

farming" was commenced, the standard of knowledge of animal and vegetable life was as low perhaps as it ever had been.

There is no doubt that the terrible strain of what is known the world over as the "Agricultural depression," was greatly intensified by the cramping through which whole generations of each section of the landed industry has passed. This cramping is still carried on by the markets, at least these act in the same direction, viz: to restrict the lives within which the farmer find his profit, and the men of the farm their occupation. The influence of the markets is good in so far perhaps as they make one holder of land aim at producing some one thing better than any neighbour, subordinating all farm products to that one; but he thereby becomes a specialist; and the popularity of the caution—about putting all one's eggs into one basket—shows that men are alive to one very real danger in becoming a specialist viz:—as I pointed out in a former article on "fancy breeding"—that if the favour of the public for his spécialité be capriciously withdrawn (and the consuming public are very capricious) then the man who has devoted all his farm, all his capital, and his mental powers to producing one thing, will be left either without a market, or with a market which will only take off his wares at less than the cost of producing them. It is to be imagined that it is now proved that a certain amount of variety of cropping is essential to the secure position of any farmer, with the power to divert into fresh channels part of their energies and products, as the variation of demand may require.

When in the past anyone has suggested supplemental pursuits to the ordinary return of the farm, to an agricultural audience, the comments on the suggestion have almost invariably take the form of "What! give up growing wheat and barley to grow jam?" "What! give up hay-making to fill a silo?" "What! give up bullocks to keep old hens?" The assumption invariably being that, there being an opening (as proved by the markets) for some new production, there is no intermediate course between throwing up every other consideration besides this new demand; and remaining doggedly *in statu quo*, although this be notoriously unremunerative. This assumption is not justifiable. There is a third course open, and that is to be always trying—of course on a small scale,—new experiments and combinations, viz:

growing a new crop, or "converting" some part of an old one in a new way, and, by so doing, feeling one's way into a better business. If the business be already good, it is certainly "good business" to leave well alone.

I fancy that an intelligent observer of any market might discover some direction in which there is a demand which he has the power to supply. The exact articles will of course, be different in different localities, just as the exact crop which each farm will produce to the greatest advantage can never be discovered except on the farm itself.

The idea that once prevailed—surely it is dead now—that all land must be farmed on exactly the same number of courses, and the few crops permitted only be grown in one rotation, was worthy of that robber chieftain of olden times, who made all comers fit his bedstead, lengthening out by the rack those who did not touch both top and bottom, and chopping off a bit of those whose inches were in excess of what was required for this purpose.

To sum up. To determine which variety to grow, and how to grow it, requires no small intelligence, and no small amount of traditional skill. Mere quick-wittedness, without any practical knowledge, is about the most dangerous quality an agricultural assistant can have, as anyone may find out for himself who will take a sharp town-boy and put him to some country-task.

The man who should set out, or chop out, one variety of roots at the distances which suit another will half spoil a costly crop. The man who expects one variety of herbage, to "make," exactly as another would, will be rewarded with a "rick a-fire." Success in farming depends in recognizing a thousand little differences and distinctions between plants and animals which have a general outward resemblance to each other; and to do this requires a sympathetic insight. Now, this sympathy with beast or bird, or plant is not a product of modern education.

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