

THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE & HOME MAGAZINE

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A Double Benefit.

The time to kill weeds is before they are visible. Then the least disturbance of the soil by means of a light harrow will bring them to the surface, where they perish immediately. A shower coming an hour after is too late to help or save them, and the loosening of the surface makes the crops grow vigorously. Thus frequent cultivation of such crops as corn and potatoes will keep the land free of weeds, and make it absorbent and retentive of moisture. This is the most effective way to grow large crops.

The Horn Fly.

The horn fly pest is already very bad in some localities. When the flies are at their worst, it has been found necessary to spray cattle with the ordinary kerosene emulsion every two days. Prof. Fletcher, of the Experimental Farm, Ottawa, has found that Tanner's oil, containing some carbolyzed oil, or oil of tar, is more lasting in its effects, but takes longer to apply and requires much greater labor. Train oil or fish oil alone, or train oil or lard, with a little sulphur, oil of tar or carbolic acid added, will keep the flies away for five or six days.

Our Common Schools and Farmers.

From the New England Magazine, March, 1894.

BY E. P. POWELL.

The following article was recently published in the New England Magazine. It is so much to the point that we decided to reproduce it.

Canada, especially the older provinces, suffer from the same conditions as prevail in New England. The remedy suggested appears to be the chief or only one which will permanently benefit the country:

"The difficulty with agriculture is two-fold,—farming does not pay, and farm life is not attractive. The result is that our population, which one hundred years ago was ninety per cent. agricultural, is now but little over sixty per cent. such; and the ratio is decreasing. The national pride in vast cities is an error of judgment. Any one of our metropolitan cities might be reduced one-fourth in size without loss to productive capital. Deduct the dependent and criminal classes of New York, and you bring down your census by two hundred thousand. The first great break with barbarism was when land tilling began to create permanent homes and the home instinct; and the next was when each family could have its separate house and its individual tastes. Any reaction toward the herding instinct is a movement backward; and our efforts as social reformers should be exercised to prevent such a tendency. If you ask the lower classes in our cities why they are there, and why they endure such pinchings of penury, and if you further urge on them to accept your help to secure a home in the country, you will find as a rule that they cannot endure the loneliness of dissociation. They are like your domestic animals, or the sparrows in the eaves. Our cities are not filled with foreign influence altogether; even the tenements and cellars are populated largely by our own native-born people. When we come to a consideration of the problem of capital and labor, and the friction of competition so bitterly complained of by Mr. George and Mr. Bellamy, we find that the worst elbowing is done in the undifferentiated masses, not by individuals sharply separated by skill and knowledge. It is a mistake to assert that we are living in an age of individualism; we have hardly touched the threshold of individual character. It is a question of supreme importance whether American life has not of late been moving toward the mass, and not toward the man.

I do not see that I can emphasize the danger to which I desire to call attention better than by going back to Thomas Jefferson and the founding of Democracy in 1800. It was Jefferson's profound conviction that agriculture must underlie a republican government as the basis of prosperity. "The American people," he said, "will remain virtuous as long as agriculture is our principal object. When we get to be piled upon one another in large cities, as in Europe, we shall become as corrupt as they." The very key to a possible republic lay, in his judgment, in the tillage of land, as predominant over commerce and manufactures. In his maturest years he wrote as follows: "It is by dividing and subdividing republics from the great national one down through all its subordinations, until it ends in the administration of every man's farm by himself, by placing under every one what his own eye may superintend, that all will be done for the best. What has destroyed liberty and the rights of man in every government which has ever existed under the sun? The generalizing and concentrating all cares and powers into one body, no matter whether of the autocrats of Russia or France, or of the aristocrats of a Venetian senate. And I do believe that if the Almighty has decreed man shall ever be free, the secret will be in making himself the repository of powers respecting himself, so far as he is competent to them, and delegating only what is beyond his competence." Jefferson would certainly, if allowed to reappear to survey the American Republic, warn us that we had, while becoming powerful as a nation, lost power as a people; that we had gone far to undermine our Republic by forsaking our fields and becoming "piled upon one another" in great cities.

But we are at once answered that, however dangerous this may be to republicanism and individualism, it is nevertheless a natural drift of events; that farming does not pay,—and no influence can keep a people at an occupation that is not remunerative. We might ask the counter-question: Do cities pay? Is it profitable, even from a material point of view, to crowd into municipalities? Do most of those who desert the farms prosper in the avenues of trade? Morally and socially, the exchange is disastrous for the majority of our young

people. Statistics show that three generations of city life exhaust vitality, and that our cities must be steadily fed by an influx from the rural districts. Most of this influx, however, is simply absorbed and lost. It is fed to the octopus of vice and beggary and disease and general want. On a farm a failure is seen, while a lad who is lost in the city drops out of sight, and reappears only in the potter's field.

The city is not a natural product. Its crowds are not needed for the mechanical industries. The bulk live from hand to mouth. At least one-fourth can be dispensed with economically. The whole system is false. We mass our people, and then carry food to them at vast expense and waste. The key to prosperity is not in the distribution of products, but in the distribution of consumers.

There is a story of some college boys who were off for a Saturday's outing. They wished to show their wit and knowledge at the expense of a farmer whom they met. At last he turned on them: "Very well, gentlemen, now let me ask you one question: I see you have killed a snipe. Can you tell me whether that snipe is a bird or a fowl? Will you tell me what is the difference between a bird and a fowl?" The boys tried in vain to invent some definition which should accurately classify snipe, turkeys, quail, hens, sparrows and geese. Snapping his finger at their classical learning, the farmer informed them that "a bird takes food to its young, but a fowl takes its young to the food." Our cities are built on the bird plan; our farms run on the plan of the fowls. We cover our land with costly railways, to enable us to convey sufficient food to the crowded cities; that is, we have our food in one place and our mouths in another. We are doing the sparrow trick too largely in proportion to the turkeys. We are educating our young folk to desert the farms and squeeze into blocks, and to lose their individuality by becoming bits of the mechanism of urban life. Not one in a hundred gets rich—not one in twenty gets a competence.

But farming does pay; it is paying; that is, in right hands, with right methods. Whole counties of New England, that were deserted practically by our own farmers, are taken up by Canadian French, and they are thriving. I have seen the old Yankee stock that came to Central New York, up the Mohawk Valley, run out, mainly by Irish people. These, in turn, gave way to Germans, who will doubtless in a couple of generations yield their titles to others. So long as any race holds to old-fashioned culture and methods of life, all goes well; but by and by the new ideas and new methods are inevitable, and then there is a lack of something. They are unable to readjust themselves to the new order. But we cannot expect to resurrect the eighteenth century. We must find out our difficulty; and that is, as I shall aim to show, that our common school education is almost precisely what it was one hundred years ago, and in no way fitted to the other revolutions in farm life.

Our fathers on the farm were producers in the main for home consumption. Each homestead was expected to be self-supporting, or nearly so. Wives wove, knit, sewed, cooked, dyed, made soap and candles; husbands not only ploughed, but made their own shoes, cut their own fuel, and mended their own simple machinery, as well as built their own houses. Each farm raised nearly all that was eaten, worn, or enjoyed. Little was sold; little was bought. There was swapping of surplus among neighbors; and wheat, corn, oats, rye, were in each man's private bin. But to-day the farmer everywhere is a trader. In Dakota he raises his truck for Chicago, his wheat for London, his corn for New York. On the other hand, he buys his fuel, lights, clothes, most of his food, and his comforts. This flings him in with the world of speculators and adventurers. The farmer deals in futures as much as the Chicago dealer who buys October corn in July. On the old plan the farmer was everywhere moderately successful. He was educated for that style of work and to be content with that style of life. Now machinery has elbowed him out of his pride, skill, and art; and his wife also is left without her craft. He no longer swings his scythe with pride, or his axe with rhythm. She does not sew and knit. He buys coal, and has hung up his bucksaw forever. She buys stockings, and the old spinning-wheel is an object of curiosity.

The change involves new needs, new desires, new methods. The farmer who handles money instead of household material, and who speculates in crops, as all farmers now do, learns to need fine horses and carriages, handsome houses and barns, and costly tools. The wife learns to require costly dresses, pianos, furniture that is fashionable, literature, and art. Education becomes costly; and when the children get it, they push off from the farm for the city. A few farmers get rich, exactly as a few Board of Trade men amass wealth; but the bulk grow poor, and most of them ultimately dwindle away. I can find barely a dozen old families in my own township who "hold on," readjusting themselves to the changes. This is the story everywhere. It is impossible to make the farm universally profitable on such a system. Many move West, or move on; lose the home instinct, and create a migratory sentiment. This is not a desirable sentiment to increase.

The bottom of the difficulty is not some mystery; nor is the cure some nostrum in the way of statute