

Home and Farm Magazine Section Editorial Page

Suggestions From Our Associate Editors, Allowing For an Interchange of Views, Written by Men of Experience on Topics With Which They Are Fully Acquainted—Hints Along Lines of Progressive Farm Thought.

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LARGE VS. SMALL FARMS.

WHICH is best for the country, or for a state—that its valuable farm lands be divided into great landed estates, or worked into small farms? That makes a difference where you are—the nature of the land and the people. By small farms we do not mean especially the twenty or forty acre tracts, yet the average 160 acre farm might be classed in this sense as a small farm. In a semi-arid, or arid, section where it takes many acres to graze a steer, it is folly to speak of small farms at all, for none could live on such a farm. But in sections where the land is very fertile a 160 acre farm will readily support a family and a much smaller tract properly farmed will do so.

In pioneer days when land was plentiful the great estates of the tobacco and cotton planter of Virginia, and the great sugar plantations of Louisiana and the great corn farms of southern Illinois and wheat fields of the Missouri Valley states were a blessing to the country. They gave employment and furnished products to those of less means, but now that land is getting more scarce, and the population more dense, conditions have changed. A landed aristocracy has been a curse to England and likewise will be a curse to this country.

The people of Louisiana are awake to the situation and desire to see the great cane plantations broken up into smaller farms. The adverse tariff legislation seems to be the climax that will bring about this much needed change. In a way it will be too bad if the re-adjustment of conditions in that proud state should cause a loss of that splendid southern hospitality. Let us hope, says Successful Farming, it will not happen. But one thing is certain, the great cane and cotton and rice plantations will be divided into smaller tracts and this will make homes for a greater number of thrifty farmers from the north who desire a milder climate.

In due course of time we will awake to the necessity of subdividing our great corn and wheat farms, for one-crop farming, no matter where it is, creates intolerable conditions that have no place in this country. Let us take a lesson from Louisiana, which is now going through the throes of an agricultural transformation. We must discourage one-crop farming on a large scale, and encourage the ownership of small farms where livestock and diversified farming may prevail. The Texans are seeking relief through a system of taxation that will break up landlordism on such stupendous scale as prevails there. Far better is small farm ownership.

USE FOR THE USELESS.

IF MR. DONK, of the Agricultural Department, can show a cheap, practicable means of saving the by-products of stumps and of making them salable he will have found a way of making hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of acres of Western land productive. The great obstacles to clearing logged-off land are the high cost per acre, if men are hired for the purpose, the laborious, back-breaking work if the owner does it himself, and the apparent uselessness of the stumps after they are uprooted.

If, as Senator Brady believes, the products of stumps will sell for enough to pay for clearing land, and if, as experiments

show, distillate from stumps can be refined into wood alcohol, ethyl alcohol, turpentine, tar and oils, clearing of logged-off land should not only go on apace, but should give birth to new industries in refining and selling these products. It remains to apply the methods of the experimenters on a large scale in the field and to convince capital that there is money in it.

A large part of the work of the present day consists in finding a use for that which is apparently useless, says the Portland Journal. It has become a trite saying that meat-packers use all of the hog except the squeal, and that their profit is made not from meat, but from by-products. The carbon dust held in suspension by petroleum was formerly a nuisance to refiners, and its disposal was a source of expense, but it is now used in making electric carbons and has created a flourishing industry. Gasoline was also worthless to the refiners, but its use as fuel has made it more valuable than kerosene, much of which is now thrown away. Some cities have made profit out of garbage disposal, which costs Portland a pretty sum every year. The refuse of the farm is to be made into denatured alcohol, now that the shackles have been taken off its manufacture.

These discoveries are the fruit of the chemist's work. He analyzes everything and learns what useful ingredients are contained in the most apparently useless materials. He spies out every secret of matter and applies all to man's purposes. He is teaching us that there is nothing useless under the sun to the man who will seek a use for all which comes to his hand. Only to the ignorant and indolent is anything useless.

ARTIFICIAL AND REAL LIVING.

THE FARMER'S DAYS are full of toil and he is often disposed to think his life is a hard one, says the Fruit Grower. There have been farmers who held to this view until they tried to do the things a city dweller does. Then there was a reversal of opinion, and likewise form. The farmer sometimes overlooks the fact that he is an outdoors man and the city dweller is an indoors man. And there is all the difference in the world. The city dweller lives at higher tension; the nerve-racking noise, the problems that require instant decision, the fierce concentration, the ever-increasing value of time, the dangers to life and limb, the fictitious pleasures, the late hours, the dissipation that adds to the physical strain and nerve sickness, the temptations, the lure of extravagant living—in a word, a general consumption of life's candle at both ends.

And when the city man does go on a vacation, when he is burned out over the steady daily grind, and mind and body both crave relaxation, where does he go—where indeed—except to the farmer's outdoors—the heart of the woods, the banks of some river or lake, there to let the balm of Nature, the peace of wooded temples and the clean winds of heaven remove the burden of his trouble and make his heart and body pure as in that past but still vivid time of boyhood.

There is no tonic like the tonic of outdoors. There is healing in the winds; there is strength in the cool streams, sermons in the very stones over which the waters purrl so musically, and good in everything.

The farmer is unacquainted with the narrow confines of a city lot, and an immature flat or apartment. For him broad acres and the waving wheat, the thrifty orchard, the lush growing corn and meadows. Work? Of course, it took work, but it represents no taint; there is no misrepresentation, no chicane, no unearned increment of the parasite is in it. It is a tribute to the farmer's creative spirit. It adds to the wealth of the world and the sustenance of human kind. It is part and kindred with Nature's outdoor alchemy. Is there any comparison between the two—the city and country? Is there any choice between the man-made town and the God-made country?

THE COST OF BAD ROADS.

A WRITER in Technical World quotes some figures on the cost of bad roads. Department of Commerce statistics show that it costs eight times as much to deliver a pound of coffee from a country grocery store to a home a mile away as it costs to carry that same pound of coffee from Rio de Janeiro to New York.

It costs the farmer who lives ten miles from the railroad over which he ships his products one and one-sixth cents more to haul a bushel of wheat to the freight station than it costs the buyer to ship that wheat from New York to Liverpool. The annual bill for carting America's crops from the fields to the railway stations represents, in large part, unnecessary loss.

Poor roads, making necessary the slow-going, half-loaded wagon, account for most of this waste. If farmers could be made to realize the tremendous tax bad roads impose upon them, not to mention the tax upon the consumer, public opinion would demand the making and maintaining of good roads everywhere.

Two sets of figures have been compiled by the good roads bureau of the Department of Agriculture. If the cost of hauling in this country could be reduced to one-half of the present cost, or 11½ cents per ton a mile, the saving to the people would amount to \$250,000,000 a year.

If equitable and efficient road laws and good business management could be substituted for the present antiquated and wasteful system of handling our roads, there would be an additional saving of \$140,000,000 annually.

The United States cannot continue indefinitely matching its vast resources against unnecessary waste. Every dollar squandered because of poor roads is irrecoverably gone, the same as though a thief had taken it in the night.

OPPOSITION TO CO-OPERATION.

WHY SHOULD there be opposition to co-operation associations of farmers? Surely no one will object to the formation of cow or seed testing associations because everybody knows that their only object is to get better results. Then why not go a step further and provide means for closer connection between the city men and country folks? Mutual fire insurance companies among farmers were the natural result of conditions which compelled agents to charge higher premiums in the country than in the city. Extra expense had to be incurred to collect the premiums and time was lost in getting and continuing the business with the farmers. When the farmers established their own insurance companies the premiums were cut in two, not because they were better business men, but because they could cut out the extra expense. Undoubtedly the regular insurance companies and probably the livery men who furnished the rigs for the insurance agents lost, but the loss of a class often goes with the advance of the great mass of the people.

The practice of sleeping outdoors is constantly growing in popularity. It is found to be beneficial to the sick and well alike. Those who fancy that an open window thoroughly ventilates a room deceive themselves in many cases, according to recent medical lights. It has been found that the air sometimes remains foul near a window open both at top and bottom.

Henry Ford, the famous automobile maker, is said to have learned the secret of being happy though his income is a million a month. He pursues the simple life in a modest country bungalow, wears overalls much of the time at his shops and keeps only two domestics. By lopping off superfluities he retains his peace of mind and by avoiding luxuries he keeps his health. Others should emulate his example.

The St. Paul Dispatch says a thousand men are leaving St. Paul each day for the harvest fields. These are the best kind of reservists.