

## Second Prize Essay

### Can our Present Methods of Farming be improved upon; and if so, How?

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SUPPOSE we take a farm rather run down and dirty—that is, with a good deal of weeds—and that has not been yielding very remunerative crops, as I am sorry to say is the rule rather than the exception.

Let us give a field at a time a good summer fallowing, beginning in the fall with a good deep plowing. The following winter will nicely mellow the soil, and it will be in good condition after the spring crops are in, to get another good plowing. If there are any low or wet places, put in under-drains wherever needed, at least two and a half feet deep, which will dry the land and make a very great improvement. This will aerate the soil, by means of which we can work the soil later in the season as well as earlier in the spring; in fact, it will be dry before the other parts of the field. Give it a good coat of barnyard manure, being careful to spread it thicker on any rather barren spots, if any. Then put on the gang plow or a good cultivator, so as to stir up and turn it over. This will give the weeds a chance to start. After each plowing or turning over, give it a good harrowing, and so continue for two or three times, when it should again have a plowing. By this means the land will be pretty well cleared of thistles and other weeds, and the following harvest the grain can be bound without gloves. If the ground is lumpy, put on the roller after plowing, and get it fit for a seed bed.

In the fall drill in wheat, being careful that the seed grain is clean of all foul seeds, for if we sow foul seeds we are sure to gather a foul crop. Seed down with timothy and other grasses if necessary; sow the grass seed liberally. If the land is in good, fine condition as a seed bed and well manured, the following winter will not have as much effect on the plants as it would otherwise. Then early in spring sow the clover. Then for the next two or three years keep this as a meadow, from which we may reasonably expect good crops of hay, but the aftermath must not be pastured too close while in meadow. For the next two or three years keep it as a pasture, when the soil can be broken up early in the fall, and the following spring plant potatoes, roots, and corn on part of it (using all the manure we can possibly put on during the winter) and spring grains on the balance. Thistles and other foul seed may probably get in again by this time.

Let us by all means keep all the Live Stock we possibly can, and what we keep let us keep well, in good growing condition. In the summer, if the pastures fail, which they often do, especially in a dry season, feed the stock plentifully with green feed, such as corn, which I find yields the greatest amount of succulent forage, consequently we should grow a good large piece for that purpose.

To enable us to keep the Live Stock in good heart and growing all the year round, we must also have good farm buildings, and a good bank-barn (so called) is about the best form for the main building, with a conveniently fitted-up basement of stone for horses and cattle.

As the prices of grain have been low for the last few years, it is more profitable to grow only just enough for our own use, which feed liberally, as well as hay, to the Live Stock; thereby we shall be able to take our produce to market on its own feet, and also have a good heap of barnyard manure of the best description, which is better in almost every respect than the commercial fertilizers. We should during the winter draw out most of our manure and spread on the land soon after it is made—we then get the full strength of it. By adopting the above method, we should be able in a few years to go all over the farm, and as some one has said, "become a benefactor to his country, able to make two blades of grass grow where only one grew before." Aye, more than that.

If the farm, or the first portion of it thus treated becomes dirty again, which it probably will, while we are surrounded by careless and dirty neighbors, begin again as at first. This leaves a regular rotation of crops covering about seven years, which is better than oftener. We keep a good part of this time in grass, and in these days grass is king.

Horace Greeley said: "Only good farming pays." . . . The good farmer alone grows good crops at first, and better ever afterwards; it is far better to maintain the productive capacity of a farm than to restore it. . . . Rotation is at least negative fertilization, it may not positively enrich a farm, it will at least retard and postpone its impoverishment. He who grows wheat after wheat, corn after corn, for twenty years, will need to emigrate before that term is fulfilled. The same farm cannot support (or endure) him any longer than that. All our wheat-growing sections of fifty years ago are wheat-growing no longer, while England grows larger crops thereof on the same fields that fed the Saxon Harold and William the Conqueror. Rotation has preserved these as the lack of it has ruined those."

We must by all and every means keep our lands clear of weeds as far as possible, for we cannot grow half a dozen crops mixed together.

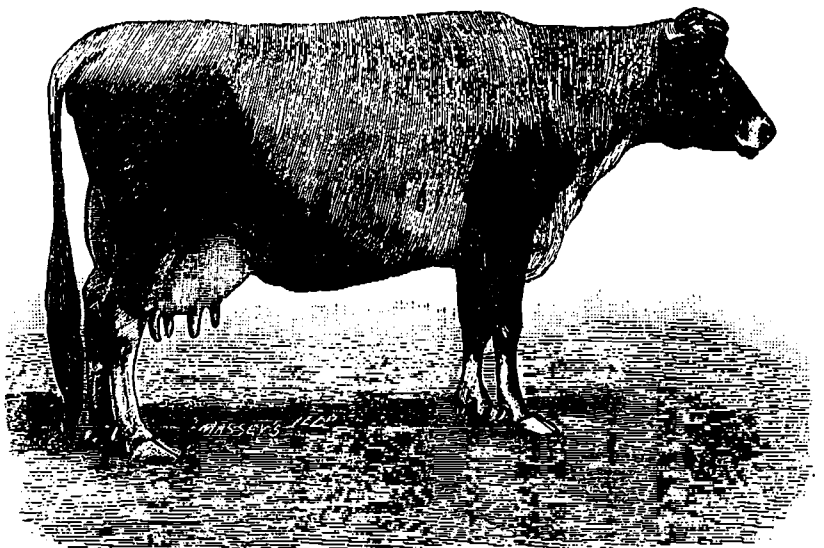
This puts me in mind of a neighbor's hay field last year. The first crop of hay after wheat, he had a heavy crop such as it was. There was about 3 parts thistles, 2 parts chess, 1 part cockle, 1 part wheat, 1 part rye, 2 parts mustard, 3 parts timothy, 1 part clover, besides shepherd's purse, sorrel, yarrow, and other trash.

Let us keep the scuffle and hoes going frequently on all root and corn crops. The farmer's life is a busy one at certain seasons (and as for that all other occupations have to keep busy, besides a good deal of worry), but we can save a good deal of labor by not growing so much grain as we have been in the habit of doing.

Another method of improving farms would be to plant plenty of good thrifty shade trees, which would act as shelter as well as shade, in front of the farm, and I have often thought that a row of trees between and surrounding every field would be a great advantage. The little shade the trees would give to the crops would be trifling compared to the comfort afforded to stock in pasture. Besides, timber is getting scarce, and those trees would make good posts that would not need renewing very often, to fasten wire on as fences. They would also act as wind breaks, which are very much needed now as our forests are nearly all swept away.

Almost any farmer can improve his place by making it attractive; it would be the best investment he could make for his children, and it would surround their youth with a beautiful and attractive home. The dwelling may be small and rude, but a few choice flowers and shrubs in front and surrounding the house, and good fruits, together with a select lot of vegetables, and best of all, a nice variety of small fruits, which can be grown so easily, would add a great deal of pleasure for the young folks as well as conducive to health. There is very little labor done on the farm that is so profitable as that which makes the wife and children fond of their home. We should also have a small library of well-selected books, and not begrudge some of the best papers, particularly good agricultural and horticultural journals. This would save many youths from wandering away from their homes.

I may not have advanced many new ideas for a progressive farmer, but they are practical and common sense ones.



We take pleasure in presenting a portrait of the Jersey cow Eurotisama, breaker of the annual record for butter, she having given, in the year ending April 21, 1890, 945 lb. 9 oz., salted ounce to pound and ready for market—which is 8 lb. 10½ oz.

more than the yield of the only other cow that is known to have reached 900 lbs. Eurotisama was bred, tested, and is owned by Mr. D. F. Appleton, of Ipswich, Mass.