WHAT I SAW IN THE MIDDLE WEST.—III.

CLARENCE POE.

On Train in Kentucky.—(Editorial Correspondence.)—As I write this we have crossed the border. I am once again on Southern soil, and my heart beats faster at the thought of the possibilities of our Southland and the work that is to be done within her borders. This does not mean that I am sectional: in love of our great country and in reverence of Old Glory's stars and stripes I yield to no man North or West. But for the South every true Southerner must feel a distinct and peculiar affection. That she is behind the North and West in many respects, we grant. The people of the South live yet in shabbier houses; there are too many ramshackle barns; the fields are less thoroughly plowed, patches instead of broad well-kept fields, and the land has been too often neglected and allowed to wash. The beautiful herds of cattle, the sleek Percheron plowhorses two or three abreast, the trim lawns, the great red barns—these are no longer the rule as in the West. There are also fringes of disreputable looking cabins on the edges of these Southern towns, and too often the white people, from association with the lower ideals of neatness and thrift on the part of a more backward race, seem to have suffered a pitiful sagging of their own racial standards. The roads here are in worse condition; there are ten times as many people who can't read and write, and the schools are yet by no means as efficient as in the North and West.

And yet in spite of all these things, I would not live in the West. Rather must the true Southerner feel that because of these things the call is all the more imperative for him to stay in the South. The task of betterment, the task of improving these conditions—this is his, and he dare not run away from it. As well might a soldier desert his post in time of battle. If your neighbor's field is plowed well, do not wish for it, but plow your own well; if your neighbor's children are well educated, do not wish for his, but educate your own. And so our duty is not to covet the beauty and thrift and enterprise of the West, but to give our lives to bringing to the South the same high degree of beauty and thrift and progressiveness.

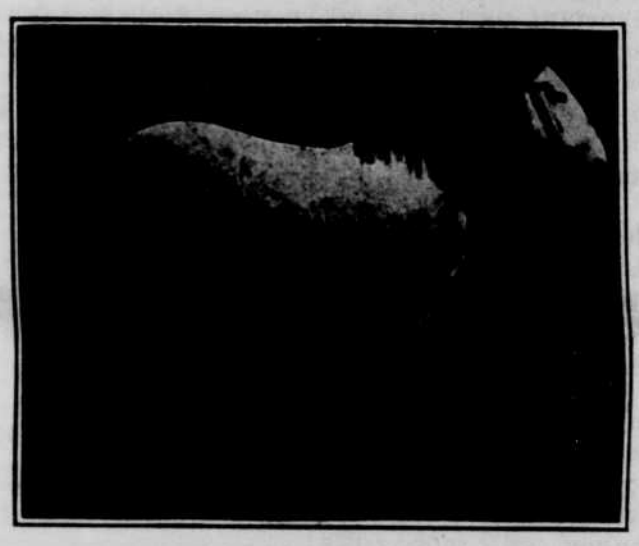
To educate all our boys and girls in longer and better and more practical public schools and to educate our older people through farm papers and demonstration work and farmers' institutes, etc.,—this must be our main hope of deliverance.

This, however is not what I started out to say. There are a number of other good ideas yet to be reported that I have gotten from this trip through the farming sections of Illinois, Wisconsin, and Indiana—among others the idea that no boy who can afford it ought to start farming until he sees how these Western farmers work.

Over in Wisconsin they have an Agricultural College that is doing an almost marvelous work, and we must go to work to get something like it in every State in the South. Ten years ago there were only nine students in the long agricultural course; now there are 332. But it is not the long course which has done most to help Wisconsin farming: it is the short course. This short course is designed especially to enable the farm boy to go to college after the crops are gathered and get back before time for starting the crops in the spring. It is a two-year course of fourteen weeks each, lasting from the first of December to the middle of March. That is to say, the farm boy takes the course in the comparatively idle weeks of two successive winters. This short course has grown steadily in popularity and there were nearly 500 enrolled last winter and this. "It is the best educational money the State has ever spent," Dean Russell declares. Then, too, there is the Farmers' Ten-Day Course which we must also introduce into every State in the South. This course gives practical instruction in crop growing, stock feeding, dairying, etc., and the Wisconsin farmer now looks forward to the Ten-Day Course as to a sort of annual picnic combining pleasure with intensely profitable instruction. I went through the big pavilion where 1,100 Wisconsin farmers, representing seventy counties, gathered for this course last February; and at the same time a course for farmers' wives, first inaugurated this year, was in progress with an attendance of 425. It is the conviction of the University of Wisconsin that its function is not merely to instruct the few hundred boys and girls whom good fortune enables to spend two, three, or four years on the grounds, but rather that the true mission of the University is to go out into the highways and hedges and carry light and learning to the whole people of the State. "To put a whole State to school"—that is its aim, and no other university in America is better living up to its ideal, and no branch of the University better than the Agricultural College.

It is this two-year fourteen-weeks' short course especially that has made the Agricultural College of Wisconsin a power for good, and every Southern State should begin planning now to provide a similar course for its farmer boys—boys who will respond just as heartily as Wisconsin boys have done, and whom our States can neglect only at the peril of their future. Eighty per cent of the young fellows who have taken this short course are on Wisconsin farms to-day, and they are in the very front of the procession of agricultural progress.

For one thing they are organized—1,000 of them—into the Wisconsin Experimental Association by means of which scientific ideas and better methods of farming are reaching every nook and corner of Wisconsin. With corn an especially notable work has been done. I have already referred to the fact that twenty-five years ago it was thought that the Wisconsin growing season was two short to mature a dent corn. Careful seed selection and plant breeding soon developed a type that would mature all right. And then



THE KIND OF SIRE THAT THE SOUTH NEEDS.

corn culture seems to have drifted along, the statistics of ten years ago showing that Wisconsin had an average yield of twenty-five bushels per acre, the same average as for the United States as a whole—a showing that didn't satisfy the ambitious leaders of agricultural progress. They set about getting the farmer to use better varieties and select his seed better, with the result that in eight years' time the average yield per acre went up to 41.6 bushels—the highest, with one exception, for any American State that year. The main explanation of how this was done is the Wisconsin Experimental Association. The Agricultural College, with a few high-bred varieties of corn, furnished to each member of the Association seed enough to plant two acres of corn with the understanding that the Association member would sell seed to his neighbors at not over twice the market value of ordinary corn. In this way seed of the best varieties has been put within reach of farmers everywhere—and seed, too, acclimated and suited to the climate and soils of the farmer's own section.

Still another notable agency in increasing Wisconsin corn production has been the boys' and girls' corn clubs, numbering 20,000 last year and possibly 50,000 in 1910. Each boy or girl gets a package of improved seed; from this product the ten best ears are selected in competition at the the county fair, and if this is carefully managed, the third year the farmer may have enough improved seed to plant his entire crop. What improvement Wisconsin has wrought with corn is more than duplicated by her improvement of barley breeds. In the light of such achievements and the increase in sugar content of the sugar beet from 8 to 16 or 20 per cent in the last hundred years, the people who minimize the importance of plant breeding and seed selection can be regarded only as enemies of progress.

Another idea our Southern agricultural colleges would do well to adopt from Wisconsin is the plan of honoring each year two or three men who have done notable work for agricultural betterment. Two of the men so recognized this year were Wisconsin farmers who had had been leaders of progress, and the third was Dr. Seaman A. Knapp. The award is simply an artistic parchment, but it is bestowed with suitable ceremony and lends a new sense of dignity to the work in which such men are engaged.

And since this issue of The Progressive Farmer and Gazette is a "Horse Special," let me say that another example of the Western notion that the State should be interested in the financial welfare of its citizens and should help them to do better work along all lines, is found in the Wisconsin law requiring every stallion in the State to be registered. Nor does registration there mean merely paying a certain fee and getting a number. Every stallion is examined for soundness, and every stallion-owner must give satisfactory evidence as to the breeding of his horse. Then the stallion is enrolled as, "Pure-Bred"—when registered in any recognized stud book; as "Cross-Bred"—when both dam and sire are pure-bred but of different breeds; as "Non-Standard Bred"—when so recorded in the American Trotting Register; as "Grade"—when either sire or dam is proven to be pure-bred, and as "Mongrel" or "Scrub"—when neither parent is of pure breeding.

Then when a stallion is advertised, either on a poster or in a newspaper, his number and his breeding must be given. If he is a scrub, the advertisement must say so, plainly and without equivocation.

The effect of this law has been to decrease the number of scrub stallions kept—that is, in comparison with the pure-bred, and to a much larger extent to turn the patronage from them to the pure-breds. At any rate, the average value per head of all the horses in the State has increased $15.35 in the last few years, and much of this increase is attributed to this law requiring the registration of stallions and their advertisement for what they are.

The average value of Wisconsin horses is now $107 per head, and State Veterinarian Alexander says this is entirely too low. So he has outlined the following campaign for better horse breeding:

> "Grading up with sound muscular sires; continuous use of pure-bred stallions of a chosen breed; use of sound stallions and mares only; proper feeding and care of the mare and foal; working of stallions regularly; home production of pure-bred stallions to replace grades, mongrels and scrubs used at present; use of grade horses to replace scrub horses in farm teams; organization of community associations for promoting horse breeding; and the encouragement of the industry by prizes at county fairs for pure-bred stallions and mares and the progeny of these animals."

The average value of horses in Southern States last year was, according to the Report of the United States Department of Agriculture: Virginia, $100; North Carolina, $110; South Carolina, $121; Georgia, $116; Florida, $104; Alabama, $88; Mississippi, $78; Louisiana, $65; Texas, $71; Arkansas, $72; Tennessee, $103. In only three States is the average value equal to that which Wisconsin considers so low as to merit the attention of the State; and it is safe to say that a horse of equal quality will bring at least 25 per cent more in these States than in Wisconsin.

Is there any reason why this plan of stallion registration should not be adopted with us? Sixteen States have already followed the example set by Wisconsin, and we can not afford to lag behind. This much is certain: We can not improve the quality of our stock while we continue to breed to scrub sires, and with stallions the only way for the farmer to know the ancestry of the animal to which he wishes to breed his mare is by some system of State registration which will not allow a grade or scrub animal to be advertised as a pure-bred.

More than this, Dr. Alexander had on his desk when I called to see him several fake registration papers, accumulations of the mail for only a day or two previous; one, I believe, had come in that morning. Unprincipled breeders had sold stallions and pretended to give French and German registration papers, investigation showing that these were absolute forgeries. How many forged papers both of foreign and American stallions are palmed off on Southern buyers, it would be impossible to tell. Let's try the Wisconsin plan.