

THE SOUTHERN FARM GAZETTE

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LOVE YOUR FARM—THE SPIRIT BACK OF THE WORK

THE OLD YEAR ENDS and the Christmastide is here—the time when, leaving for a moment our work itself, our attention is given rather to the spirit which alone makes all labor worth while. Not unfittingly, therefore, may we now turn aside from the severely practical considerations of the farmer's daily tasks to the spirit in which we would have every member of our Southern Farm Gazette Family go about these tasks. Better seed, better tools, better stock, better cultivation, better marketing—from year's end to year's end we urge these fundamental principles of more profitable farming, and yet we have failed miserably if our typical Southern Farm Gazette reader has not gone back of all these things and caught the deeper spirit we would have him imbibe.

We would have every farmer love his work even as the artist loves his work, and in this spirit, too, every farmer should love his farm itself as he would love a favorite horse or dog. He should know every rod of the ground, should know just what each acre is best adapted to, should feel a joy and pride in having every hill and valley look its best, and should be as much ashamed to have a field scarred with gullies as he would to have a beautiful colt marked with lashes; as much ashamed to have a piece of ground worn out

from ill treatment as to have a horse gaunt and bony from neglect; as much hurt at seeing his acres sick from wretched management as he would be at seeing his cows half starving from the same cause.

Love your ground—that piece of God's creation which you hold in fee simple. Fatten its poorer parts as carefully as you would nurture an ailing Collie. Heal the washed, torn places in the hillside as you would the barb-scars on your pony. Feed with legumes and soiling crops and fertilizers the galled and barren patch that needs special attention; nurse it back to life and beauty and fruitfulness. Make a meadow of the bottom that is inclined to wash; watch it and care for it until the kindly root-masses heal every gaping wound, and in one unbroken surface the "tides of grass break into foam of flowers" upon the outer edges. Don't forget even the forest lands. See that every acre of woodland has trees enough on it to make it profitable: "a good stand" of the timber crop as well as of every other crop. Have an eye to the beautiful in laying off the cleared fields—a tree here and there, but no wretched beggar's-coat mingling of little patches and little rents; rather broad fields fully tended and of as nearly uniform fertility as possible, making of your growing crops, as it were, each a beautiful garment, whole and unbroken, to clothe the fruitful acres

which God has given you to keep and tend even as He gave the First Garden into the keeping of our first parents.

And so again we say, love your farm. Make it a place of beauty, a place of joyous fruitfulness, an example for your neighbors, a heritage for your children. Make improvements on it that will last beyond your day. Make an ample yard about it with all the old-fashioned flowers that your grandmother knew; set a great orchard near it, bearing many manner of fruits; lay off walks and roads leading to it and keep them up; plant hedges along the approaches, and flowering bulbs and shrubs—crape myrtle, and spirea and privet and roses—so that your grandchildren will some day speak of their grandsire, who cared enough for the beautiful and loved the farm well enough to plant them.

Name the farm, too; treasure up its history; preserve the traditions of all the romance and adventure and humor and pathos that are in any way connected with it; and if some of the young folks must leave it, let them look back to it with happy memories of beauty and of worthy ideals and of well-ordered industry.

We have not developed in this country, as we should, the intense pride that the Englishman feels in being a land-owner. It gives a man distinction that the homeless man has not. He is a better citizen, a

freeholder, a guardian holding in trust a piece of creation fresh from the hand of the Almighty. And yet how many—alas! how many!—who have such talents in their keeping are indeed unprofitable servants—not so much as keeping their treasure unhurt (as the one-talent man in the Bible did), but wearing out and destroying in one brief lifetime the heritage that the Creator intended to remain fertile and fruitful, to feed our human race, as long as the earth shall last.

Love your farm. If you cannot be proud of it now, begin to-day to make it a thing you can be proud of. Much dignity has come to you in that you are owner and care-keeper for a part of God's foot-stool; show yourself worthy of that dignity. Watch earnestly over every acre. Let no day go by that you do not add something of comeliness and potential fertility to its fields. And finally, leave some spot beneath the shade of some giant tree where at last, "like as a shock of corn cometh in his season," you can lay down your weary body, leaving the world a little better for your having lived in it, and earning the approval from the Great Father (who made the care of fields and gardens the first task given man): "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of thy Lord."

THE REAL JOY OF CHRISTMAS.

THE happiest privilege of Christmastide is that of giving pleasure to trusting children and to men and women sick or in need. We wish that all who read these lines may have the privilege of giving joy to one of these—and that is the best way in which we can wish for every member of The Southern Farm Gazette Family the merriest and happiest of all Christmases.