferer from either occasional or continuous illness, which may be hard to bear without being necessarily fatal; and the farmer himself may be in good health, and yet much troubled, and put to an expense through troubles within the family circle, among those who labor in the household. These our registration reports do not discriminate; and whether the farmer's life is long-lived or the family require unusual medical attendance must be largely derived through indirect evidence. We derive some facts from the valuable reports of the Massachusetts Board of Health, and especially from the able article of Dr. J. F. A. Adams, of Pittsfield, who has made, apparently, an extended and most critical study of the health of the farmer. We first remark that the farming population is the most strictly American of all the classes that compose our population. In 1870 the census showed that of the farmers in Massachusetts 92 per cent. were American born, and that they included one-eighth of all persons having occupations and one-sixteenth of the whole population over the age of ten years. This class of our people are comfortable and prosperous; occupy warm buildings, are well fed, not overworked, and are their own masters. Their families are usually well educated and their homes contain many of the luxuries and comforts. In view of the intelligence of the farming class and their families, we trust that a quite literal quotation of the opinion of the forty-six physicians scattered throughout the State, may be of some service as a text and as a preventive. The question put was: "What causes tend to injure the health of farmers and their families?"

Overwork is mentioned in..... 26 cases  
Exposure..... 18 "  
Improper diet..... 22 "  
Sanitary defects pertaining to barn-yards, hog-pens, privies, drains, or filthy cellars..... 10 "  
Want of ventilation..... 7 "  
Overwork among women..... 6 "  
Irregularity of work..... 3 "  
Ignorance of hygienic laws..... 3 "  
Anxiety..... 3 "  
In-door life of women..... 3 "  
Want of recreation..... 5 "  
Neglect of bathing..... 2 "  
Damp cellars..... 2 "

Of the prevalent diseases by forty-nine correspondents.

Rheumatism is mentioned by..... 28  
Pneumonia..... 12  
Pulmonary affections..... 10  
Fever..... 23  
Dyspepsia..... 10  
Phthisis..... 9  
Bronchitis..... 4  
Catarrhal affections..... 4  
Diarrhoea and dysentery..... 10

When we consider that all the causes in the first table are or should be under the control of the individual, we can realize the importance of a better understanding of hygienic laws. In the second table we have rheumatism mentioned first among the prevalent diseases; and this trouble, although not as yet entirely under our control, either in its causes or effects, yet may be largely diminished through proper care. Pneumonia, in turn, is usually predisposed by conditions which may often be obviated. And as to fevers, we find ourselves almost ready to say broadly that the mere existence of fever is the result of accident or gross carelessness. Indeed, as a general proposition, a little knowledge and considerable action on this knowledge would suffice to reduce this second list at the least 40 per cent. of its present numbers. This is to say, among people who must have one of these nine complaints, none should suffer from fever or dyspepsia and but few from diarrhoea or dysentery. These diseases are not the names states into which our system falls, an usually results from exposure of certain kinds. Fevers, of which slow and typhoid fevers are the type originate, usually, if not invariably, from a low and depressed state of the system and living in the presence of atmosphere containing germs, of which sewer emanations are usually considered the type. Now we feel safe in asserting that if the farmer keeps his cellars sweet, clean and aired, and his drainage good about his house, even including the soil drainage, he will be surprised at the increased health of his family and the decrease of his doctor's bills. Typhoid or low fevers will be almost unknown; and, in addition, he has guarded himself largely against that fell New England scourge, consumption. It is probable that more than fifty per cent. of diseases which meet the farmer and his family are preventable, and easily so, through his own action—viz., dry, sweet, clean, ventilated cellars, perfect cesspool system, and removal of surplus and stagnant water from about the house. The stomach is, however, largely the key to health, for it is through this organ that all the nutriment of the system must pass and all the force taken with the food must be transferred. We must, therefore, consider the demands of a healthy stomach. This organ becomes habituated to a system. It secretes the fluid which in part disorganizes the food and digests it. Now, so long as this organ is in order man appears to get the better of his surroundings. So long as the faculty to digest is present, ill-health need scarcely be feared. How important, then, to guard this important organ against damage. What the farmer requires is regular meals, and that slowness of eating which allows the food to be masticated before being swallowed. He must guard against surfeit, because he works at times hard, and hard work on an overloaded stomach is shown by experience to be injurious. Yet he must eat abundantly. In this respect, as in the work of his farm, he should use common sense. Then as to the character of the food. Let him avoid the habit of tea-drinking or water-drinking in excess at meals. Eat plain or rich food, but in moderation. A swallow of meat and a whole pie is scarcely as healthful or as nourishing as a swallow of pie and a large chunk of meat. It is not so much what we eat which is injurious as the manner and proportion; and a little common sense here also will go a great way. It is only necessary for the family to think to increase the comforts of life. It is but necessary to apply thought to produce most radical improvements in the family and without. The thinking farmer should be the rule; and when once the rule we need fear but little that he will take his proper place in the community, honoring and being honored, healthful and contented.—E. L. S., in *Scientific Farmer*.

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12 " " " " " " " " " "	32 00	384 00
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200 " " " " " " " " " "	3 00	870 00
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