



THE FARMER'S TALK TO FARMERS

FARMING NOT HELPED BY DISTORTION OF TRUTH

(Written Specially for the Bulletin)
I do not see the New York World often. Therefore, I do not know what my fortune or my misfortune I shall leave others to say. But the other day I read in another newspaper, a resume of an article recently appearing in it. I quote:

"In respect of the American farmer a correspondent of The New York World writes: 'The farmer is the most prosperous man in the world today, considering the amount of his investment; that, barring fire and nature's calamities, he is the only man secure in his home; that he is the only man absolutely sure of three square meals a day for himself and his family and of warm clothes and a hot stove; that, considering his means, he can provide his family with comforts, recreation, and education not surpassed by people we call rich; that his is the only occupation developing the best all-around man, morally, mentally and physically; that his is the only fair intelligence to acquire for himself a comfortable, self-sustaining home, and that no other industry ever undertaken by man will provide for a few thousand dollars a comfortable home for a large family, and the sole right to sufficient real estate, capable of being easily operated by average industry and brains in order to provide an income adequate for a comfortable family; that he is the only man who can, by his own industry and skill, pay his taxes and improvements and show a net cash on the original investment.'"

These you have yourself, esteemed farmer, believed out to the hilt. Now you see how you and the modern farmer of today is far from the ideal. At last you are frankly told what a shamefully little better than you are. In order to show this, we have a city-bred man, intelligent enough to write a letter, thinks your condition is the best in the world. We old fellows remember the school-boy story of the two knights who, meeting as they came from opposite directions, thought to the death in a dispute over the color of a shield suspended at the wayside. The one who came from the north said it was a white shield; the one who came from the south said it was black; and, as they chopped each other's words at its eastern edge because each one was sure the other was a liar and a recent knight. But, just before he had, some one came along and asked the cause of the quarrel. They told him. He looked up at the shield and, as he saw both sides, and laughed a bitter laugh. It was white on one side and black on the other. Both knights were right, from their one-sided point of view. At the same time, both were wrong from the full, all-embracing view of both sides.

They killed each other simply because they wouldn't either of them, take the trouble to look at both sides of the plain thing as a painted shield, hung, simple as it is at the wayside.

A great many people in real life have killed and been killed for no better reason. A great deal of time lost, world-wide suspicions have been engendered; communities hatreds and feuds embittered; the wretchedly complex, divided, blocked, hindered, diverted—all because men and parties and nations would rather fight over the color of some shield than take a look at both sides to see if it was the same color on both.

Now, I don't for a moment believe that this world-spoiled gentleman in The World really wants to kill anybody merely for disagreeing with him. Sartain sure is it that I haven't any such feeling toward him. But you, brother layman, and I, who both know how the shield looks on the side he doesn't see—we can't help wishing that he could be tossed by some educational fate over on our side and compelled to make good his own assertions.

All we would ask is that he be dropped on an average New England farm with his family and compelled, there, to do just three of the things which his rather respectable claim seems to see the other farmers all doing viz:

First: Inure his family a secure home, three square meals a day, plenty of warm clothes and a hot stove.
Second: Provide them all with the comforts, recreation and the education

attainable by "people we call rich."
Third: By the use of only "average industry and brains" so operate that farm as to "produce an income adequate for all reasonable family requirements, pay for upkeep and improvements, and show at the end of each year at least six per cent. net cash on the original investment."

These results, in his view, are not only easily secured but actually secured by the farmers of the country. Wherefore and whereupon, he declares those farmers to be the most prosperous men in the world today.

Since he actually believes this, he surely has the right to say so. He has the right to defend his assertion with word or pen or sword or lance.

But, oh! that he and those fellows who follow him might only be pitchforked over the side by some just fate, and compelled to look at the other side for six or eight years; just long enough to open their eyes fully to its real color! Until that happens he is, not, we must respectfully maintain, authorized to speak so emphatically as he does. So long as he sees but one side of the painted shield he is less fitted to describe the other side than we who live all our lives in view of it.

Indeed, it seems to me a little more than queer that in his long and somewhat repetitious summary of the farmer's blessings he has mentioned but one which is both important and true. He says that the farmer's occupation is "the only one developing the best all-around man, morally, mentally and physically." As he puts it, even this is not correct. If he had said that the farmer's life affords "an opportunity for developing the best all-around man" he would have come nearer the mark. There is a wide difference between an opportunity and an attainment.

That the farmer's life gives room and scope for such development as he assumes we have often argued in these talks, but, unobtrusively and self-satisfied as too many farmers are, I never yet heard one presume to assert that such development was universal among them or even common. It is an ideal often dreamed of, sometimes zealously striven for, but rarely attained.

As for the rest of this New York city-made list of farm advantages and prosperities, the less said the better. They are perhaps in his eye. They are hardly existent elsewhere.

His last clause, that in which he assumes that every farmer "of only fair intelligence" can and declares by the exercise of only "average industry and brains" "produce an income adequate for all reasonable family requirements, pay for upkeep and improvements and show at the end of each year at least six per cent. net cash on the original investment"—that clause is so absurdly out of range of the actual facts that it seems as if even a

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casual summer visitor's most superficial observation should have made its utterance impossible.

I don't feel like counting up on my fingers the number of actual farmers whose business affairs I know something about. There are a good many of them. And I do not know a single one who, after supporting his family, paying for upkeep and necessary improvements, and having himself a reasonable margin for his own work, is making six per cent. or any other other per cent. on the original investment. In truth, I do not know a single one whose total net cash income, after running expenses are deducted, is sufficient to pay him even fair wages, to say nothing of interest on investment.

I have heard of farmers who are said to be "well off" and even better. But I have never yet been able to run one down whose assertions, when properly tested, were sustained by the facts.

One trouble with too many of our city-bred exhorters is that they mix up wages and interest charges. If a farmer comes out at the end of the year with \$500 cash they tell him it is profit and should be reckoned as interest on his investment. Which means, simply, that they allow nothing for wages. "Overhead" they expect the other workmen of the world to be paid wages for their labor. But the farmer, with longer hours and harder labor conditions, is to work for nothing, he himself, and have all his scanty earnings declared "profit" or "interest."

This is, of course, utterly unfair. The farmer's work is worth at least the current wages which would be paid anyone else for doing the same amount and quality. To refuse him wages for his labor, in order to appropriate those earned wages for payment of interest on the investment, is worse than robbing Peter to pay Paul. The farmer who invests money in a business and then does daily laborer's work in that business, is entitled, first to wages for his work, and only second to interest on his investment.

And I am perfectly within bounds when I repeat that I do not know of a single working farmer, living on and working his own farm, who is making even current wages; by which I mean such wages as men of similar capacity and intelligence earn at other trades for comparable work.

Heaven knows we overworked farmers should welcome anything and everything which seeks to divert the present wild rush from country to town. We should do welcome every written or spoken word which shall help to attract back to the farms the men and women who are now deserting them.

But neither ever was gained or ever will be, in the long run, by deception. There are some very real advantages connected with farm life. It is right and highly desirable that these should be pointed out and enforced upon the attention of all to whom such advantages are likely to appeal. But he is not a true friend of the country or of the



farmer who attempts to embellish the truth by artificial and delusive misstatements or distortions of the truth.
Some like cabbage to eat. Some like roses to look at and smell. Putting a cabbage root will never make it a rose. Nor will cooking a rose with salt pork ever make it a cabbage.
THE FARMER.

ELLINGTON

C. J. Clark and F. B. Nangle returned Sunday from New Haven, where they attended the Yale-Harvard game on Saturday. There was a large attendance at the church supper Friday night and \$72 was realized from the supper and the auction sale which followed it.

Miss Evelyn Clark was given a party Wednesday night at the home of Mr. and Mrs. F. T. Buel. The young girl's friends present enjoyed the evening.

Rev. James T. Carter preached in Wilbraham, Mass., Sunday. The pulpit of the Ellington Congregational church was occupied by a student of the Hartford Theological seminary.

A ditching bee was held Thursday by the members of the Ellington Tobacco Growers, Inc., when nearly 1,100 feet of four-foot ditch was dug and pipe laid to carry water to the association's new warehouse. Thirty men gave their services. The warehouse is to be opened at an early date, and the following committee is arranging a program for the opening: R. E. Hyde, R. A. Sikes, M. E. Thompson, F. L. Phelps and Clyde Corlison.

Edward Charter is in Waterbury and spent Thanksgiving with his uncle and aunt, Rev. and Mrs. Irving L. Smith. Mrs. Capen of Hartford spoke before the Missionary society Thursday afternoon in the lecture room of the church. Her talk was followed by a social and tea.

Breck Lewis and family of Springfield spent the week-end with Mr. and Mrs. Miles H. Aborn. Monday afternoon the Women's club went by automobiles to Springfield to visit the museum, to see the fine collection of Japanese pottery, as the subject for the afternoon was Japanese Art.

T. E. Burnham of Hartford spent Sunday with his sister, Mrs. H. C. Aborn. The P. C. club of Ellington gave a dance in the town hall Saturday evening which was largely attended.

COLUMBIA

Mrs. Elsie Lewis, who many years ago lived in Pine street near Wells woods, and recently in Hartford, is dead, and her body will be brought to Columbia for burial in the family plot on Thanksgiving day.

The house on the road to Chestnut Hill belonging to Mrs. Mary Tucker, residing in California for several years, and which was occupied during the past summer by Mrs. Cox and Mrs. Beardon and families, was sold Saturday to Ransom Yerrington.

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doors but does not regain his strength rapidly.
Miss Bertha Meyers and Jennie Stark were week and guests of Mr. and Mrs. Shirley E. Askey of Chester.
Mrs. Clarence Alcantara, with her two children, went to Hartford last Saturday for a visit of several days with her parents.
Mrs. Trexell, who has been spending some time with her sister, Mrs. Franz Chivatal, has gone to Hartford.
Schools throughout the town closed on Wednesday for the Thanksgiving recess.

EAST HADDAM
Mrs. Reed Hartman was a visitor in Middletown Friday.
Friends of Edwin H. Phelps regret to learn that his physical condition does not improve.
Mrs. Harry Powers of Essex is visiting at her former home here.
William Tracy of Chester, who has been spending some time with his brother, Deacon John L. Tracy, has returned home. Deacon Tracy is now able to be out of

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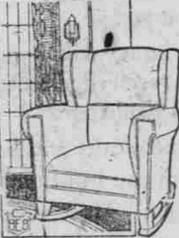
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