

Sidelights on the Foreign Farmer

Continued

bit of hardware, which any hardware merchant would cheerfully contract to duplicate new, and lay down at the nearest express office charges prepaid, will sell for nearly double the money this transaction would involve.

Our young man got his farm, and he got his girl, too, and if you ask me, he deserved them both. Consider what he did. He paid the government the full value of his own labor in breaking and improvements for three or four years. But he took it out of the land. He did not. He took it out of himself. There are millions of acres just as good or better in Canada. They lack the man.

My pen is not suited to the heroic measure. No sooner am I started upon some adequate description of a really great achievement when some whimsical or ridiculous aspect of human endeavor seizes me and deprives my pen of all requisite enthusiasm. The history of this young man is really an epic of the soil. But when I think of its triumphant climax being capped and illustrated by the lavish purchase of \$50 worth of orange cider at one fell swoop, gone is all hope of any Homeric or Vergilian strain. I love the orange and admire it as a fruit. Occasionally, and for no apparent reason, I have a disagreement with some particular orange and in the argument which ensues I get very much the worst of it. This does not interfere with my high respect for the orange, but compounded with sugar, fortified with ardent chemicals which are as unslaked lime to my inward parts, and tempered by none of that narcotic which is divine or diabolical to the reader's taste I approach even a modest five cents' worth of orange cider with convulsive shuddering. Fifty dollars worth at a gulp as it were, Gorgonian evidence of stupendous financial and organic resources though it be, there is something about the notion that diverts and twists all epic inspiration. I'll come to the cider in a moment.

The present position of this particular foreign farmer who formed and carried out the project of locating on and working a quarter of school land is this. He owns and works three quarter sections. What of cattle, pigs, chickens, geese, turkeys and ducks he owns I do not know. He has eight head of horses which are always fat and in fine condition. Here I may pause to observe that the foreign farmer is without superior in the care and feeding of horses, that is so far as my observation goes in the district to which it has been limited. A great many of them have a very shrewd knowledge of horses. Nothing but poverty will induce them to buy a poor horse and no horse is too good for them if they have money. They keep them well conditioned. Public opinion among them runs very strongly upon this point. They are sentimental about all animals, but especially about horses. One that I know had a horse stray on him and was in a great state of mind over it. A friend of his was describing his agitation to me, how he had come to him with tears in his eyes, saying in his own tongue, "My dear little horse I shall never see it again." True his friend was ridiculing him, but it was not for his language or for the tears, but because there was almost no danger, one chance in a thousand, of the horse being really lost. Exceptions there must be, no doubt, but I must say that the foreign farmers I have known have been kindly and clever with animals and, from the teams I used to see on the roads and their condition, this characteristic must be general.

Out of his eight head of horses he drives a team of matched greys which are almost as good as he himself thinks they are, which is saying a good deal. In the matter of harness he is luxurious, not to say ostentatious, so much so as to excite remark. He possesses besides an automobile which cost him \$1100 cash. He is the happy father of twelve children, and a great handsome wife. I have thought of many words, but can hit upon none better than "great" to describe her build and stature at once with delicacy and truth.

This man is the type of a successful farmer anywhere, rough in feature, physique and voice but mostly jolly and good natured. Not possessing more than a word or two of English himself, he has given, and is giving, his children the best education procurable. This spring as I have mentioned before, he married his eldest daughter after she had finished with

high school, to the son of a neighboring farmer, the combined ages of bride and groom making 36 years. There was indeed a wedding. The clans gathered from far and near. All Saturday night they danced and froliced and drank orange cider. On Sunday they trooped to the church where the marriage was solemnized and returned to more feasting and more draughts of orange cider. No less than \$50 worth of this delectable beverage was consumed and other things in proportion.

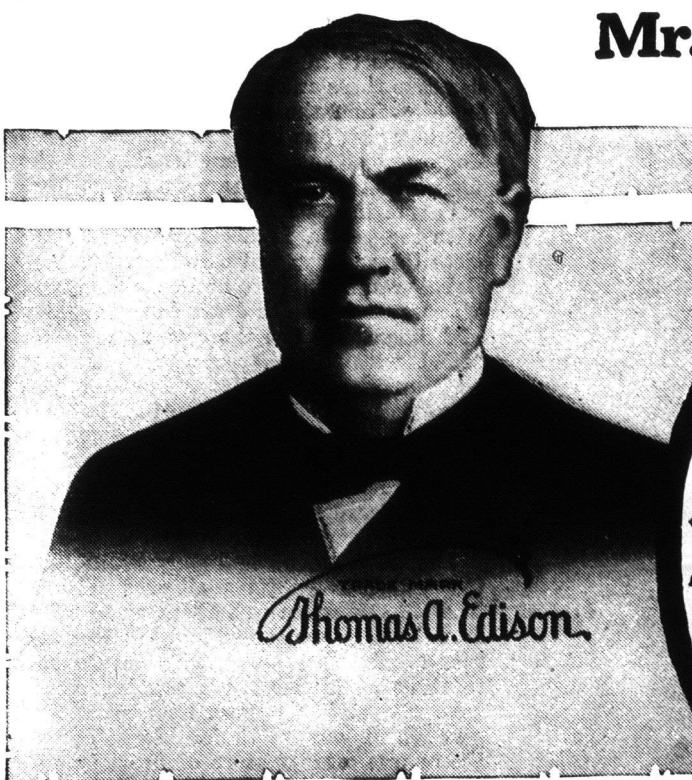
Whether there was anything else available than orange cider I do not know. The views of the foreign farmer on prohibition are unimportant, he has no views on the subject. Alcoholic drinks are to him simply a not unimportant part of the joy of life, sanctioned by religion and immemorial custom. Whether he ever will or can arrive at the idea of alcohol being a curse to the community,

he certainly has not done so yet. He drinks whisky or beer in the same way as he drinks water or buttermilk, and to upset his head with the one is the same kind of wrong doing as to upset his stomach with the other. His attitude towards a man for getting drunk is the same as his attitude towards a child for making itself sick with sweets. He does not and cannot see anything more in it than this. At the same time he has a great fear of the law. He is emphatically not a law breaker. When you stop to think about it, a great many laws are broken by us, not only with impunity but with virtuous self-approval, not because we are law breakers but because we either obey a higher necessity or recognize the essential harmlessness of some particular breach of the law. The foreigner is quite different. The law is to him an external force which does not require

his consent for either its making or enforcement. This is where his citizenship is still incomplete. He does not yet at least regard himself as part of the public opinion without which a law cannot come into being or existing, cannot be enforced. Our obedience is based on respect for the law, respect for ourselves as its authors, his upon fear of an external and punitive force. Hence his obedience is likely to be more particular, but less essential to the maintenance of law as law. This attitude is the fruit of long centuries under tyrannical government. It extends into his whole relation to government and law. The true conception of democracy in its relation to law and liberty will take a while to grow up in his mind. Rome was not built in a day, nor was true democratic freedom built in a day either. But I become too philosophical.

(To be continued)

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