

A TALK WITH SECRETARY WILSON.

GUY ELLIOTT MITCHELL

Secretary Wilson, as the official head of the great family of American farmers, views with some considerable satisfaction the abundant crops which have blessed almost every section of the country.

"The harvests have been heavy," he said, "and the farmers will make more money than in an average year. The prices on farm products will be lower, but the crops will bring the farmers, nevertheless, more money. Living should be cheaper, too. The hay and grain crops have been enormous—probably record breakers—and meat as a result should be more plentiful and cheaper. I say it should be. The producer and consumer are so far apart, and so much goes on in between these two principals that it is difficult to say just to what extent production

send our hogs abroad and are eating more mutton, veal and beef."

"The present condition and the future outlook for the American farmer is a good one then, Mr. Secretary?"

"Yes, things certainly look well generally; yet I believe we are very near to a sort of agricultural crisis—hardly a crisis perhaps, but an important and radical change. The farm hands everywhere are leaving the farm for the factories. Wherever there is any manufacturing you will find this to be the case."

The farmer has pretty nearly reached his limit. He is doing about all he can do with his hands and with the most improved labor-saving farm machinery worked by good horses. This bad condition on the farm is going to affect production and prices, and that

THE KITCHEN GARDEN.

More Than Two Thirds of the Living of a Family Can Be Raised.

If the farmer's wife could induce her laggard to contribute the same care, patience and labor next spring to the kitchen garden which his grandfather did during his day, there would be perhaps a considerable gain in the household's economy as well as much satisfaction developed for the housewife. The old folks insist that even with the greatly increased variety and excellence in fruits and vegetables, due to many plant generations

the boiled cob at "roasting ear" stage. And, among others, okra or gumbo makes equally as good soup in winter as when fresh in summer.

When it comes to canning and preserving, there is little real comparison between the home canned product and bought goods. It time is considered as money, canned tomatoes can be bought probably cheaper than they can be grown and canned at home. But how about the results? If the farmer's wife should go through the ordinary canning establishment she would probably conclude to do every speck of her own can-



SECRETARY WILSON AND GROUP OF CHIEFS, DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE GROUNDS AT TIME OF COMMENCEMENT OF WORK ON NEW BUILDING.

of selection and breeding by the seedsmen and scientists, the kitchen garden on an average is not so well planted or tended, has less variety, and on the whole is much inferior to the same institution in the "good old days" when grandfather was a boy.

It is an oft repeated argument, in every farm journal that more attention should be given to the garden; that fully two-thirds of the living for the farmer's family, however large, can be produced from a good garden.

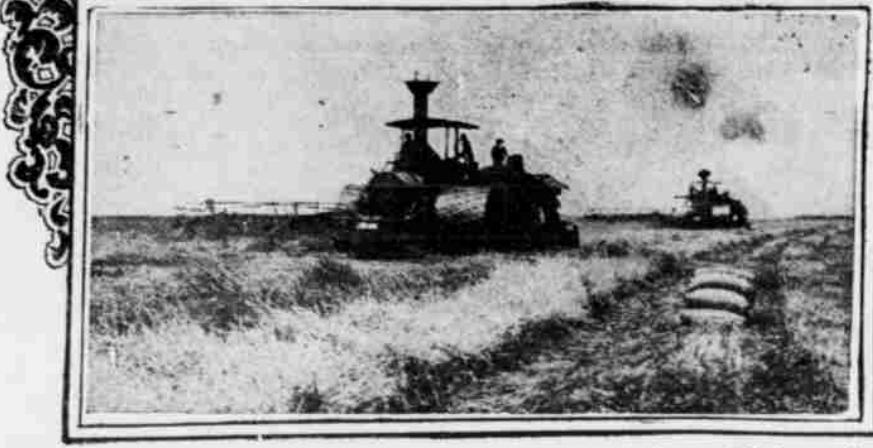
ning hereafter and avoid settling on her table sour green fruit, artificially colored and sweetened with coal tar products.

With the supposed degeneration of the individual farm garden, it is interesting to note that the professional market garden, as an industry, has tremendously increased.

The farm gardens, "market gardens" and truck gardens of today are the producers of a multitude of "miscellaneous vegetables" almost unknown fifty years ago. In the census



Western Wheat Scenes.



affects the cost of actual consumption. A great deal goes to the middleman; too much, I believe. It is a long and devious pathway from the farmer to the man who eats the things which he has grown. I gave out a statement here the other day intimating that the local Washington dealers were charging in certain instances too much, and a dealer came at me with a wrathful assertion to the effect that I did not know what I was talking about and that he made a profit of only forty per cent.

Co-Operation in the South.

"I have been watching the South with a great deal of interest," continued the Secretary. "They have accomplished more in effecting an organization down there to bring the cotton producer and consumer together than has been attempted with any other of our great agricultural productions. The cotton crop is a big one this year, though not by any means a record breaker. The grass and hay crop is probably the biggest we have ever had; our corn crop is probably a record crop and our wheat crop is one of the very largest."

"That is the order of importance of these crops?"

"No, I should put cotton third in importance—grass, corn, cotton, wheat; though of course, our meat animals taken as a whole, are more important than any one. Why, the poultry production alone is worth 400 million dollars a year—as great or greater than the value of the wheat crop. We will undoubtedly export some very fine hogs this year—choice corn fed hogs. Pork is our greatest meat export. A quarter of a billion dollars would hardly cover our animals exported this year. I fancy, probably amounting to

very shortly. It is impossible to say just what the effect will be, but a change is coming. The farmer must have labor, but with the prices of farm products as they are now, he can not meet the wages offered by the factories; therefore the farm hands are gradually shifting toward the centers—the towns and the cities."

Mr. Wilson Not a Theorist.

"I would like, Mr. Secretary, to have a message from you to the American farmer for the coming year."

"Oh, I can never discuss things in an academic way," remarked Mr. Wilson, with a smile. "You will have to



"SOME PUMPKINS."

refer to some of our bulletins."

"Well, I mean a few words of personal advice to the farmer, to an individual American farmer regarding his work for next year."

and that with thoroughly rich soil, good seed, a well planned rotation of garden crops and a medium amount of hard work—a good wheel hoe will reduce this last expense—a very small area will produce a very large amount. Not only should the table be supplied from spring to late fall, but large stocks of staples should be saved for winter use. Of course, every farmer stores in his cellar potatoes, turnips, pumpkins and other coarse crops, but there are many others equally good and almost as easily cured and kept which no longer contribute to the winter's table and have been supplanted by cheap canned goods, in the long run expensive and usually very inferior.

Limas for Drying Pick Them Green.

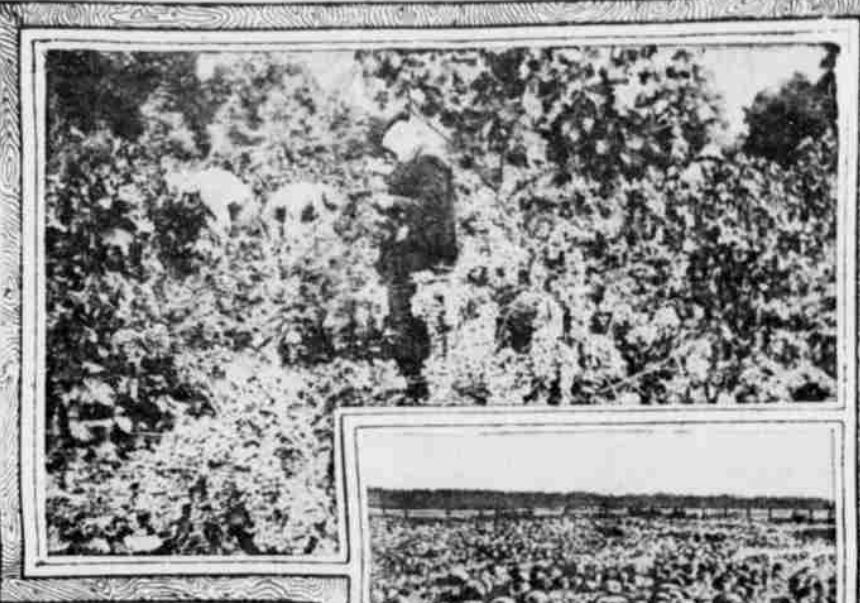
Take, for instance, lima beans. If these are picked and shelled when green—the same as though for imme-

of 1890 the large increase in garden products was recognized, and a systematic count of their bulk and value was made. It is possible, therefore, to make a ten-year comparison of the increase of such products, and this records the remarkable increases from 290 per cent to 400 per cent in the five several divisions of the country. The North Atlantic States had a well developed industry in "garden products" before 1880, which accounts for the relatively low increase. However, 190 per cent in 10 years, while the population increased only a trifle over 20 per cent, is amazing.

When Tomatoes Were Believed Poisonous.

Could our great-granddaddies, who thought tomatoes poisonous, and our great-grandmothers, who grew them as ornamental plants in window pots,

These Are Not Typical.



under the attractive name of "love apples," come back and realize that over thirty million bushels of the pretty poisonous vegetables, according to a statement in Harper's Weekly, are eaten as a common and healthful food, they would surely realize that time works wonderful changes.



Haying and Cattle Scenes.



WAY DOWN SOUTH IN DIXIE LAND.

two-thirds of the value of the entire wheat crop of the country.

No Longer Big Hog Eaters.

"The American people are no longer such great pork eaters, you know. We



"No, I can not do anything with these hypothetical cases of higher farm education."

"Well, then, what should a man do with the manure which accumulates on his farm?"

"He should put it on his land," replied the Secretary, now thoroughly at home; he should take it out on the land at once and not let it accumulate; haul it out and spread it on as fast as it is made. The ground will get the good of it."

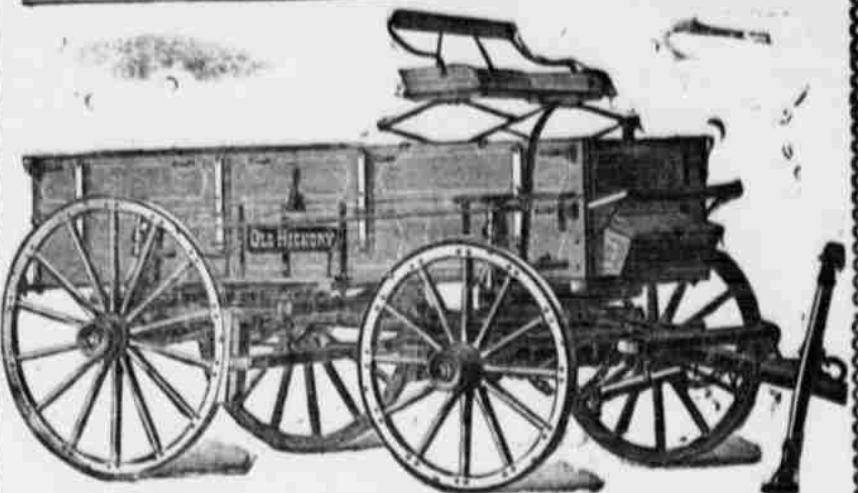
"Won't the ammonia evaporate and the fertility be lost to the soil?"

"No, it has been demonstrated by careful experiments that the hauling out of manure is the best method. It will go down into the grass roots. It ammonia is produced by bacteria and these bacteria flourish only under three conditions, moisture, heat and oxygen. There are three classes of bacteria which must operate upon manure before it is available for plant food; the ammonia bacteria attacks it first; it is then converted by other bacteria into nitrites, and, lastly, by still other bacteria, into nitrate, when the roots of the plant can then take it up as food.

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