

"THE LOVE OF THE SOIL"

By EARL F. STRONG

Among the human emotions are instincts which revert back to heredity. Such is the love instinct; such may be the fervid patriotism of war time, and its lifting enthusiasm. And in some people there is a time comes an instinct which may be named "the love of the soil."

When strong enough this call of the land has drawn men from soft, high paying positions to wild and desolate homesteads. It is a demand for elemental things, for the love of life is the soil.

Such is the case of a Roseburg man who recently inquired of "how I liked the farm." He has never plowed a furrow; he has never fattened a pig or butchered a veal. He is a clerk with a family. But he wants to be on a farm.

He asked my advice on farming in Douglas county. Of all the town-bred or city raised men who have tried the agricultural life, only one in five has stayed in the country as actual cultivators of the soil, or raisers of stock. I believe that this percentage is good the country over. Four of every five return to the towns or the cities to make their living, more or less disillusioned.

The fundamental conditions of the nation are not right for these untrained and inexperienced men to make good in the first place. The American nation has reached the point where the industrial side of its life and its development has passed the agricultural in consequence and importance. Country boys are going to the city and the towns. City life is increasing in population much faster than the rural.

The profits of agriculture are much less than those of business and industry. As a result wages are often high and salaried. This fact, combined with the conveniences of towns, the pleasures of social life, of theatre, of church, and of the graded school, make the fundamental conditions such that a town-bred man and his family are unlikely to be satisfied in the rural districts.

Conditions in Douglas. In Douglas county, as anywhere else, farming is really a very intricate business, consisting of numerous kinds of production, and marketing. No longer is it a matter of plowing and sowing and reaping. Douglas agriculturists do not make their living in that fashion. Grain raising, as a rule, would little more than pay the taxes. Most of our soils have been farmed for fifty years, and for straight wheat or oat farming, few soils can stand a drain of that many years and yield a profitable return.

Fruit raising is undoubtedly now the leading business of this county. It is a special business, with experts devoting time and study and

experiment—in fact—their lives, to this class of work, as much as a lawyer devotes his time to the study of the law. L. B. Skinner and C. A. Brand are apple growers who may be cited as examples. Although ninety per cent of the apple orchards of this state are alleged to be financial failures, these men are such expert managers that they have made good in this branch of fruit growing as well as with other species.

Of course prune growing is the greatest fruit industry in Douglas county. There are many expert growers, who have made eminent success with the no longer humble prune. This crop is adapted peculiarly to our county and climate; and in addition may be shipped anywhere, when dried, throughout the year.

Stock raising is much less intricate, although any city clerk might find it a matter of a year or so before he assimilated enough experience to make a profit in that line of endeavor. Poultry raising is a matter of considerable knowledge and skill, too. Any one who has raised a band of turkeys or made pullets lay in November profitably realize that.

So the man without farm experience may find that it takes more than the instinct of the "call to the land" to make a living on a Douglas county farm.

Besides these facts, the land of this section is now rather expensive. High prices are being paid for the land here. I doubt if the average income from the farms of this county pays three percent on the selling value of the land, after depreciation, upkeep and labor bills are considered. Thus a man with small capital, buying land and paying from 6 to 8 per cent for his money, will not be able to pay the interest from the earnings on the principal. Many failures originate in this condition.

High Taxes. The cost of government everywhere has mounted to stupendous heights. Taxes on many ranches are as high as the rent due to be. In some cases the taxes take most of the rent value. How much further this tendency may go is difficult to say. But now three-fourths of the taxes in the state of Oregon of one kind or another are paid by the land and its improvements. Notes and money pay but two per cent.

So when the town man moves to the country he becomes one of the heaviest tax payers of the state. When a business pays a tax its manager usually passes the expense on to the buyer. But the farmer can not do so. His price is set to a large degree by the world's markets. His taxes must come out of his profits. There is no possible way to pass them to other shoulders. If the tax be con-

sidatory the farmer must quit or move from the country.

Another thing which has borne heavily on the man new to the country districts is the frequent isolation, particularly in the winter months. It takes two people on our places. The wife likes society, and the loneliness irks her more than the husband. Often the living conditions are not like town—with its plumbing, running water, electric lights and the like.

The work of the farm is much different from many town jobs of the lighter sort. Besides being more heavy, with longer hours, much farm work must be done alone. City men are not accustomed to solitary effort, doing better with company or in an organization.

Farm life requires that man be his own veterinarian, his own plumber, woodcutter, gas engineer, bookkeeper, hired man at times, and a score of different things. In town if a pipe breaks you call the plumber; if anything else goes wrong you have the tinner, the carpenter, or the furniture man, come and repair it.

A general decline in the prices of farm products the last two years has made the problem harder. Wages are twice as high in proportion as farm products. The expense of production is much higher than before the war in every respect, from the taxes to new pitchforks. So far as farm products are concerned the general conclusion seems to prevail that a man working for wages with steady employment has much the better of the Douglas county farm operator.

The Other Side. But as intimated in the beginning when the instinct to try farming is so strong that it can not be resisted; and such cases do exist, my advice is not to buy off hand, but to rent a place as near your idea as possible for at least a year. Rent it equipped if it be possible.

For opportunities certainly exist. Where so many people are learning a life of work, others may find their chance. Then it is very noticeable that large families no longer exist as the rule in Douglas county rural districts. School districts sometimes don't have children enough to have a school. This makes more room and less competition—for the new man in agriculture.

Several fundamental conditions in Douglas county should be carefully considered before entering any proposition. I knew a truck farmer near Yoncalla. He grew wonderful vegetables; very successful in production. But there was no market.

Long Freight Haul. This county is in a district requiring a long haul to the markets of the world. It is not near any really large city. Portland, as a rule, is a very poor market, full of greedy dealers who wish to resell any produce at a long profit.

In grain farming the lands here have reached the stage where they are now being bought for the or-

chards and cover crops are being grown.

The new man, whether town man or immigrant, should also note that there is an exceedingly wide variation in soils. One acre may be one kind, the next of another class. Then as a rule our prices are exorbitant. The land is often not worth what it brings. All of the Pacific coast mild weather districts have been stimulated by newcomers buying land at high prices. Sometimes on account of the climate, sometimes because they come from very productive lands of the middle west. This force is ever likely to exist; for the United States contains vast areas of rigorous cold climates. The well to do of these climates as they grow older seek the milder states.

Anyway, the new man must be aware of the speculative value placed on the lands of this county, and stay clear of the owners and the dealers who are looking for what may be termed "suckers." Good examples of this class of selling occurred a number of years ago, when the big apple orchards were planted, platted and sold by mail and otherwise.

Real Opportunities. With the man who possesses aptitude there are nevertheless opportunities very discernible. Think what a revelation Dr. Bailey's commercializing of broccoli has been. Consider for example the possibilities and extent of the Dillard melon industry. So far with a natural climate for fruit there has not been a nursery development in Douglas county of any degree of size. Think what the specialty of raising turkeys has become.

California is a vast fruit orchard using fertilizers and cover crops. Oregon, west of the Cascades, is becoming so. Consider the prune orchards being planted in Douglas county each year. No cover crops equal vetch and rye. Western Oregon is the one part of the world which grows seed crops of vetch better than anywhere else. There is also much room for producing other kinds of seed. A man in the Willamette valley has made a reputation and a fortune with a hand-fanning mill. Who has not heard of the famous Shadeland oats? Similar opportunities are in breeding stock of one kind and another.

The coast country is an ideal dairy land. Inland Douglas county falls far short of that. Our seasons here are somewhat peculiar; a long dry season and then a very wet. In some ways this may be a blessing, in others it is a great handicap, especially in regard to pasture lands and pasture grasses. But a little irrigation and dairy opportunities are at once open.

The long-hoped-for establishment of canneries also opens fields for the raising of certain kinds of vegetables and small fruits. It affords a long-needed outlet for the surplus, and gives a chance to large scale production. With careful business management, the canneries in Roseburg and other towns should be a very great assistance

(Continued on page 40)

ROBUST HEALTH

COMES FROM NOURISHING FOOD

AS THE SUPREME FORM OF NOURISHMENT OUR QUALITY MEATS LEND STRENGTH TO GROWING ACTIVE BODIES

In Our New Location

North Side Meat Market

Boyer Bros., Props.

Winchester St.

Delicious Roasts
Steaks
Juicy and Savory

Tender Cullets
Chops

THE BEST OF MEATS
FOR THE
BEST OF HEALTH

A Happy New Year

Why Stagger Under This Burden?

THERE'S NO EXCUSE

FOR THOSE DREARY, TIRING, BACK-BREAKING HOURS SPENT ON YOUR WASHING EVERY WEEK. NOTHING CAN COMPENSATE FOR THE WEAR AND TEAR ON YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM. IT'S REALLY UNFAIRNESS TO YOURSELF. ANYWAY WHY GO THROUGH ALL THIS WHEN YOU CAN SEND YOUR LAUNDRY TO US AND GET IT BACK CLEANED, IRONED IN A CAREFUL, DEPENDABLE MANNER. WE'LL GLADLY RELIEVE YOU OF THIS BURDEN.

Roseburg Steam Laundry**Phone 79**