



Mr. Ford's Page

THERE is one American institution not provided for in the Constitution of the United States which could command the votes of all of us if it required them—and that institution is the County Fair. At this season of the year it begins to emerge in a gorgeous array of colored lithographs, with promises of "better, bigger, best" liberally sprinkled over them, and adorned with scenes of grain field and pasture land. The very air, as autumn comes on, is redolent of the soil and the harvest.

Town and Country meet at the County Fair, or State Fair, in a manner and under auspices that cannot be equaled. And anyone who has observed the efforts—the deliberate efforts—made of recent years to divide Town and Country and provoke antagonism between them, knows how necessary such a meeting is.

It is natural that the Country should be interested in the Fair, because the Fair is first and foremost an exhibition of Farming skill and progress. Men in the same business like to compare results, and that is how the idea of a Fair began. In Fair-Time the year's work is mostly done; its results are fairly apparent, and it is possible to pass a verdict on it all. Choice grains, fruits, vegetables; the choice of flock and herd and dairy—these are brought together for the judgment of the farming community. The domestic side of farming is represented too—choice quiltings, embroideries, and the handiwork of the women of the farm.

If you go to any one of the little one-day Fairs held in the mountains of Vermont you will see this institution in its pristine simplicity—a Fair where there is nothing to sell, but where the choice of the hills has been turned out to show. There is nothing elaborate about it, but everything you see has come from the hills. The exhibits are not large, but behind each of them is the home-farm, and you can read everywhere, in the legible writing of life, whatever the hardships or whatever the successes have been. There are Fairs and Fairs, and many famous ones, but it is in the little Fairs of the Eastern United States, where families still come behind ox-teams, and where a crate of chickens brought for exhibition gains free admittance for the whole family, that you see the Fair as it was in the beginning.

But Fair-Time is money-time on the Farm, and therefore was added a commercial element by which the Farmer and the Manufacturer were brought in touch with each other. That is to say, the Fair became hospitable and widened its borders so that the Town could come in and exhibit its year's progress too. And so it comes that when we have wandered up and down the long rows of well-washed sheep, and have listened to the pleasant laughter of the children where the little pigs delight them, and have emerged from the noisy shed where the chickens are displayed, and have passed in admiration past the big box stalls where glossy horses nuzzle the caressing hands of passers-by, and have breathed the aroma of the fruit exhibit and observed the clever manner in which the grain display has been arranged—we are drawn away toward the clatter of the threshing machine, the ditch digger, the farm tractor, and other impressive exhibits which warn each succeeding Fair crowd that the day when the Farmer had to work like his horse is past, and the day when the Farmer may become an engineer is here.

The old single-beam plow, the old windmill, the old method of harvesting by hand, all the old ways which broke men's backs and burdened women's hearts—they looked very pleasant in pictures and they were very romantic in fiction; but they were often cruelly hard on flesh and blood. We shall never be able to thank the old-time farmer for his devotion and his toil.

But that day is passing, it is passing before our eyes. Farming in the old style is rapidly fading into a picturesque memory. The benefits of modern invention and standardized manufacture are being heaped upon the Farmer with a plenitude which makes up for its too long delay. This does not mean that work is going to be

removed from the Farm. Work cannot be removed from any life that is productive. But Power-Farming does mean this—*Drudgery is going to be removed from the Farm. Power-Farming is simply taking the burden off flesh and blood and putting it on steel.*

Farming, of course, has advanced. Time was when men dug with their fingers the hole where the seed was planted, and pulled the crop by hand. There was an era of Hand-Farming.

Then came the time of Tool-Farming. The plow supplanted the spade; the disk took the hoe's place, and the harrow the rake's. The drill lifted the seed-bag off the farmer's shoulder. The threshing machine put the flail into the discard. The mower retired the scythe and grain cradle. No one can deny that Tool-Farming made great strides.

But it was still the Farmer whose muscle and nerve made the tools go. The Farmer does not need new tools so much as he needs Power to make the tools go. And thus we are in the opening years of the Era of Power-Farming. The motor car has wrought a revolution in modern Farm Life not because it was a vehicle, but because it had Power.

That is what the noise of machinery on the Fair Ground means. It means that Power-Farming is coming in. Power-Farming is using motors instead of men's muscles, machine speed instead of the drooping gait of the tired man or horse. Power-Farming is the magic of modern mechanics whereby the element of Drudgery is extracted from Work.

So Town and Country meet at the Fair, the one to see the fruits of the fields, the other to see the fruits of the factories. Both serve each other. The trouble is that they do not serve each other more directly. There are too many interests squeezing in between them. There is too big a tax or toll exacted on the exchange between them.

It would be a good thing if we could add a third section to our Fairs—a section where large groups of city people could meet with large groups of country people, discuss their problems together, and make trade arrangements direct. Suppose 100 families living on Block 9, Smith avenue, should say to Farmer Johnson, "We want you to be our farmer. We, 100 families, will guarantee you a straight direct sale for all your produce." What would be the result? Farmer Johnson would get more from those people than from the men with whom he now deals, and he could sell to the city people for less than they have to pay now. Both would make money, and neither

would be at the mercy of artificially created market conditions. Only a "bad year," that is, an act of Nature, could affect the arrangement.

Frank judges would probably say that of the two classes who meet at the Fair, the farmer has the better of it. He may look toward the Town and sometimes envy the things which City Folk have and he has not. But something must be allowed for illusion. Things are not always what they seem. City Folk have many, many things that are not desirable at all, and, strangely enough, these are usually the very things which give glamour to the city. The city has nothing worth while that the Country has not, or cannot have if it will. It is too bad that the City shines so gloriously from afar in the eyes of the young people of the Farm. If they could only see the City as it really is, they would thank the good fortune that brought them to birth on a Farm. Many and many a boy and girl learns this bitterly.

So we are all going to the Fair. Old and young, rich and poor, the city rube and the farmer, all are going to the Fair. And you will notice one very significant thing: the fruits, the grains, the fowl, the cattle which are produced where Power-Farming is practiced, are just as flavorful, just as nutritious, just as "country"—in short, just as natural as Nature herself; only, they are more plentiful, and the Power-Farming family will look much more natural, because now they have more leisure for self-development, more time to grow, more money to aid their happiness.

THIS is Fair-Time, when Town and Country meet to see what each has done to serve the other. City Folk will linger long around the horses and cattle, the fruit display and everything that is redolent of the Farm, while the Farm Folk will mostly be seen where the noise of Machinery arises, for we are entering an Era of Power-Farming. It was a great thing when the Farmer gained Tools, but even with Tools the Farmer himself supplied the Power. Power-Farming takes the burden off flesh and blood and puts it on steel. It extracts the Drudgery from Work. It permits the Farmer to use more of his Mind and less of his Muscle. It solves the whole Farm problem in all its phases.