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THE FARMERS OF THE FUTURE.

An article in a recent issue of the Century upon the homesteads in blue grass land, Kentucky, with very few modifications could be cut to fit almost any other portion of the United States. This writer says, in answer to a question as to the future of that region: One seems to see in certain tendencies of American life the probable answer to this question. The small farmer will be bought out and will disappear. Estates will be fewer and larger. The land will pass into the hands of the rich, being too precious for the poor to own. Important changes in the conditions of land tenure and the farming industry have been creeping upon us almost unawares for years in various and widely separated portions of the country. What is said to be true of Kentucky is a truth that has been frequently recognized and discussed in these columns in connection with the farming interests of certain portions of Oregon.

The old-fashioned farmer, with his thrift, his generous shrewdness, his intimate acquaintance with the responsive secrets of nature, his wholesome content and his sturdy family of helpful sons and daughters, expecting to maintain his stake in the soil when he should leave it, has very few successors today. It looks as though, here too, the small farmer would be bought out and disappear, and as if estates would grow fewer and larger. The movement in this direction has not merely begun, but has attained considerable proportions already. It is better to recognize this transition and prepare for it, than to waste our time in unavailing regrets for a past that cannot come again, because the conditions under which it flourished do not now exist.

Hardly any single cause is sufficient to account for the altered status of the small farmer. It cannot be charged to the deficiency of the tillers of the soil, because men's minds are more acute than ever; education is more widely diffused; there is more impatience of the old conservatism, and more eagerness to keep in touch with advanced ideas. But it is quite probable that these very facts have worked against the prosperity of the old system of farming. What is called liberal education is more general, and by it tastes are developed and aspirations stimulated which cannot be satisfied within the narrow limits of the farm. Society has become more gregarious within the last quarter of a century. It longs for closer contact with the great movements of the world than can be had upon the farm. It seeks for richer and more exciting associations than rural seclusion affords. Luxury is more necessary to it than formerly, and in thickly settled communities it can at least see it if it cannot more intimately enjoy it.

But a more potent reason than that mentioned is the fact that modern agricultural methods put the American farmer at a very serious competitive disadvantage. The great farming operations of the country are largely conducted by machinery, and machinery costs money and presupposes business on a large scale. The hundred-acre farm does not give it opportunity to pay for first cost and maintenance, while the man who tries to do without it, is working against as great odds as the shoemaker at his bench who tries to compete with a modern factory. Many men, even now, make independent livelihoods upon limited acres with perhaps a little over, but the business ability and push that will accomplish that in a farm will achieve larger results in other pursuits.

The logic of events, therefore, seem to point to larger farms and the investment of more capital in their cultivation. The small farmers will be the agents and stewards of the new dispensation, and their experience and labor will receive larger rewards in those capacities than they are now receiving in their struggles as proprietors, while the land will increase in value and productivity.

This may not be an ideal solution of the problem of land distribution, but it is a solution that would much improve the present condition of the agricultural communities, and seems the only practical one under the present circumstances. It would certainly make the hills and valleys of our Inland Empire more beautiful and productive than before. Then, with a tariff system that would allow to some of us the leading manufacturing, this section would attain a degree of prosperity that would stand the closest inspection and be proof against the most adverse criticism.

Lost or Stolen.

"Cap," an Irish setter (large dog with yellow hair) Wednesday; collar on neck marked "Thos. Haulan, La Grande," if not removed. Any information as to his whereabouts please leave at CHRONICLE office. MILTON HAULAN.

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