

AYFIELD

EDITORIAL

MUSINGS

Improvements Gained From the Buttermilk Demijohn and Living Out of Doors a Little

Editorial headquarters have moved to the hay fields the two weeks. The editor had winter coats that he wanted into hay, but the country is so prosperous that it was possible to hire anyone to cut with a mower, and after a long day he gave it up and got a friendly neighbor to tackle it with a scythe before working hours, for known to all, our neighbors are honest people and work for a living. Our youngest man neighbor employed on the electric alligator boat that is hauling in the rock to make the model road that Uncle Sam and Judge are constructing between them, a few days he had it all down, he had to help rake it up and into cocks and then got a man team to draw it to the barn now it away. As the teams are employed on the electric roads street improvements we had to city express delivery wagon to the hay. With another neighbor help, it has all been stowed. The exercise, the perspiration, the long pulls at the buttermilk demijohn, the sweet sleep at night, constituted a delightful brain-tingling out at home. Living in the open air is a definite feature of outdoor life, and the editor has virtually been eating, working, sleeping and writing editorials out-of-doors. The car bills of fare advertise in nutmeg chops, but those take on a new relish when they cover the coals under the fire. Pile up a few stones the size that Jacob had for a foundation and down the ladder to heaven. A wire broiler holding the demijohn by means of a green bunch at right angle to do them just right, with salt and pepper while they sizzle over the fire, butter lightly on them right off the bone with a fork and teeth in the way of a demijohn. I have a de-termined appetite for that forbidden fruit and anything tastes better when it is a demijohn that out of the glass.

Sleeping out of doors has great merit. The stars are the ceiling. You can imagine you feel the swing of the world as it wheels its under side on top to be exposed once more to its diurnal bath of sunshine. There come cool rippling breezes at night, even when there is no wind, and your rest is so sound that the pale streakings of dawn seem to have reached over to kiss the last fading traces of the belated twilight of midsummer. All night there will come twittering of birds as some robbin or hedge sparrow nestles a little nearer its mate and threatens to crowd it off the perch. There is no dark brown floor in your mouth when you sleep out. The undertone of silence is penetrated by the chirping of crickets, the droning of cicadae and the thrilling of an occasional frog in some water hole. The night has many surprises, and enhances the sweetness of the faintest and most rudimentary music. I have listened to a couple of boys tramp by a few blocks away, accompanying each other on mouth organs that came across the cooling stillness of the night with the effect of the choicest orchestral music. The same is true of the discordant ocal intercourse of a bunch of house cats. Their acrimonious howlings interspersed with yells of fiendish triumph get mellowed down by the atmospheric perspective of the night until they are quite musical and take on some of the qualities of a lullaby mixed with infant squalls. While I was working in my hayfield and thinking on some of the social problems of the day one of my neighbors, who is a Socialist, got over the fence and went to work on the other side of the field. He called in a cheery way that he wanted to show what a good neighbor he was in helping me to save my crop. Pretty soon our winnows brought us near enough for general conversation, and I found his talk very entertaining. He told me how a great Socialist lecturer was at Salem before the primaries, and some of the most active political aspirants attended and gave all manner of encouragement to the cause he was presenting. One who was a candidate for a state office, and has been a prominent Republican politician, told the lecturer that the Socialist reform was sure to come about. "Nothing can stop it," said the office seeker of the other party. "Powder and bullets cannot stop it," he added, and then led my friend and neighbor out to one side and wanted to hire him to work for him on promise of an office. But he was not to be hired, and had to decline the proffer of Republican money. Another reform aspirant offered my

Socialist neighbor a horse and buggy to use and plenty of whisky and cigars to hand out to the voters. This was also declined. It was all very funny.

The Socialist made a good hand and really gave me a great deal of information about the tenets of his political faith. He would not take any pay and when he found I had hired a man by the hour to help me, he quit on the ground that he did not wish to take that man's employment away from him by his volunteer services. When he was assured that the other man did not want the job, but was only working after his regular day's work was over to accommodate me, he came back and helped me until the hay was in the barn. At the end of the hard work I took him over to the house and gave him his choice of some buttermilk or any other contents of the refrigerator that he might prefer. We talked of the old time grain harvest when nearly every farmer thought he had to have whisky for the harvest hands. It took from ten gallons to a barrel to make a big grain harvest. There were no self-binders, and the hands bound around the field by stations. If the team was slow it took four hands to bind the three stations, but many farmers found it paid to push the team and have a fresh team to put on at noon, and keep the five binders busy, and they were kept on the jump. The reaping machines in the seventies got to have the self-raking attachment.

Raking the bundles from one of the old-fashioned apron reapers, that carried the grain as it fell, was a hard job. Binding a station was no small task, but took a full-handed man. He made his own bands of the grain, and if the grain was hort or weedy, or full of thistles it tried his patience, and made a man want to take something besides water to help him around. Coming in wet with perspiration at night, washing at the pump, eating three meals and two lunches, three times as much as the same man would eat now, sleeping on improvised beds in the barn, or right on the sweet-smelling hay itself, was all part of the harvesters' life. After harvest we generally got a job stacking and sometimes stayed till threshing. To pitch bundles on the wagon was not easy, and a good pitcher who could land a bundle right to the stackers' hands, was always sure of a job. The stacker laid the bundles with heads pointing in, and pressed them all down with his knees. The art was to make them water proof, and have the stack bulge out as if it rose from the ground, and then tapered to a beautiful spire-like point. I have traveled across the Iowa prairies when one could not see the horizon for stacks of grain.

There are few Western men who have not helped make a grain crop. From carrying water to the hands in the hot blistering fields, binding a station with another boy when neither of us could make a full hand, to tending the men on the stack, or bucking away straw at the tail of a threshing machine, or holding sacks when the old half bushel measure was filled at the side of the threshing machine, and the sweeps of the old-fashioned horse-power went around with a man on the center of the gear cracking his whip merrily to the eight teams that drove the separator, I have done all the work connected with grain harvesting. I have gone a step farther and worked in the flouring mills where the grain was received at the scales hopper, went up the elevators, and thence via the conveyors into the great bins, again to come back into the packers, where it was nailed up in barrels and branded. Then I have helped team it to the railroad, and to the Mississippi river, where it went its way to market. These are the recollections of a hard-working but happy boyhood, that I cannot but think was as good an education as any college could give.

How all these thoughts and experiences come thronging back from merely going out and working a few hours each day in the hay field, where I am raking and gathering up a few loads of oats hay for horse and cow feed. The smell of the ripe grain, the shimmering of the yellow straw, the silvery tassels of the oats heads, the dry brown earth that has done its duty in bringing forth a crop, the song and twitter of the harvest home birds, the golden tints of autumn coming into the air, the general feeling of ripeness and maturity of things—all this is a joy and a pleasure that is worth living over once more. How real and genial is the smile of earth and sky, how faithful is mother earth! Even though robbed of her product, the faithful old dame is putting forth a mighty effort to sprout a second crop of oats out from among the brown dry clods—the passion of reproduction strong in death. Nature

will not be robbed and where one of her plants is cut off by the reaper she will make desperate effort to bring a second crop for seed and her species are to be perpetuated at all hazards. So while I rake the harvest off the dry stubble and the dust rises from the dry clods, another crop of the tender green young shoots are coming on, and some of them are already heading for the next year's volunteer crop.

Neighbor Truelove was in almost as bad a fix as I, with respect to harvesting a field of wheat and oats across the road from mine. It stood until dead ripe and then he had to get in and do something. He borrowed an old-fashioned cradle from an old-fashioned neighbor and swinging it right lustily for a man of his age, in a few days had the field down. Underneath his fine crop of grain came a grand stand of red clover, so he left the stubble about a foot high to shelter the young clover, really showing that he was a far-sighted farmer. He laid off a straight winrow of grain and then with rake in hand proceeded to bind it up after the old style. Truelove did a good job and will have nearly a hundred bushels of grain off his two acres and a clover crop besides. It was a real pleasure to stand and lean over the fence and see my neighbor work, and yet it was an honest pleasure than working my neighbor. He has his grain all bound up and shocked and the green oak and fir trees on all the elevations form a beautiful background to the golden sheen of the stubble fields, while in the air there is glimmering the mist of autumn like a golden halo over the finished work of nature. Alas, there be many who cannot see these beauties of summer.

Avast, ye dwellers in the polluted cities. Get behind me, Satan, with thy golden crown beckoning me to become a plutocrat and abide in the counting-rooms of wealth. I would rather set my lips to that remijohn of cooling liquid in the corner of the hayfield, or get a long and satisfactory swig of buttermilk fresh from the stone churn, handed to me by a plump woman with sleeves rolled up and face red with honest thought, than homely domestic duty well-performed, than quaff apollinaris or sip highballs paid for with tainted coin among the so-called great men of the earth. To love one's neighbors, to live in amity and concord with all about one, to have no designs of a selfish nature at any living human being, to love them all and wish them well and be ready at all times to give them a life along the road of life if it be for their good and the good of the community, and then go your own way along the highest conception of your own development, religiously keeping out of everybody's way, is surely heaven on earth. Then to lie down in the shade of a tree and steal a nap, when nobody is watching and know that you are not going to be docked on the payroll, is a little chunk of satisfaction that cannot be expressed in the impoverished condition of the English language, and as far as estimating its value in cold cash, all the money in Wall Street can't purchase it for those who are not prepared for it.

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THE CIVIC PROBLEM.

From the Improvement Point of View—Address by J. Horace McFarland, Harrisburg, Pa., President of the American Civic Association.

The civic problem, it seems to me, is peculiarly a matter of improvement, and therefore the improvement point of view would seem to cover all the problems.

Looking at this subject from the standpoint of the American Civic Association, I cannot but put it against the correspondence and the occurrences of the three years during which I have held an executive relation to the association and its predecessors.

Considered thus, it seems to me that the problem is largely one of demand and desire on the part of those who would gladly do the civic duty presented to them if they could be advised of its needs and its extent.

There is no doubt that a great arousing could be made where there is as yet no feeling for civic improvement if the agencies most of us know of could be efficiently used; but speaking from the experience alluded to I am strongly convinced that all present resources and activities used to be directed primarily to the co-ordination and use of the obviously strong desire to do right in a civic way being expressed by many communities all the time.

The civic problem dealing with home affairs had hardly been esteemed as one purely philanthropic. I present, however, and maintain, that it is a purely philanthropic problem, taking rank with missionary efforts of all kinds, and therefore to be sustained just as any missionary effort is sustained.

It would be as reasonable to expect the South Sea Islander to come with cash in his hands to pay the missionary who is to turn him toward ways of right thinking and right doing as to expect the communities that show an awakening toward civic righteousness to thus pay for the propaganda to uplift.

Nevertheless, they do it more than occasionally, and this is only another showing of the strength of the desire and of necessity for conserving the forces for civic uplift toward meeting the present opportunities before undertaking to foster new applications or to create new needs.

I have no hesitation in saying that as I look at it the civic problem from the improvement point of view presents features of great encouragement. The whole public is awake to the need of improvement. It is manifested in little and in large ways. A woman in a little southern town will write about cleaning up her own back-yard; a town official of a northern city will ask how to take care of garbage, and numberless other applications for information and for aid come from all parts of the country. The encouragement is not so much in the amount of good work being done as it is in the anxiety of the people to be worked with and to be directed.

There is, however, the further encouragement of much actual accomplishment. Cities and towns all over the country are doing better, are cleaning up; are making their streets, and houses, and parks and

public places more slightly and sometimes actually beautiful.

I will not touch upon the improvement along political lines except to say that as the public conscience with regard to ash-piles, backyards and other primary civic sins is aroused, the same conscience turns toward better city officials and better regulations.

If my point of view is correct, and the civic problem is in an encouraging state, what remains to be done by those interested? I can answer in one word—everything! This awakening must be strengthened, and if we can ever keep pace with its growing needs, we may then become pure missionaries, and go openly to the unenlightened. We must make our efforts concrete. We must make our position and our work known to the end that applications may be properly and promptly made by those who feel the stirrings of the improvement impulse.

More than all, it seems to me that we must, some of us at least, take this matter up as those who secure the underwriting of great missionary enterprises. We must secure support; not from those benefited, but from those who give of their abundance for the uplift of mankind.

With all this encouragement, then, and with the situation existing, there is work for every man, woman and child, great or small, humble or prominent, who feels the willingness to do something to make our America a better and more beautiful place to live in. What this work is and how to do it is the purpose of the deliberation of all the organizations associated in this civic conference.

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