

Edgerton's ...Farm.

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Back to Nature and Sanity.

Here is a truthful account of the way I became editor of a farm. I had been a newspaper man for twenty years. For practically all that time I had lived in cities, the last five years having been spent in that most wretched and maddest of all cities, New York.

I thought I liked it. I was as mad as the rest. We were all obsessed with the lights, the motion and the mad chase of sensation. We went out to live on the surface until we got there is anything but surface. People who are quite insane think they are mad but themselves, and I fully found victims of Broadway—who imagined all who do not live in Manhattan Island a little queer. I show what a hold the disease had on me, I was deluded enough to marry in the city and to rear my children there. I do not know what brought me to sanity at last, whether some hidden hypnotist behind the scenes suddenly said "Right" or whether my soul asserted itself and caused me to look at things in a normal manner.

At any rate, I made up my mind one spring morning that we had been pursuing the glitter and leaving the real light. Even city walls, smoke and noise cannot stifle all of nature's magic on a May morning. I suddenly saw things clearly. I had not been doing my duty to the beings dependent on me. I owed it to them to let them grow and be as nature and God intended—to take them out of the abnormal and overcharged air of the town into the sweet breath of the open country.

I have often observed that when one really makes up his mind to do a thing, and it is the right thing for him to do, the way appears. I get more actual satisfaction out of believing in God than from anything else I do. The way appeared in this case. A friend living fifty miles from the city, far enough to be free from the zone in which nature is tamed—and tamed—invited me out for a day. We climbed to the top of a mountain, and there I discovered a new world. It was not an outer revelation, but an inner. I was a Columbus who had discovered myself. I found I had a soul. I had been told that before, but never more than half believed it. That view on the mountain top revealed more than a landscape. I saw vistas leading off into undiscovered countries. I walked on the delectable mountains. I drank at the springs of beauty. For one wild, sweet moment I even dreamed that I saw the smile of God.

At the foot of that mountain, nestling between it and the river, I found a quaint, half abandoned, little, old farm. I thereupon hugged it to my bosom and have never let it go. It was not till the next day I realized the problem was but half solved. I had seen my promised land, but I did not enter in. I was still under the domination of cities, still a slave of the city. My work would not let me go so the remnant of my mad world to me. The best I could do was that I might die on the farm, but could not live there. I reckoned, as we all do, with the loving kindness that shapes ways far better than we had dreamed of or deserved. In a few months my farm became plain and easy to go to. I became a farmer in the valley and to walk on the delectable mountains each day. I really began to live.

The happiness of the little folks has something new and marvelous about it. This alone has repaid me a coming four times over and over again.

Let the Fly In the Ointment.

At the convention on my farm. Great things were said. He was enraptured with the scenery. This was the first time he had made the acquaintance of mosquitoes. There is not a more entrancing spot in America," said the colonel. The river is like a gem in a setting of mountains. There is not a thing in its beauty (slap). It is a harmony without a discord (slap), a panorama of nature on which the eye (slap) rests and never tires (bliff, slap). The green slopes of the mountains reflected in the waters below (slap, slap). Notice how cool and delightful is the air (drat at mosquitoes!). This (slap) is a miracle (bliff, bang, slap) of grandeur. But the sentence was never finished, for just now there came on fresh brigades of mosquitoes, and he immediately went to work on the colonel's neck and nose. The result was that his language suddenly became too warm to reproduce, while his exclamations were even more sensational than his words.

Go to the Trees.

When a man tires of life he should go to nature and renew his vitality. There is an odor from the trees, the leaves and the grass that intoxicates with wine, except that it leaves no headache. There is a subtle aroma that gets into a man's heart, brain and nerves. Sunshine and open air are better than come from the drug store. They are better stimulants than

from the rum shop. I have no quarrel, understand, with people who wish to drink nostrums or booze. I am only stating my own preference.

Give me a wheel, a horse or a rod and reel, then out to the fields, the streams and the mountains. That is life. Human beings were never intended to be shut up forever in the sweltering, festering town. There is more beauty in the granite piled up by the earthquake than in the hideous collection of bricks and mortar piled up by men. There is more sweetness in the grass and blossoms than in the clinking pavements. There is more health in one good outing than in all the doctors' prescriptions.

Nature is wholesome, genuine. She does not flatter us or lie to us. She does not nag at us or restrain us. She simply gives us our liberty and lets us do as we please. She says: "Here I am. Take me or let me alone. I am free to all and am never jealous. I have no favors to offer, yet man can gain from me whatever he desires. To the weary I give rest; to the poet and artist beauty; to the avaricious wealth; to the bruised heart balm and healing; to all health, vigor and wholesome enjoyment. I sustain in life and fold back to my bosom in death."

To one tired of the artificial, the hollow and the insincere a day with nature is like a draft of cold water to one athirst.

A Path to Truth.

The greatest crop I have raised on my rock farm has been a crop of dreams, and here is one of them: Nothing is real that is not permanent. Nothing is permanent that is not perfect. All else passes away. It strives toward perfection as the wave on the shore strives up the sand, only to fall of reaching the top and falling back.

What, then, of man is real, permanent and perfect? God's thought of man, is it not? God's thoughts are things. They actually create in the one substance, which is spirit. We see but the apparent man, the symbol in the manifested world, the imperfect reflection like the distorted reflection of the moon in the uneven surface of the water.

God's man, the one produced by the divine thought, is perfect. There is the eternal of each of us. There is our real self, the only real self that exists. Oh, to keep this thought of ourselves ever, to function in this immortal nature that God makes by thinking of us! That would mean perfect health, perfect joy, perfect brotherhood and service.

This is one of the visions that have grown for me on my little rocky farm.

Joe Biggs and the Grasshopper.

The wheat stack was very high and was just being topped out. The stacker asked for a jug of water, and Joe Biggs volunteered to carry it up. The ladder was long, but still did not reach within six or seven feet of the top. Jimmie, the little boy, was on the stack, where he had been handing shovels to the stacker.

Joe stood on the very top rung of the ladder, holding the jug as high as he could, so that Jimmie might reach it. While in this position a very large and hungry grasshopper lit on Joe's wrist and began operations.

Jimmie did not want to interfere with the grasshopper's pursuit of happiness, so was maddeningly deliberate in his movements. Joe tried to shake the insect loose, but the other was so busy with his excavations he did not seem to mind. Finally Joe could stand it no longer, and letting go his hold on the stack with his other hand, made a vicious grab at the hopper.

The movement jostled the ladder, and in a moment more there was a catastrophe. Joe, ladder, grasshopper, jug and all began a wild slide down the side of the stack. First went the ladder, on top of this was Joe, and in the middle of Joe's stomach lit the jug, out of which the water went with a spasmodic "kelug," "kelug," "kelug." To cap all was a large bunch of shovels which the wild descent had torn off the wagon. This frightened the horses, which began prancing and lunging.

Out of all the chaos, however, arose Joe Biggs, scratched and stunned, but triumphant, holding aloft with a grim smile the body of a dead grasshopper.

As over cloud and gloom,
As over shroud and tomb,
Still there is light,
So, tamper tossed today,
Truth may seem lost today,
Yet in her might,
Radiant, glorious,
O'er all victorious,
Rises the right.

"To him that overcometh"—in that phrase is packed the whole meaning of life. It is not easy to overcome, but nothing that is worth while is easy. Rise above self. Triumph over environment. It is all a question of rising, struggling, conquering, overcoming.

Anger and pride cannot live with love and happiness, for anger starts a quarrel, and pride keeps it going. Before it is composed two hearts are broken and love and happiness have gone to live in more congenial company.

One of the happiest men I ever knew lived in a cabin and one of the most unhappy dwelt in a palace. From this I have concluded that where one keeps his body does not matter so much as where he keeps his soul.

Most evils grow out of the fact that we are too artificial, too abnormal, too affected. We are too far from Nature that she would not know some of us without an introduction.

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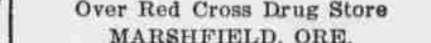
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