

FARM ORCHARD AND GARDEN
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CORRESPONDENCE SOLICITED



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COUNTRY LIFE COMMISSION.

President Roosevelt recently transmitted to congress the voluminous report of the country life commission which he appointed about a year ago to investigate into agricultural conditions and life over the country and report to him and make recommendations which they thought would be instrumental in improving conditions. The commission consisted of four men of exceptional qualifications both in breadth of view and keen insight into the agricultural needs and problems of the country. Their report to the president consisted of a digest of the data and evidence secured at thirty public hearings held at different points and attended by the farmers and farmers' wives of forty different states and territories and from 120,000 answers to printed questions, which were very generally distributed. In the executive letter of transmittal to congress, which is really an admirable digest of the committee's report, it is pointed out that the general level of country life is high and compares favorably with that of any previous era in the history of the country. Yet, notwithstanding this condition, farming does not yield the financial returns it ought to give. Added to this, there is much discontent, and even discouragement. Three ways are suggested which, it is thought, will help to improve this condition—namely, a better type of farming, better business methods and a better type of living on the farm.

With a view to realizing these ends the president makes the following recommendations:

"First.—Effective co-operation among farmers, to put them on a level with the organized interests with which they do business.

"Second.—A new kind of schools in the country, which shall teach the children as much outdoors as indoors and perhaps more, so that they will prepare for country life and not, as at present, mainly for life in town.

"Third.—Better means of communication, including good roads and a parcels post, which the country people are everywhere, and rightly, unanimous in demanding."

The federal department of agriculture, state experiment stations, the agricultural press and other agencies are recognized as agencies which are doing an excellent service in favoring a better type of agriculture, which, realized, would mean a doubling of crop yields in many sections of the country. The president asserts that, rightly viewed and carried on, agriculture should be one of the most dignified, desirable and sought after ways of earning a livelihood. In bringing this condition of things to pass emphasis is placed on the need of organization and co-operation for business and social reasons. The religious need is also recognized and an important place given the country church in this connection, while an especial tribute is paid the home as the most powerful factor in the development of character and personality, the presence or lack of which tends to make life rich or poor. At the close of his message the president emphasizes the fact that the permanency of our civilization depends upon the wholesomeness, attractiveness and completeness as well as the prosperity of country life. An appropriation of \$25,000 is recommended in order that the commission may be able to digest the material it has collected and to collect and digest other valuable data which are within easy reach. While this is but a beginning, the work of the country life commission is bound to result in untold benefit.

AN IMMEDIATE PROBLEM.

Titlers of the soil in all the older agricultural sections of the country are up against an economic proposition which it would be well worth while for them to take into serious account. We refer to that to be found in an increase in the value of farm lands in the sections referred to, a corresponding increase in rental charges, and this coupled with the fact of a continually decreasing soil fertility. Those who have thought of this problem even superficially can realize at once that this condition of affairs cannot continue long. Either the soil robbing methods of tilling land will have to be abandoned and a more rational system adopted in their place in the shape of dairying and stock raising or else farms of the class referred to will themselves have to be abandoned. The wise course to follow would seem to be along the line of a reformation of agricultural methods, which is the only way out of the difficulty consistent with financial consideration and patriotic regard for the dignity of agriculture as a vocation and the marvelous original endowment of soil fertility. We should quit this dishonorable business of soil robbery and develop a heavier regard than we feel for the agricultural bankruptcy which it would lead to if persisted in.

Poor seed is usually an index of a low type of farming, while two other landmarks are inadequate cultivation of the soil and a surplus of weeds. The three things together make a pretty bad agricultural mess.

California dairymen are up against the proposition this winter of paying \$22 a ton for the alfalfa hay which they have to buy, which results in a serious reduction in profit, notwithstanding the high price which they receive for their dairy products.

During the year 1908 the state of Arkansas raised 15,000 acres of rice, which was a substantial increase over the acreage of the preceding year. It is probably not generally known that rice is cultivated so far north. They have been doing some strange things since Secretary Wilson took charge of the department of agriculture.

A rather unusual fact of natural history was noted recently by the residents of a Mississippi river town in the flight of thirty-five big snowy owls in one flock, their large size and fluffy snow white appearance making a most interesting sight. Owls are usually unsociable birds and not gregarious, as are other species like the crow, blackbird and a few other familiar kinds.

A poor stand of clover is often due to a careless preparation of the seed bed and only half covering the seed, which is the case with much broadcast seeding. It can be asserted with considerable certainty that seed of good vitality will germinate and grow if it is covered with a sufficient depth of earth so as to give needed moisture. Clover seed is expensive, and its value as a soil renovator is so great that the greatest care should be exercised in sowing it properly.

Some one fond of statistics has figured out that if the 25,000,000,000 eggs laid in this country in the year 1907 were all packed for shipment they would fill 69,395,000 crates, allowing thirty dozen eggs to the crate, and allowing 350 crates to the car, would fill 198,257 carloads. Placed end to end, these cars would extend a distance of 1,500 miles, or from New York to Omaha. The American hen is surely justified in doing a little cackling in view of the above showing.

The desirability of cement and plank for stable floors would seem to be of about equal rank if the amount of bedding used in both cases were what it ought to be, and this would seem to be true of hopen floors also. With little or no straw on either, neither plank nor cement is comfortable or sanitary for the animals that are compelled to stand or lie thereon. In the latter case it would be nearly a Hobson's choice, with the advantage possibly a trifle in favor of the plank flooring.

There is no way in which the weed pest on the farm may be more effectively held in check than by the keeping of a flock of sheep, which in a very real sense are weed scavengers, eating all but forty or fifty of the 500 odd varieties of weeds common to this country. On farms where sheep are kept clean pastures are the rule, which means fewer weeds befalling adjoining cultivated fields. If the stubble field can be fenced off they will provide a range and abundant feed for the flock at a time when the regular pasture is often short. The food consumed is usually waste, and whatever is realized from wool and mutton, barring the cost of its simple winter ration, is clear gain.

It should be a source of great encouragement for the hosts of boys and young men who have the major part of their lives before them to remember that today more than at any other time in the history of the country is there recognition of the influence and responsibility of the young man well equipped for some special line of work. In many lines of work today the men who are at the head of affairs are the comparatively young, clean shaven fellows who have force, enthusiasm and capacity for work. While the population of the country is growing its needs are also increasing and becoming more complex, a situation which gives abundant assurance that there will always be work to do for those who fit themselves to do it effectively.

One of the really serious problems which confront the young man of today is the difficulty of being able with small means to so manage as to acquire a farm of his own. There are two ways out, one of which is for him to go to a section of the country where land is new and lower priced. The best chances along this line are getting fewer every day. The other is to hire out to a man who is carrying on a progressive and intelligent type of intensive agriculture and work for him two or three years, in the meantime exercising prudence and economy, and a little later to secure the long term rental of such a farm and continue in this way until means are in his hands to buy a small farm, which he should work on the same intensive plans. It is as plain as the nose on a body's face that it is out of the question for the young man with but \$1,000 or so to negotiate the purchase of a \$10,000 farm. He must content himself with a lesser stake, say forty acres, costing one-fourth of this amount, and he will find if he works this wisely that he will have as much in hand at the end of the year as if he skinned over twice as much land. It must be admitted that even this way out for the young man is much easier to outline than to carry out in detail, yet it is a way that is not being given the emphasis just now that it ought to receive.

Better fencing is quite usually an accompaniment of an improved type of farming. In any case the more effectively a farm is fenced the better the system of management which can be followed.

Western Canadian farmers are already planning to ship their wheat to Europe by way of the Panama canal as soon as the big ditch is completed. It is quite clear that many products now produced or manufactured on the Atlantic coast will be sent to the Pacific coast and points in the orient by the canal route.

The landlord will be doing a kindness to himself and his land if he insists on a long time lease when he rents his farm. This will enable his tenant to take some pride and interest in improvements and methods of crop rotation which cover a period of two or three years. It may be added that the tenant also will be dollars as well as satisfaction ahead under such a system.

The flavor as well as the texture of a piece of boiling beef may be preserved if the piece is seared for a few minutes in a hot kettle without water and boiling water then added, in which it should be cooked briskly for ten or fifteen minutes. This should be followed by slow cooking for about two hours. In the case of a soup cut the reverse course should be followed, placing the meat in cold water and allowing it to come to a boil and letting it cook for about the same length of time.

The cream separator and milking machine are modern improvements which are greatly simplifying some of the most serious problems connected with the dairy business, and, rightly managed, they mean also a cleaner as well as higher grade dairy product. Carelessly handled and not properly scalded, quite the reverse is the case, as a slovenly dairyman who produces a filthy product under the old system of milking and handling the milk and cream will produce a still filthier and more germ laden article with the devices mentioned. This is a fact that many creamerymen know and many more are every day finding out.

The question is raised now and then whether the landlord or the tenant should pay for the manure spreader. There seems to be little question that any landlord could well afford to stand the whole expense simply from the standpoint of economic farm management and the utilizing of the maximum value of the homemade manures. It would seem to be equally true that if a landlord was so shortsighted and penurious that he would not pay for the machine the tenant could afford to do so merely from a selfish standpoint, this being especially true if he had the farm on a long time lease. The fairest way, in view of the benefits accruing to both parties, would seem to be for each one to stand for half of the expense. The benefit being mutual, the expense should be so too.

Readers of these notes will soon be buying grass seed. It is well worth remembering that the pure food laws of the several states give no guarantee of vitality or freedom from noxious weed seeds in the case of grass seed shipped in from outside the state limits, and it is more than likely that it is grass seed of this adulterated, inferior type which will be furnished at the bargain counter prices which tempt so many shortsighted buyers. Put it down as a safe rule that that grass seed which is the lowest in price is the poorest in quality and therefore in the long run the most expensive, while that which is the highest priced and bought of firms of known reputation will be the best and by a like rule the most economical. This lesson of seed price and quality is one that many learn from the costliest kind of experience.

One of the chief drawbacks to a newly settled prairie country from the standpoint of comfortable residence is the absence of trees to provide shade in summer and shelter from the storms of winter. As soon as time can be spared for the job, and the sooner the better, a belt of trees should be set on the north and west and at such a distance from the home site as will give ample room for the barns, sheds and feed lots. If the trees are desired for windbreak purposes only, there is nothing better than the conifers—the pines, spruces, cedars and larches. If the timber belt is intended for timber or fuel purposes also, the belt should be more extensive and may include the catalpa, cottonwood, hard and soft maple or even the despised box elder if other better varieties of trees are not available. If the young trees are not propagated at home, as will likely be true of the conifers, they should be secured of the nearest reliable nurseryman, who should have given the trees such care in the nursery plot as will enable him to back them with a pretty good guarantee. After being set out—and this applies to any kinds of trees—the best results will be secured if the young trees are given careful cultivation for at least three years, when the shade they furnish and straw mulch which may be applied will answer the purpose of conserving necessary moisture. A well located and thrifty shelter belt of trees will contribute not only to the attractive appearance of the farm and comfort of its residents, but will also add a good sum to the value of the farm in case it should be sold.

F. E. Trigg

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