

## THE BOOK WORLD

## A PRACTICAL FARMER ON RECONSTRUCTION

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Books written by farmers are not numerous, the reasons being doubtless that writing is not their specialty, and that their ordinary occupation leaves little time for extras. A great many farmers have scarcely any correspondence beyond the bare necessities of business, because they claim that they have enough to do without writing letters. These remarks perhaps apply rather more to the years past than to the present. Labor-saving machinery has lessened certain parts of the farmer's toil, but no machinery runs without a man to look after it, and man-power has become difficult to secure. Wages in factories are high, and many men prefer the life of the city with its shorter hours of toil. The "eight-hour day" is more or less a myth on the farm, unless it be eight hours in the forenoon and eight hours in the afternoon of the same day. On the other hand, farming has become a highly scientific business; the Agricultural College is abroad in the land; farmers' conventions and associations are everywhere marked by a high intelligence and a power in debate which augur well for the part to be taken in our great agricultural country by members from the farming areas. The day of having rural constituencies represented in parliaments and legislatures by professional men from the cities, is about over. Class representation is not a desirable thing in any country where it is narrow and oblivious of the fact that there are other people in the land with other occupations than those to which a legislator belongs. But all elements in the composite of human society should have a voice in order that the rights of all should be conserved, and the good of the whole people, and not merely that of any one section, should be steadily kept in view. Or, as the ancient sage expressed it, let "the greatest good of the greatest number" be an antidote to selfishness.

I am moved to this general introduction because there came into my hands a few days ago from J. M. Dent & Sons, of Toronto, a book by Mr. W. C. Good, whom I know as a practical farmer on the homestead between Brantford and Paris, in Ontario. And the book is on a difficult and important subject suitable for this reconstruction period in our history. It is entitled "Production and Taxation in Canada from the Farmer's Standpoint." Had I been the publisher I think I would have called the book "A Farmer on Production and Taxation." That puts the farmer in the foreground, writing on a highly technical and economic subject hitherto reserved for specialists, and the passer-by would have been more apt to say, "Let me now turn aside and see this great sight." But once anyone picks up the book the title is not important. The careful reader will find that it is written with great ability even though he may query certain points where Mr. Good emphasizes certain points in the too exclusive interests of farmers. If he does that, however, I believe it to be unconscious, because by temperament and desire he aims at being fair.

I have the good fortune to have known Mr. Good with considerable intimacy in years past. The fact of thus knowing an author may be both an advantage and a disadvantage in reviewing his book. It is an advantage in that one understands the author's motive, and it is a disadvantage in that one rather dislikes to act the part of a "candid friend" and find some flaws in a friend's book. Fortunately it is not very necessary to find flaws in this case, and if any are pointed out Mr. Good is not the kind of man to complain. He believes in "give and take" without fear or favor,

Mr. Good's brief and modest autobiography in the preface is given with a view to letting readers understand that when he speaks about farming he knows what he is talking about. He says: "I was born and brought up, as was my father, upon the farm which I now own and work. The greater part of the years 1896-1901 I spent in under- and graduate work in the University of Toronto. In January, 1902, I took a position in the Chemical Department of the Ontario Agricultural College, where I stayed nearly two years. In the fall of 1903 I returned to the farm, where I have been ever since, and where I expect to stay." Let me supplement this a little. Mr. Good is a B.A. of Toronto University. He had a large career opening out to him in the college, but he was the only son, and on his father's death he unselfishly abandoned professional work to come back to the homestead and look after his mother and sisters. Later on, when he got affairs in shape, I had the pleasure of marrying him to Miss McCormick, the daughter of Mr. George McCormick, one of a well-known and highly respected family of farmers on the Paris Plains. I had the added privilege of baptising their eldest-born. Mr. and Mrs. Good are both thoroughly practical in their knowledge of every department of farm work, and they pursue it with skill and a just pride in their vocation. Doubtless Mr. Good means to stay on the farm, as he says. I think both he and his wife would prefer it, and they realize that it is a good place to bring up their family. But Mr. Good has become widely known as a thinker and speaker both in the cities and country places of Ontario. The farmers are coming more and more to the front. He has been nominated for the Legislature for North Brant, and one would not be surprised to see him a member of the Government in Toronto or Ottawa. But he would not get out of touch with the farm. So much about the author. His personality enhances the value of his book. Mr. Good has put all his scientific knowledge into his farming occupation. He has worked hard himself and lived with economy. But he says that there are general economic conditions which militate against the success of the farmer, and he writes this book in order to give us his opinion of the trouble and the remedy. And he claims that better conditions for the farmer will lead to wider and more general prosperity for the country as a whole. There can be no doubt of the general truth of that statement. The whole business world in Canada is restless and nervous when crop reports are bad: and vice-versa when they are good. Mr. Good is entirely right when he says: "Of all the industries that contribute to human welfare agriculture is undoubtedly the most important." Here, of course, he is speaking of industries rather than callings, for he recognizes the paramount place of mental and moral excellence. He feels that it is the fresh blood of the country that saves the city and civilization itself from death. He believes that a "numerous, strong, intelligent and independent yeomanry is the best guarantee for the maintenance of democracy." He thinks "a high standard of life on the farm is a condition upon which depends the quality, and indeed the very existence of the whole social fabric."

"I'll fares the land to hastening ills a prey,  
Where wealth accumulates and men decay."

And then Mr. Good goes on to show that rural depopulation has been going on at an alarming rate for twenty years past, and maintains that there is no use in telling men to stay on the farms and produce more unless they get a better share of the proceeds than they now receive.

Mr. Good justly flays the land gambler who holds land for

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