Old Ideals Versus New Ideas in Farm Life

by PAUL H. JOHNSTONE [1]

WHAT do you as a farmer think of the importance of farming in the general scheme of things? Do you envy city people, or do you tend to look down on them a little? What kind of education do you want, and how would you go about getting it? Do you like farming for its own sake, or do you think it should be considered primarily as a means of making money? How have modern conveniences and comforts affected your attitudes and your life? What do you think the "typical farmer" is like? Would your father and your grandfather have given the same answers to these questions that you do? Here is a rich historical survey of rural attitudes and ways of life in the United States covering just such questions as these, told through a wealth of human-interest material going back to colonial times. The author's interpretations, of course, are his own. They are thought-provoking, but in many cases others might draw different conclusions.

IN THE century and a half since the United States became a nation, our agriculture has moved all the way from the sickle to the combine, from the wooden plow drawn by a yoke of oxen to the

[1] Paul H. Johnstone is Senior Agricultural Historian, Division of Farm Population and Rural Welfare, Bureau of Agricultural Economics.

gang plow powered by a tractor. Our population has grown during this period from 4,000,000 to about 130,000,000; and whereas about 9 out of every 10 persons lived on the farm in the days of the Revolution, today only 1 person in 4 is a farmer. Farm life and work were concerned with more than agriculture then, for the farm family supplied itself with goods provided nowadays by special industries. The family took not only food and fuel, but lumber from the land; it boiled its own sugar, made its own soap, grew its own wool, and wore its own homespun. There were then no large factories nor great financial accumulations; there were no urban and industrial masses to be fed by commercial agriculture. But in 1928 over $63,000,000,000 worth of gross assets were owned by 150 huge corporations; and in 1930 nearly 70,000,000 Americans living in towns and cities of 2,500 or larger, and many more millions in smaller towns, were dependent on the farmer for their food and clothing. A century and a half ago a rich continent of unexploited cheap land awaited the agricultural settler; today there is not enough land to go around.

The economic and technological conditions of American agriculture have in the course of a century or more been altered out of all recognition by thousands of innovations of a drastic and even revolutionary character. These changes have not taken place in a vacuum. Neither farm life, nor any other kind of life, can be divided up. It comes all in one piece and hangs together. The changes that have come to agriculture have not altered just single phases of farm life, leaving everything else untouched. On the contrary, they have profoundly influenced the very essence and character of rural living. Even philosophies and ideas of right and wrong have in some cases taken on a new shape and character. It is the purpose of this article to suggest how the philosophy and social substance of farm life in the United States have altered in response to the tremendous changes that have taken place during the last century in the physical and economic worlds in which we live.

AMERICA'S INHERITANCE FROM "THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT"

The United States was very much the child of the eighteenth century into which it was born. That century was a period of unprecedented social change and intellectual vigor. Most of the ferment of ideas originated in England and France but rapidly penetrated the whole western world. Social and political philosophers felt themselves suddenly free of medieval trammels, and with what seemed to them new and complete freedom from customary ideas they systematized social and political thought according to the abstract rationality [2] of their time. Because of this new faith in the perfectibility of knowledge

[2] The terms "rationality," "rationalistic," and "rationalism" as used in this article are not meant in any technical sense. Rather, they refer generally to the new faith in reason as opposed to the older faith in revelation or tradition. This faith was based partially upon a restless dissatisfaction with the state of things as they were and included confidence that reason and knowledge could effect vast improvements. It was founded also upon the faith that man is a "reasoning" creature of infinite perfectibility who should be expected to act according to the dictates of reason rather than, "unreasonably," according to custom or habit. Rationalism implied that whatever was "natural" or "right" or "just" would be evident as such to man, because of his powers of reason; similarly, because of the supposedly abstract, timeless, and spaceless quality of this rationality, it was conceived to be theoretically possible for man to achieve a kind of perfect and absolute sense of understanding of both nature and the world of men.

and of reason, the period came to be known as the Age of Reason, or the Age of Enlightenment.

Colonial and revolutionary America was not isolated from these influences; rather it participated to the utmost. Our revolutionary and founding fathers reasoned and acted in terms of the philosophy developed in eighteenth-century Europe. The republic they created amounted to a realization of the ideals of eighteenth-century intellectuals.

As with the Nation as a whole, so also with its agriculture. American agriculture has developed under the influence of eighteenth-century tradition. In that early age America was predominantly rural and agricultural, and most of its leaders came from a rural and agricultural background. When they were not themselves farmers or landed proprietors, they generally had at least a rural background and an active interest in agriculture. It was through the agency of men who were at once the civic, intellectual, and agricultural leaders of the young Nation that the beginnings of a new and modern character were planted in the American agricultural world.

One phase of the intellectual atmosphere of eighteenth-century Europe was a fashionable public interest in agriculture that at times attained the proportions of a craze. Princes and princelings, poets and philosophers, and fashionable lords and ladies assumed an ardent interest in agriculture that would have been disdained by people of their rank in an earlier age. Frederick the Great of Prussia loved on occasion to affect rural simplicity and posed as a rustic philosopher-king; George III of England had a model farm and pretended pleasure at the nickname "Farmer George"; the Emperor Joseph of Austria gave a public demonstration of plowing with much ceremony and a beribboned plow; the Dauphin of France (later Louis XVI) did the same; and Marie Antoinette played milkmaid in her doll-house farm at Versailles.

But such faddish extremes were merely froth on the wave of very sober interest in agricultural improvement. Royalty, nobility, landed proprietors, agencies of government, and learned societies fostered serious efforts to improve agricultural practices. Jethro Tull brought to England the "horse-hoe" of southern France and experimented with more intensive methods of cultivation; Lord Townshend improved on Tull's ideas and was the first to practice them successfully. Robert Bakewell began the systematic breeding of cattle and sheep. Such men as these in England, and men like Duhamel du Monceau, the student of forestry, fungus diseases, and insect pests, in France, began to effect substantial progress in husbandry and methods of cultivation through experimentation and the application of rudimentary science. Publicists and theoreticians such as Arthur Young and François Quesnay propagandized the newer methods of cultivation, argued for a better public appreciation of the special agrarian needs, and even developed an economic theory, called physiocracy, along lines particularly favorable to agricultural interests. Physiocracy marked the first notable attempt in history to develop a systematic and coherent theory of economics.

The most prominent men in the political and intellectual life of America aided in planting these ideas in this country. Benjamin Franklin and the American Philosophical Society encouraged the

improvement of agricultural methods through the development of labor-saving inventions and the application of science. George Washington corresponded with the English agricultural improvers, Arthur Young and Sir Arthur Sinclair, made Mount Vernon into a model farm, and conducted countless experiments with new plants, new methods, and new machinery. Thomas Jefferson searched Europe for an upland rice, introduced olives into this country, though unsuccessfully, conducted experiments in rotations and soil fertility, undertook novel soil conservation practices, and was possibly the first to devise a mathematical formula for a moldboard of least resistance for plows.

SOME EARLY AMERICAN AGRICULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

Agricultural Societies

Agricultural societies began to spring up in America in imitation of those of Europe. They were inspired by the rationalistic philosophy and agrarian liberalism of the day and were devoted principally to the dissemination of general scientific information and to the encouragement of experimentation with new implements, new plants, and new methods of cultivation. They developed at first under the leadership of prominent men and generally had a select and limited membership drawn from the ranks of wealthy proprietors and distinguished intellectuals and political figures.[3] Among the first were the South Carolina Agricultural Society (1784), the Philadelphia Society for the Promotion of Agriculture (1785), the New York Society for Agriculture, Arts, and Manufactures (1791), followed shortly by the Massachusetts Society for Promoting Agriculture, and many others. The aristocratic nature of these early agricultural societies may be illustrated by the membership of one of them. The Albemarle Agricultural Society, founded at Charlottesville, Va., in 1817, had Thomas Jefferson as its prime mover. James Madison was later to be its president. Of the 30 founding members, besides former President Jefferson, there were 2 future Governors of Virginia, a future United States Senator and Ambassador to Great Britain, a future Justice of the United States Supreme Court, a brigadier general, a future head of the University of Virginia, and several others prominent in the political life of the Old Dominion (*72*).[4]

In the course of time, as the number of agricultural societies grew (about 300 agricultural societies were active in 1852, and in 1860 the United States Agricultural Society listed 941 (*71, p. 23*)), their popular base was broadened. Through their efforts and those of agricultural-fair associations and agricultural journals the ideas of the early and aristocratic agricultural societies were first democratized.

Agricultural Fairs

The agricultural fair as it developed in the first quarter of the nineteenth century has a very mixed ancestry. Its most ancient antecedent was the thoroughly medieval institution of the fair as a

[3] A possible exception may be the Kennebec Agricultural Society, founded in 1787, which was purported to have been organized by farmers.

[4] Italic numbers in parentheses refer to Literature Cited, p. 167.

special seasonal market place. Cattle fairs had a long colonial history, and there had been other similar events such as the Strawberry Fair in St. John's Parish in Berkeley County, S. C. An agricultural exhibition of some sort was apparently held in Washington in 1804. George Washington Parke Custis in 1810 began his public sheep shearings at Arlington, across the Potomac from Washington. Custis was essentially imitating the device of the English Coke of Holkham in making the institutional relics of the fair the means of giving a popular demonstration of modern methods of husbandry (*64, p. 5*). What appears to have been the first agricultural fair of a modern kind came probably in 1810, also in the District of Columbia. Many notables attended, including President and Mrs. Madison; and there were prizes for the best exhibits.

It was, however, Elkanah Watson more than anyone else who established the agricultural fair in this country as a lasting institution. After exhibiting publicly two prize merino sheep at his home in Pittsfield, Mass., in 1807, he led in organizing the Berkshire Agricultural Society in 1810; and in 1811 that organization staged its first fair. Thereafter, agricultural fair associations and agricultural societies whose principal purpose was to foster and manage such fairs increased rapidly in numbers and importance, particularly in New England, the Middle Atlantic States, and the new regions to the west. As the membership of these societies grew, the original aristocratic nature was lost, and more and more men of common rank undertook to aid the improvement of agriculture along the lines first advocated by the distinguished and select.

Agricultural Journals

Three early New Jersey newspapers—the New Jersey Gazette (1776), the Rural Magazine (Newark, 1796) and the Newton Farmers' Journal (1797) (*71, p. 28*)—are believed to have been the first American periodicals to publish many articles on agriculture. But it was not until 1810 that America's first full-fledged agricultural journal was founded—the Agricultural Museum (Georgetown, D. C.); it lasted 2 years. In 1819, two agricultural journals made their appearance—the American Farmer (Baltimore) and the Plough Boy (Albany). The New England Farmer (Boston) began publication in 1822, the New York Farmer (New York City) in 1827, the Southern Agriculturist (Charleston, S. C.) in 1828, the Genesee Farmer (Rochester, N. Y.) in 1831, and the Cultivator in 1834. The Prairie Farmer (at first the Union Agriculturist and Western Prairie Farmer) began its long career at Chicago in 1840. By 1850, 40 or more agricultural journals had been established. Many did not last long, but those that survived exerted a great influence. As early as 1837, 3 years after its founding, the Cultivator had an edition of 18,000 and subscribers in almost every State and Territory in the Union.

THE SEED OF A NEW GROWTH

Thus the United States, at the very outset, developed special institutions directed in one or another way to the service and betterment of agriculture—first agricultural societies of an aristocratic

nature, then agricultural societies and fair associations on a more popular level, then agricultural journalism. State boards and departments of agriculture, national agricultural organizations, a Federal Department of Agriculture, and a Nation-wide system of State agricultural colleges and experiment stations were to follow. In the present day, when such things are taken for granted, their significance is likely to be overlooked. They were in fact, however, something new under the sun. Agriculture had from the earliest times grown like Topsy. It was wholly traditionalized, conducted automatically according to customs transmitted down the centuries without change or question from father to son. Until the age in which the United States became a nation there had been very little rational and systematic effort to improve agricultural practices, and the overwhelming mass of farmers still employed methods that were very little changed from those employed in ancient Rome. Furthermore, until that age the idea that agriculture might be improved simply did not exist in any effective way. People did things the way things always had been done, and the idea that there might be a better way of doing them, or even an alternative way, simply did not occur to them.

The existence of a growing body of institutions deliberately and directly devoted to the alteration and improvement of agriculture is therefore a fact of tremendous significance in American history. It has meant that there has been within the agricultural world itself a force constantly working to overcome traditional inertias and to direct agriculture into new paths. A stout core of customary resistance has of course remained, but the unrelenting agitation for progress has resulted in an accelerated change that is unprecedented in all previous agricultural history. The story of American agriculture during the last century and of the changes that have taken place in it in that time is to a very large extent the story of the interaction between agricultural leadership on the one hand, striving for improvements and innovations, and the inertias of folkways and informal tradition on the other hand, naturally and inevitably resistant to novelty.

AGRARIANISM

The Tradition

The early leadership of agriculture in America planted the seed of an intellectual tradition that in essence had two parts. The first of these was the idea of progress and scientific improvement. The second was the literary agrarianism derived originally from classic antiquity. Typical of the eighteenth century, these ideas were an integral part of the rising new spirit of that age, in the world at large as well as in the world of farms and farmers.

The agrarianism of classic tradition became the political and social agrarianism of Jefferson:

> Those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever He had a chosen people, whose breasts He has made His peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue. It is the focus in which He keeps alive that sacred fire, which otherwise might escape from the face of the earth. Corruption of morals in the mass of cultivators is a phenomenon of which no age nor nation has furnished an example. It is the mark set on those, who, not looking up to heaven, to their own soil and industry, as does the husbandman, for their subsistence, depend for it on casualties

and caprice of customers. Dependence begets subservience and venality, suffocates the germ of virtue, and prepares fit tools for the designs of ambition * * * generally speaking, the proportion which the aggregate of the other classes of citizens bears in any State to that of its husbandmen, is the proportion of its unsound to its healthy parts, and is a good enough barometer whereby to measure its degree of corruption.[5]

Such ideas were in close harmony with the romantic intellectual currents of the day because both were based upon assumptions of the goodness of nature, of natural man, and of simplicity of manners. And they amounted also to a philosophical elaboration of a deep but less articulate distrust of the city widely held among the masses of country people. Regardless of political party, Jeffersonian agrarianism came to be accepted as the expression of the rural social creed.

A cardinal point of the agrarian creed was the concept of the complete economic independence of the farmer. In the days when production on the farm was directed principally to the supply of home consumption needs—when all the food except occasional luxury items, when all the power and housing and fuel and most of the clothing for the farm family were produced upon the farm—the doctrine of rural independence harmonized with reality. It was the doctrine of agricultural leadership, regularly repeated by all rural spokesmen. A typical statement is this excerpt from the Union Agriculturist and Western Prairie Farmer of August 1841:

The farmer is the most noble and independent man in society. He has ever been honored and respected from the days of Cincinnatus, the Roman farmer, to the present time * * * He is not placed in that station which requires him ever to be seeking or courting popular favor, bowing and bowing to this or that man to gain their favor; but he looks upon the earth and the indulgent smiles of Heaven to crown his efforts, resting with the fullest assurance that "seed time and harvest" shall ever continue through all coming time (*3*).

The second important point of the agrarian creed—agricultural fundamentalism, it has been called—was the idea that agriculture is the fundamental employment of man upon which all other economic activities were vitally dependent. This was literary doctrine, but it was also popular belief—was bound to be, perhaps, in a country where three-fourths to nine-tenths of the population lived on farms. And thus farm people generally, and most nonfarm people also, firmly believed that, as General H. K. Oliver declared in 1858—

* * * the whole pulse of commercial and monetary operations is affected by the healthful and unhealthful beatings of the agricultural heart; that stocks and prices in the market and on "change," rise and fall as the agricultural tide ebbs and flows; that, as come the crops, either plenteous or meagre, so darts or limps the gigantic business of the busy world * * * (*65*).

The third and most important point of the agrarian creed was the idea that agricultural life is the natural life, and, being natural, is therefore good. The ever-present corollary was that city life and urban culture are inevitably enervating and corrupt. The first part of this, concerning the inherent goodness of country life, was gener-

[5] UNITED STATES BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS. WASHINGTON, JEFFERSON, LINCOLN AND AGRICULTURE. (From Jefferson's Notes on Virginia.) 102 pp. 1937. [Processed.] See p. 48.

ally, so far as it was explicit, a literary or intellectual doctrine. The second, concerning the corruption of the city, was popular belief.

Rural-Urban Antagonisms

There is evidence to indicate that much of the praise of rural life expressed in popular literature was a defensive gesture against real or imagined slurs. Farm journals in those early days were constantly preoccupied with derogatory urban opinions of farm people and rural manners. Farm people were constantly advised by their leaders to be proud of themselves and of their occupation. From this repeated advice it is easy to infer a significant hypersensitiveness, for although it was regularly pointed out that urbanity of manners was superficial at best, and even an indication of shallowness of spirit, frequent exhortation was made to acquire the learning and social grace that would leave no room for such criticism. "There has * * * a certain class of individuals grown up in our land," complained the Cultivator in 1835, quoting the Genesee farmer, "who treat the cultivators of the soil as an inferior caste * * * whose utmost abilities are confined to the merit of being able to discuss a boiled potatoe and a rasher of bacon * * *" (*51*). And Joseph Brayshaw, in an address in 1841 reported by the Union Agriculturist and Western Prairie Farmer, declared that "it is really mortifying to the well-wisher to his country, to see how anxious many of the cultivators of the soil are to leave this occupation, in order to follow some other, which they think will make them gentlemen. Shame upon that gentility which depends only on dress or occupation!" (*43*).

Closely associated with this common resentment against a consciousness of urban disdain was a deep dislike of many of the trappings of aristocracy and the corruptions of the city. Country people have always felt some hostility toward urban cultures. From age to age the specific objects of that hostility have varied; but in the early United States, farm people concentrated their dislike of the city upon the wealthy and aristocratic, upon "dandies" and loafers, and upon bankers, "loan sharks," "land sharks," middlemen, monopolists, and other symbols of an unwelcomed capitalism. In its first issue in June 1819, the Plough Boy in declaring its purposes heaped scorn upon "*female* as well as *male* DANDIES" and detailed its praise of the "real, unsophisticated American; a virtuous, intelligent, brave, hardy, and generous yeoman, who despises alike the trappings of *royalty* or *aristocracy*." Solon Robinson, writing in the Cultivator for May 1838, expressed the typical resentment of farmers against "the butterflies who flutter over them in British broadcloth, consuming the fruits of the sweat of their brows" (*67*). And in November of the same year the Cultivator repeated a common warning to farmers of the dangers in store for them in banks. In the list of "things a farmer should not do" was the following:

> A farmer should shun the doors of a bank as he would the approach of the plague or cholera; banks are for traders and men of speculation, and theirs is a business with which farmers have little to do.

Farm journals made a regular feature of the iniquities of speculators, usurers, and middlemen. There was much outright preaching against the perils of credit dealings, and short tales were told to illustrate

this moral. "The Unjust Usurer—A Tale of the Prairie," printed in the Prairie Farmer in 1860 ended on the following note:

> This is no imaginative sketch, but a stern reality. It shows the danger of getting into debt, of the sure ruin that will arise from accumulating interest, and the tender mercies of land-sharks and unjust usurers.

Urban culture was considered bad not only for its possible effect upon country people; it was deemed even more disastrous in its effect upon the poor and the unfortunate within the city itself. It was regularly emphasized that in the city "vice and immorality are held up as examples for the unprovided children of unfortunate families" (*50*). And when a correspondent of the Prairie Farmer ventured in 1849 to praise the "luxuries," the "polished society," and the "investments" possible in the city, he was strongly rebuked for failing to see that city life "*crushes, enslaves,* and *ruins so many thousands of our young men,* who are insensibly made the victims of *dissipation,* of *reckless speculation,* and of *ultimate crime*" (*8*).

There was a long historical background for this rural-urban antagonism. It had been especially strong during the colonial period, except in New England. In the middle and southern colonies, the cities were settled and to a large extent governed by the representatives of European commercial houses, sent here to milk the hinterland, and by representatives of European landholders and aristocrats. The upper stratum of the colonial city population, therefore, was identified with European merchants and aristocrats rather than with the American rural settlers whom it exploited.

The farmers and the laboring classes, on the other hand, were for the most part of yeoman and peasant stock and felt akin both because of common origins and common dislike of aristocracy. They had come from a Europe where class lines were relatively rigid to a land of opportunity where they could acquire property and move up the economic ladder. But in many cases they found obstacles in the way of moving up the political and social ladders. The transplanted aristocrats, who came over as members of the ruling class, were slow to recognize the changed situation, even slower to find it desirable. Farmers tended therefore to become progressives and rebels in order to reinforce the economic opportunity of the New World with social and political opportunity as well. Out of long resentment against aristocracy and privilege, the basic belief was developed and perpetuated that virtue is the characteristic of the poor and humble. This good agrarian doctrine linked the struggling farmer with the urban laborer. But it was inconsistent with prevailing Calvinistic doctrine, which said by implication that virtue was rewarded by material blessings, and tended to link the successful farmer with the successful city dweller.

Regional Differences in Rural-Urban Relationships

In New England the proportion and importance of representatives of European aristocracy and commercial interests was very much less than in the Crown Colonies farther south, at least until Massachusetts lost her charter. Furthermore, the population distributed itself in townships, where the people lived in the town and went into the fields

to farm. The community of interests within the town cut across occupational lines. There was much part-time farming and part-time manufacturing or business. Since many people were therefore part of both the rural and the urban occupational groups at the same time, the whole pattern tended to minimize both the differences and the antagonisms between those who earned a living by farming and those who earned one by trading or manufacturing. This township plan of living based on community of interests and the political democracy that developed through it fostered a sense of equality that was relatively little disturbed by class antagonisms.

In the middle Colonies, which were largely settled by the parceling out of large estates, the township plan never developed, and the county, an unwieldy social unit in those days of slow transportation, became the political unit. It was in these Colonies that the isolated farmstead which was to be the pattern on western homestead lands was first found. With isolated farmsteads rural-urban antagonism increased, because a sharp division of functions between the city and the country developed. The city seemed to exist as a parasite on the country.

In the South, where the plantation system developed side by side but in successful competition with the yeoman's subsistence homestead, the only function served by the city was as a marketing and transshipping point for the cash crops of the plantations. The city seemed only the agent of remote and somewhat parasitic commercial interests with whom the planters were often at odds. Agrarian liberalism was in the air, and the great plantation owners snatched it up as a rationalization of their own position. Thus, because it was somehow easy for the proprietors of vast estates to believe the praise of humble yeomen applied to themselves, the anomaly of a liberal gentry developed.

The Democratic Character of American Agrarianism

The United States has never had a peasant agriculture, and farm people in this country have never had the sense of inferiority and awkward rusticity of a European peasantry. There was, undoubtedly, a certain crudity of manners that the inevitable rawness and privation of the frontier engendered. And there is, indeed, much evidence that rural people were aware of the cultural inadequacies and the lack of refinement so frequent in their very young civilization and that they resented snobbish criticisms from the city and the seaboard. But that resentment did not spring from any feeling of innate inferiority. Rather, there developed among the small freehold farmers along the frontier a spirit of lusty democracy and social equality. Aristocracies of birth and wealth were left behind in the East. Along the line of westward expansion especially, everyone was close to both poverty and wealth. Wages were generally high in proportion to the cost of becoming a proprietor. Class lines did not exist, hardships were routine, and every man's hands were calloused. The resentments of these frontier agricultural people were directed principally against the lily fingers of the idle, the posturing of aristocrats, and the devious devices of those who lived by manipulation rather than by creative

labor. For themselves they knew that toil was preparation for security, and crudity the prelude to refinement. Probably no people ever built so many schools and churches on such a slender margin above the necessities of existence. Homespun was still a sign of virtue, but this did not mean that some day they would not wear silk.

There was a great deal of shifting back and forth between farming and town trades. The carpenter and the blacksmith probably had been farmers and might well become farmers again; the farmer down the road had perhaps worked for a while as a bootmaker. The traditional household practice of crafts that advancing technology was just then beginning to displace by factory industry made this possible. Few people, therefore, were ever far removed either from farming or from commerce and industry.

As settlement moved farther west into prairie lands, subsistence practices became difficult and even impossible, and farmers were forced into commercial production, with increasing dependency upon distant markets, intermediate middlemen, and transportation facilities. There was ordinarily very little local industry with which the agriculture and the farm people of a community could be economically linked and socially bound. The farmers of these regions therefore tended to identify themselves according to a vocational and economic grouping rather than by neighborhood or social classification.

Another factor that influenced the growth of attitudes and institutions in the agricultural West, where the predominant rural culture of this age was developed, was the fact that a large proportion of its pioneers and settlers were the disinherited of the older East. The rebellious suspicion felt by so many toward the East from which they had fled helped to direct hostility toward wealth and aristocracy and ease and polish, all of which long remained as symbols of the East.

THE VIRTUE OF LABOR

The famous French observer of American life, Alexis de Tocqueville, was impressed 15 years later by the fact that labor was so highly esteemed as an economic necessity that it became a social necessity and a moral virtue. There is nothing about this that seems very notable to us today, for it is a part of common American belief. But it looked new and strange to Europeans who were used to the aristocratic tradition that work is degrading.

> Among a democratic people, where there is no hereditary wealth, every man works to earn a living, or has worked, or is born of parents who have worked. The notion of labour is therefore presented to the mind on every side as the necessary, natural, and honest condition of human existence. Not only is labour not dishonourable among such a people, but it is held in honour: the prejudice is not against it, but in its favour. In the United States a wealthy man thinks that he owes it to public opinion to devote his leisure to some kind of industrial or commercial pursuit, or to public business. He would think himself in bad repute if he employed his life solely in living (*70, p. 162*).

Industry and thrift were considered cardinal virtues to a degree that was perhaps unprecedented in many previous centuries of Occidental history. There was no aristocracy on the frontier to establish

ease as a social distinction, and hard, grubbing toil was generally necessary for even the barest maintenance of life.

Gain without toil was considered unnatural, and reverence for labor was heightened by religious sanction taken from the Bible. Thus the Cultivator reminded its patrons in 1836 that "the Lord God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden, *to dress it and keep it;* and He further told him, 'in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, and thou shalt *till the ground* from whence thou art taken'" (*2*). The concept of the necessity and the honor of labor penetrated ideas of rearing the young, in whom the habits of industry should be inculcated from an early age. "There is no greater defect in educating children," declared the Farmer's Monthly Visitor in 1846, "than neglecting to accustom them to work. It is an evil that attaches mostly to large towns and cities" (*6*). Much of the literary effort of that day celebrated the honor and profit of labor. "Labor—An Ode," was the title of the following verses by George Bungay in the New England Farmer, 1857:

Toil swings the axe, and forests bow;
The seeds break out in radiant bloom;
Rich harvests smile behind the plow,
And cities cluster round the loom;
Where towering domes and tapering spires
Adorn the vale and crown the hill,
Stout Labor lights its beacon fires,
And plumes with smoke the forge and mill.

The monarch oak, the woodland's pride,
Whose trunk is seamed with lightning scars,
Toil launches on the restless tide,
And there unrolls the flag of stars;
The engine with its lungs of flame,
And ribs of brass and joints of steel,
From Labor's plastic fingers came,
With sobbing valve and whirring wheel.

Work Was Work in Town and Country Alike

Wherever the small freehold pattern prevailed, rural people tended strongly to identify themselves with all labor, whether strictly agricultural or not. The word "labor" referred to all creative work with the hands, and "laborer," though sometimes used specially to distinguish the unskilled worker from the "mechanic," was ordinarily understood to include the farmer. This was the early spirit of the agrarian liberalism that developed as the tide of westward movement pushed civilization beyond tidewater-plantation areas and the older coastal regions. It was perhaps the only popular and long-enduring indigenous liberalism that America has yet known. It was a spirit rankled by the privilege of wealth and birth, that saw right and justice always on the side of the poor and humble.[6]

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[6] See following verses:

Tell me not that he's a poor man,
That his dress is coarse and bare;
Tell me not his daily pittance
Is a workman's scanty fare.
Tell me not his birth is humble,
That his parentage is low;
Is he honest in his actions?
That is all I want to know.

Let it be a low, thatch'd hovel;
Let it be a clay-built cot;
Let it be a parish work-house—
In my eye it matters not.
And, if others will disown him
As inferior to their caste,
Let them do it—I befriend him
As a brother to the last (*13*).

Repeatedly, it was stated in farm journals that the hard-working, law-abiding poor man was "a thousand times more respectable than the wealthy idler, the educated spendthrift, the callous miser, or the fashionable fool"; and that "* * * the modest female, whether seamstress, book-folder, press tender, storekeeper, or even house servant," was "* * * infinitely more respectable than the extravagant wife * * * than the thoughtless votary of fashion, than the butterfly flirt" (*12*).

There is much significance in the fact that the agitation for agricultural education that developed during the 1830's included mechanical or industrial education as a matter of course. The desired establishments were frequently referred to by farmer spokesmen as "manual labor schools," to provide "industrial education"; and they were urged as a benefit to "the laboring classes," or in the interest of developing "educated labor." The frequent present-day combination of engineering and agricultural colleges is a historical vestige of this once prevailing community of interest between farmers and urban workers.

Agricultural journals gave sympathetic attention to the interests of urban crafts, and it is sometimes difficult to determine whether a periodical was an agricultural journal or a crafts and labor journal. This was particularly true in New England. The community of interest was sometimes evident even in the name, as in the case of the journal that for 10 years after 1848 was called The Plough, the Loom and the Anvil (subtitled, "An American Farmers' Magazine and Mechanics' Guide") until in 1858 it became simply the American Farmers' Magazine.

There was frequently an exultant optimism in the expressions of the nobility and accomplishments of labor. Those who with their own hands carved farms from the forest and with their own eyes saw the wilderness transformed into a peaceful and productive countryside, with roads and railroads and schools and flourishing towns, could appreciate labor's accomplishments and also believe in unending improvement and progress. The eighteenth-century doctrine of progress had taken root and flourished in America as in no other country in the world. The unequaled opportunity that America offered, the rapid expansion and growth, and the rise in material living standards were so evident that what had been a new and startling idea in early eighteenth-century Europe appeared in nineteenth-century America to be an eternal truth. There was a lusty pride in labor that was associated with the buoyant confidence in progress, for it was conceived that by the labors of the farmer and the mechanic the United States would be made into an ever-prosperous and ever-glorious land of the free.[7]

[7] The following verses were written for the Prairie Farmer in 1860:

The Farmers are coming, make room, make room,
The Farmers are coming, make room, make room,
They're felling our forests, enriching our lands,
Improvement is ever the work of their hands:
All hail! to the Farmer, our brave pioneer,
Whose praises resounding are heard far and near.
O! who is so noble and gen'rous as he,
In city, or village, or woodland, or lea?
The Farmer is coming, make room, make room,
The Farmer is coming, make room, make room,
The Farmer, our country's true, resolute friend,
To help, or to fight for, to bless, or defend!

* * *

[Footnote continued on p. 124.]

THE IDEA OF PROGRESS

The idea of progress was a basic element in the creed of early America, both rural and urban. It was not merely an opinion reached by calm deliberation. It had begun, indeed, as an intellectual doctrine but soon became an unreasoned basic attitude, an assumption that the very law of nature itself compelled man and society to go on improving indefinitely. It was, however, ordinarily considered that America was the peculiarly favored domain of progress. The idea of progress was implicit in all the thought and activity of the intellectual and scientific leadership of agriculture; the search for an improved agricultural technology assumed both the possibility and the desirability of such advance. "Machines for abridging human labour are especially desired in America," declared Dr. Nicholas Collin, Rector of the Swedish Churches in Pennsylvania, before the American Philosophical Society in 1789—

> as there can be no competition between them and the arms of industrious labour, while these have full employ on her extensive lands; which must be the case for ages. Agriculture has the first claim to the exertions of mechanical genius, as the principal source of national prosperity. * * * Among important desiderata we may place these—A machine for sowing broadcast * * * another for cutting drains * * * an apparatus for clearing new lands * * * so that the trees may be pulled out of the ground, cut in convenient pieces, and heaped; a better instrument for reaping than the common sickle, such for example as the cradling scythe of Northern Europe * * * (*45*).

The doctrine of technological progress, from being merely the idea of a few intellectuals, rapidly became a widely accepted popular assumption. The extent to which this was true is illustrated by an incident related by de Tocqueville:

> It can hardly be believed how many facts naturally flow from the philosophical theory of the indefinite perfectibility of man, or how strong an influence it exercises even on men who, living entirely for the purposes of action and not of thought, seem to conform their actions to it, without knowing anything about it. I accost an American sailor, and I inquire why the ships of his country are

[Footnote Continued from 123.]

> Mechanics are coming, make room, make room,
> Mechanics are coming, make room, make room,
> For labor is pleasure, and labor is health,
> Each better than honor, or wisdom, or wealth;
> O, shout! for the laboring man of our time,
> Who, 'neath his own fig tree and clustering vine,
> Can laugh at adversity's wild dashing waves,
> And count those who "live by their wits" among slaves!
> Brave Labor is coming, make room, make room,
> Brave Labor is coming, make room, make room,
> Our altars were made by the laborer free,
> Who toiled as he shouted for dear liberty!
>
> True Progress is coming, make room, make room,
> True Progress is coming, make room, make room,
> She comes to the West of our earliest dreams,
> Where cradled in beauty, broad lakes and clear streams,
> Where Science enchantment o'er loveth to fling,
> And Genius spreads broadly her radiant wing:
> Where Glory is only the beacon of life,
> And Peace is our refuge from carnage and strife.
> True Progress is coming, make room, make room,
> True Progress is coming, make room, make room.
> 'Tis found in the cottage, the palace, the hall,
> Watchword of the noble, the gifted—of all!

built so as to last but for a short time; he answers without hesitation that the art of navigation is every day making such rapid progress, that the finest vessel would become almost useless if it lasted beyond a certain number of years. In these words, which fell accidentally and on a particular subject from a man of rude attainments, I recognize the general and systematic idea upon which a great people directs all its concerns (*70, p. 34*).

The United States thus accepted broadly and popularly, at an early period, the idea of indefinite technological progress. In that youthful age, the United States was in fact unusually disposed to accord at least some welcome to almost any innovation, because she was herself an innovation inclined lustily to impatience with methods and traditions that had only age and custom to recommend them. It seems probable that the readiness to accept technological novelties developed more rapidly among some urban, industrial, and commercial groups than in the more remote rural areas. But the ever-present reform element of agricultural leadership was not surpassed by any in its zeal for progress and kept up a ceaseless and impatient agitation for improvement, regularly insisting that—

> The characteristic of the present day is *reformation* and general improvement in the agricultural department—in the sciences and arts—by general diffusion of agricultural and scientific knowledge and by *"elevation* and *refinement of intellect"* (*31*).

Rapid Development of Mechanical Devices

A distinction must be made between the adoption of new labor-saving mechanical devices and of new procedures of cultivation. American farmers were relatively quick to see the advantages of the former. Except for what they learned from the Indians, the American colonists employed agricultural implements and methods that were very little changed from those in common use in the days of ancient Rome. Then suddenly, in the space of half or three-quarters of a century, agricultural technology was improved vastly more than in the full space of the 2,000 previous years.

In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the very crude plows were made of wood according to rule-of-thumb ideas that varied greatly from one locality to the next. Metal points were in use in a few places. The restless and progressive spirit of the eighteenth century had, however, discovered the inefficiency of the wooden plow, particularly as an instrument for breaking sod and new land, and many inventive minds both in Europe and America were playing with the idea of a better plow made of iron. In 1793 Thomas Jefferson worked out on mathematical principles a formula for a metal moldboard of least resistance, which could have been used by local blacksmiths to make better plows, but wasn't. The first patent for a cast-iron plow was granted to Charles Newbold of New Jersey in 1797. Probably the first patent for steel and wrought-iron plows was granted in 1808. As the western lands opened up and there was increased need for strong plows for breaking prairie sod, it became a practice for farmers and local blacksmiths to face their plows with old saw blades. Finally in the 1830's steel plows became a common reality when John Lane, in 1833, and John Deere, in 1837, began their commercial manufacture. Soon, in all but a few remote places, the old wooden plow was a thing of the past.

In the first days of the Republic, grain and hay were still cut with a bare sickle. At some undetermined date in the last quarter of the eighteenth century the cradle for the scythe was first introduced into America and came into common use early in the nineteenth century. Although Cyrus McCormick began to work on the problem of inventing a grain reaper as early as 1809, the first serviceable machine was patented in 1831 by William Manning. Obed Hussey in 1833 and McCormick in 1834 obtained patents for reapers, which were gradually improved until by the time of the Civil War McCormick's much improved and very practical machine had come into wide use. The first patent for a portable threshing machine attachable to a reaper was taken out in 1837 by Hiram A. and John A. Pitts, but although this idea of the combine was in men's minds then, it did not become a practical reality until three-quarters of a century later, first in California and then in the Palouse. The grain binder made its appearance in the fifties, and the Marsh harvester was first patented in 1858.

Small grain was, of course, sown broadcast in the early days, and corn was planted by hand. George Washington had been among the many who experimented unsuccessfully with mechanical devices to replace broadcasting by hand. Finally, in the years after 1840, a practical seeder was evolved, and the grain drill soon became a common and working reality. A practical corn planter was patented in 1853 by George W. Brown, and a two-horse straddle-row cultivator was patented in 1856. Thus the ox-drawn hoe of the seventeenth-century vineyards of southern France that became Jethro Tull's "horse-hoe" in eighteenth-century England finally evolved toward the riding cultivator so familiar to latter-day Americans.

The cotton gin first patented by Eli Whitney in 1793 was rapidly improved and widely adopted, and it made possible the vast increase in cotton production from 4,000 bales in 1790 to 3,841,000 bales in 1860. Liebig's Organic Chemistry in Its Applications to Agriculture and Physiology (*63*) appeared in 1840 and soon became the basis for the new science of soil chemistry. The mechanical principles of the modern grain elevator were first employed by Joseph Dart in Buffalo, N. Y., in 1842; and grades of wheat were first indicated on grain elevator receipts in Chicago in 1857. In 1817 the Erie Canal was begun, and a 20-year era of canal building was ushered in that opened eastern and foreign markets to much of the western and frontier land. In 1829 Stephenson proved the practicability of railroads, and by 1860 30,000 miles of track had been constructed. The modern world of technology and industry and commerce was approachig at an accelerating pace.

Rural enthusiasm for mechanical progress was by no means confined solely to advances in agricultural technology. Farmer spokesmen expressed frequently their marveling approval of new industrial machinery. Thus in commenting upon a new power loom installed for making carpets in Massachusetts, the Farmer's Monthly Visitor in 1845 saw fit to prophesy that—

> in a few years hence, when the use of the power loom becomes general, we will be able to carpet every house in the United States and England, at one-half the price that it has heretofore cost! (*5*).

Only very occasionally did there appear in print a nostalgic protest against the march of machines like this lament in the Prairie Farmer in 1860:

> Patent right machines are fatal to poetry. * * * Singer's Sewing Machine that *never* sings is no compensation for the loss of the blue eyed girls that sewed and sang in the old homesteads. * * * Wooden harvesters do not sing harvest songs; iron mowers do not drink from cold springs, nor with Sancho Panza bless HIM who invented sleep. The poets and the prophets are a brotherhood, but the poets and the *profits* are strangers, forever.

Very generally, however, the articulate opinion of farm leaders and rural people welcomed mechanical progress with ever-increasing enthusiasm and growing faith in the future wonders that science would perform. The common attitude corresponded to that expressed in an address before the Illinois and Wisconsin Dairymen's Association in 1868:

> Up to within twenty-five years the farmer's life has been but little removed from serfdom. His many hardships conspired to make the farmer feel his inferiority, and rank his calling in the lowest scale of the professions. He now finds himself emerging from this slough; iron and wood are made to perform wonders, and brain is of more account on the farm than muscle. We are on the threshold of grand results in agriculture (*74*).

Resistance to "Book Farming"

Although labor-saving mechanical devices were generally welcomed and adopted relatively fast, nonmechanical technology encountered stubborn resistance. Agricultural science a century ago had in fact very little to offer aside from new machines, unless it was enthusiasm and faith, and for a long time labored under the disadvantage of the contemptuous label, "book farming." In the year the Cultivator was founded (1834), its editors received the following counsel from an early subscriber:

> I think in the *Cultivator* you ought to dwell continually on the importance of science to agriculture; I mean of all the applicable science the world has got. * * * We want to see the application of geological and chemical science to the different processes in agriculture (*1*).

That they needed the advice is questionable; that they followed it is certain. Book farming was advocated steadily by every agricultural journal of the day. But only a few farmers—generally the more prosperous ones—were ready to risk following the practices advocated in the name of science by agricultural societies and farm journals. For this fervent few, however, science held an appeal that was more than the lure of profit alone.

THE VOGUE OF NATURE STUDY

Avocational interest in science under the name of nature study was one of the great vogues of the day. Observation of nature of either a systematic or poetical kind was considered to be both intellectually and morally elevating. This vogue of nature study was a manifestation of some of the most influential and widely prevailing intellectual currents of the age. This was the age of Wordsworth, of Emerson

and Thoreau, of Darwin, and of Corot—of nature poems and nature studies and nature paintings and of monumental progress in natural science. As an amateur interest, nature study was inspired by a mixture of scientific rationalism and the romantic concept of the essential and divine goodness of nature. As such it expressed the moralizing ideals of physical science developed in the age before intricate specialization and professionalization took science away from the layman.

For those who went to school beyond the early grades, the pedagogy of that age saw in botany a study wherein both intellectual and moral development could be simultaneously pursued. Chemistry was much studied, but it was considered more severely practical; the biological sciences retained by far the greater amateur esteem. Nature-study clubs were formed among those not in school but with cultural aspirations. The farm journals regularly featured special articles on science—simplified versions of Liebig's Chemistry, special departments for spreading general scientific information, as, for instance, "Chemistry for the Million," a regular feature in the Plough, the Loom, and the Anvil in the fifties; and regular departments devoted to nature lore as, for example, "The Naturalist" column in the Country Gentleman in the sixties. Farmers were regularly urged to make their homes beautiful by planting flowers and ornamental shrubs, and to make their souls gracious by close observation of nature's practices. Typical of this is the advice of the Cultivator in 1842:

> The farmer * * * should remember that every tree, shrub and flower he cultivates, constitutes a new link of attachment to bind him to his home, and render that home more delightful. They multiply our means of enjoyment, they make additions to our stock of knowledge, they invite us to a more intimate communion with nature, and they prevent the concentration of the mind on wealth, and the narrow selfishness that is too often its attendant (*4*).

Although the vogue of nature study had its most obvious important effect in furthering the acceptance of science, it was related closely to many significant moral ideas. The idea gained wide adherence that, as the Prairie Farmer expressed it in 1850 (*9*), "A true lover of nature, and enlightened Horticulturist *cannot be a bad man.* Even those who cultivate trees and flowers as a trade, and who commence with narrow minds and dark souls, grow better and wiser men by the practice of their art."

BELIEF IN THE TRIUMPH OF THE GOOD

Logically essential to the doctrine of progress and to the prevalent ideas of the goodness of nature was the moral optimism of the age. This moral optimism amounted to a belief that the universe is morally ordered and that for that reason good is inherently stronger than evil and will therefore inevitably triumph. This faith had theological, philosophical, and literary foundations of great dignity and prestige. Like the idea of progress and the romantic attitudes toward nature, it developed with the intellectual element; also like them its essence was popularized during the nineteenth century. The phenomenal increase of literacy in that period accelerated to an unprecedented degree the rapidity with which intellectual traditions were transferred to the masses. Metaphysical speculation and aesthetic elaboration

were distilled into the earthy slogans of the people. "Behind every cloud there's a silver lining," "Right is bound to win out in the end," "Children (or dogs) are good judges of human nature," and "A true lover of nature (or of children, or of animals, or of music, or of good books) can't be an evil man" were popular applications of the intellectualized moral optimism of Berkeley, Rousseau, and Wordsworth.

RISING LAND VALUES AND BOOMER PSYCHOLOGY

But certain folk beliefs logically similar to intellectualized ideas seem to have developed independently. Perhaps the reason for this was that widely prevailing characteristics of the age in which they evolved determined the general nature of both. A case in point is that of boomer psychology—one of the most important of all the influences that have shaped the course of American agricultural development—which very obviously grew up out of the peculiar set of circumstances in which millions of Americans lived their everyday lives. Boomer psychology, although in a logical sense merely an extension of the idea of progress, was much less the product of any intellectual vogue than of the everyday experience of a people feverishly colonizing a rich and unexploited continent in an age of unprecedented world-wide commercial expansion.

This was the land of opportunity, and all Americans knew it. Here were land and independence and freedom from the old oppressions for all those who had the will and courage to make their own life. Here was the chance to find a home and happiness and security. And there was pride in being a citizen of this booming land.[8]

[8] This pioneer exultance was told in the Michigan Emigrant's Song, printed in the Detroit Courier in 1831, shortly after Michigan was admitted to the Union, later reprinted in the New England Farmer in 1871:

Come all ye Yankee Farmers,
Who'd like to change your lot,
Who've spunk enough to travel
Beyond your native spot,
And leave behind the village
Where Pa' and Ma' do stay,
Come follow me and settle
In *Michigania.*

I've hearn of your *Penobscot,*
Way down in parts of *Maine,*
Where timber grows in plenty,
But darn the bit of grain;
And I have hearn of *Quoddy,*
And your *Piscataqua,*
But these can't hold a candle
To *Michigania.*

* * * * * *

And there's your Massachusetts,
Once good enough, be sure;
But now she's always laying on
Taxation or manure;
She costs you pecks of trouble,
But de'il a peck can pay;
While all is scripture measure
In *Michigania.*

* * * * * *

What country ever growed up
So great in little time,
Just popping from the nurs'ry
Right into like its prime;
When *Uncle Sam* did wean her,
'Twas but the other day,
And now she's quite a Lady,
This *Michigania.*

* * * * * *

[Footnote continued on p. 130.]

From the earliest days of frontier expansion, sensational rises in land value were the repeated experience of pioneer farmers. Villages sprang up overnight and rapidly became thriving towns. Population grew, roads came in, river traffic opened up. Settlement, commercial development, and speculation increased land prices, sometimes phenomenally. Out of the experience of witnessing and being part of this expansion, the idea developed that land prices would always rise, population always increase, towns always grow larger. Farming in new regions therefore more often than not assumed a speculative nature founded upon a universal confidence in rising land values. Morris Birkbeck in 1817 described this phenomenon as follows:

> The merchant invests his profits, and the professional man his savings, in the purchase of uncultivated lands. The farmer, instead of completing the improvement of his present possessions, lays out all he can save in entering more land. In a district which is settling, this speculation is said to pay on the average, when managed with judgment, fifteen percent. Who then will submit to the toils of agriculture, further than bare necessity requires, for fifteen percent? Or who would loan his money, even at fifteen percent, when he can obtain that interest by investing it in land? (*39, p. 85*).

Birkbeck had been deeply impressed earlier by the sensational rises in land value in eastern Ohio:

> On entering the State of Ohio from Wheeling, we find a country beautiful and fertile, and affording to a plain, industrious and thriving population, all that nature has decreed for the comfort of man * * *. It is also fully appropriated and thickly settled; and land is worth from twenty to thirty dollars per acre. An advance of a thousand percent, in about ten years! * * * looking forward for the interest of our families * * * we must pass on, until we reach the country where good land is to be purchased at the Government price of two dollars per acre; and which, in return for a few temporary privations, increases in value in a similar ratio (*40, p. 50*).

And he told how towns sprang up out of what had been the wilderness:

> On any spot where a few settlers cluster together * * * some enterprising proprietor finds in his section what he deems a good scite for a town, he has it surveyed and laid out in lots, which he sells, or offers for sale by auction.
>
> The new town then assumes the name of its founder:—a store-keeper builds a little framed store, and sends for a few cases of goods; and then a tavern starts up, which becomes the residence of a doctor and a lawyer, and the boarding-house of the store-keeper, as well as the resort of the weary traveller: soon follow a blacksmith and other handicraftsmen in useful succession: a schoolmaster, who is also the minister of religion, becomes an important accession to this rising community. Thus the town proceeds, if it proceeds at all, with accumulating force, until it becomes the metropolis of the neighbourhood. Hundreds of these speculations may have failed, but hundreds prosper; and thus trade begins and thrives, as population grows around these lucky spots; imports and exports maintaining their just proportion. One year ago the neighbourhood of this very town of Princeton, was clad in "buckskin;" now the men appear at church in good blue cloth, and the women in fine calicoes and straw bonnets (*40, pp. 98–99*).

[Footnote continued from p. 129.]

Then come ye Yankee Farmers,
Who've mettle hearts like me,
And elbow-grease in plenty,
To bow the forest tree;
Come take a "Quarter Section,"
And I'll be bound you'll say,
This country takes the rag off,
This *Michigania*.

The third verse quoted has reference to the widespread belief of the day that fertilization of the soil was a confession of lack of fertility and an indication that it was time to move on to new, and therefore better, land. This attitude was undoubtedly the result of the presence of so much cheap land and of the lack of a long tradition of permanent agriculture such as existed in Europe.

De Tocqueville was among those who first noted the character that was given to American agriculture and rural life by the speculative and commercial optimism that pervaded the land. Coming from a country where land descended from father to son for generations and even centuries, he was in a position to be impressed by the impermanence that resulted from the boomer psychology and commercial enthusiasm that in agriculture was peculiar to America. His observations obviously did not apply to some parts of New England or to much of the older South where a landed aristocracy had taken root in the soil, but they were pertinent to most of the newer country.

> It seldom happens that an American farmer settles for good upon the land which he occupies: especially in the districts of the far west he brings land into tillage in order to sell it again, and not to farm it: he builds a farmhouse on the speculation, that, as the state of the country will soon be changed by the increase of population, a good price will be gotten for it (*70, p. 168*).

In some of the older regions, there was a pronounced rise in land values during the eighteenth century (*38, p. 70*). In the ante bellum South, land values were seldom consistently high, and in general rose and fell with business cycles; but settlement of new areas was there as everywhere accompanied by pronounced increases in land valuation (*55, p. 642 ff.*). Benjamin Horace Hibbard's History of Agriculture in Dane County, Wisconsin indicates that in many cases there the price of land tripled or quadrupled between 1845 and 1855, and doubled again in the next 10-year period (*59, p. 195 et passim*). In Iowa the average value of an acre of improved land increased from $6.09 in 1850, to $11.91 in 1860, to $20.21 in 1870; thence it rose more slowly, to $43.31 in 1900, before booming to $96 in 1910, $134 in 1915, and $255 in 1920 (*56, p. 4*). Land booms were frequently promoted by large owners of land and land speculators from the earliest times, and by canal and railroad interests later.

There were in those older days many manifestations of a boomer spirit quite modern in form. Thus a eulogist of the agricultural wonders of California reported to the Commissioner of Patents in 1851 that—

> On land owned and cultivated by Mr. James Williams, an onion grew to the enormous weight of twenty-one pounds. On this same land a turnip was grown which equalled exactly in size the top of a flour barrel. On land owned and cultivated by Thomas Fallen, a cabbage grew which measured, while growing, 13 feet 6 inches around its body * * *. At Stockton a turnip weighed one hundred pounds. In the latter city, at a dinner for twelve persons, of a single potato, larger than the size of an ordinary hat, all partook, leaving at least the half untouched (*75, p. 4*).

In the course of time it became the prevailing fashion to be "a booster, not a knocker." Such wide, unquestioning adherence was developed for the assumptions that unlimited growth and expansion and increased prosperity were the natural disposition of things that to suggest even mildly that such might not forever be the case meant in most communities to be branded as a dangerous eccentric. This extraordinary optimism was probably necessary to the great rapidity with which the second half of the continent was settled, civilized, and tied together. But it gave to American agriculture a speculative and impermanent character that was to be the cause of many later evils. It contributed heavily to an increase in farm capitalization

and debt load that could not be justified or liquidated unless the anticipated growth and expansion continued indefinitely—which turned out not to be the case.

The moral aspects of our agricultural traditions, deriving as they did from times of greater stability, implied an ideal of a permanent agriculture neither speculative nor highly commercialized. The little farm, well-tilled, highly sufficient unto itself, with no binding ties to the town and market place and untouched by the vagaries and passions of the changing world, was the assumption upon which the qualities of security, serenity, and independence were imputed to the agricultural life. This moral tradition, perpetuated in its idealized form principally by agricultural journals and writers and other farm leaders, has served by its persistence to develop a conflict in agricultural ideas because of its inconsistency with the speculative and commercial tendencies that were growing up in modern American agriculture.

THE VOGUE OF SELF-EDUCATION

The doctrine of progress meant more than confidence in technological progress alone; it meant, just as vitally, a faith in human perfectibility. Although many Americans were the disinherited of older lands, once in America they were not submissive; although they resented the trappings of wealth, the symbols of ease, and the pedantry of a learning they did not possess, they were not willing meekly to accept inferior status. They would not accept what they did not have as symbols of superiority, but they aspired to those things no less.

A significant proportion of farm people shared enthusiastically in the vogue of self-education and self-improvement that prevailed widely a century ago. This popular passion for self-education originated in New England, if it can be said to have had any geographical point of origin. It was a part of the flowering of New England culture and owed much to transcendentalism, the literary and philosophical movement inspired and led by Ralph Waldo Emerson. England shared and had even begun the self-education movement. But nowhere in the world did the idea of self-improvement arouse such popular enthusiasm as in the United States; and no other group in the United States was more receptive to the ideal of self-improvement than the farm people.

Probably the most famous instance of the self-education vogue is suggested by the picture in everyone's mind of the youthful Abraham Lincoln doing sums on a wooden shovel with a piece of charcoal by the flickering light from the fireplace. But to Lincoln's contemporaries, the most notable personification of the ideals of the self-improvement vogue in America in its early period was Elihu Burritt (1810–78), "the learned blacksmith." Burritt as a young man became an accomplished linguist and student of letters while working as a blacksmith in a Connecticut town. With a book propped beside the anvil and studying long hours by candlelight after the working day was ended, he learned all of the western European languages, delved into their literature, and in the end even wrote a Sanskrit grammar—the first to be written in this country. He exalted manual labor and gave impressive lectures on the subject of its dignity. He insisted that he

practiced such intellectual cultivation not as a means of rising above his station but rather to ennoble it, and that such intellectual activity was no more than befitting a working man's status. On these grounds he refused an offer of formal education at Harvard. He engaged in correspondence on a high intellectual plane with many leaders in American thought. In the 1840's his interests began to expand into social and humanitarian affairs, and he devoted himself in later life to furthering such causes as abolition, world peace, and freedom of immigration (*46*). Of such a character were the ideals of self-education and self-improvement set before rural Americans in the 1830's and 1840's.

The Cultivator carried on a constant campaign to educate farmers, not only in practical concerns immediately related to farming but also in matters concerning intellectual and moral development. The prospectus for volume 8 (1841) described the purposes for which the journal was established in the following terms:

> The Cultivator was established to improve and elevate the Agriculture of the country; to give a proper tone to the morals and mind of the farmer; to show him the dignity and importance of his profession; to store his mind with useful knowledge, and convince him that while all classes are and must be more or less dependent on each other, he alone of the whole can make any near approach to independence. If there is one thing more than another, which in this country gives a man superiority over his fellow men, it is knowledge. * * *

Readers of agricultural journals were advised on the merits of various English, Latin, and Greek grammars. Farm youths were urged to read ancient and modern histories, Good's Book of Nature, Dick's Christian Philosophy, Paley's Natural Theology, expositions of the Constitution, and works on political science and ethics, as well as to keep abreast of the news with a "good family newspaper." One of the most frequently repeated arguments was that "the laboring man, as regards the acquisition of knowledge, has almost as good advantages as the man whose whole employment is study—if he was but aware of the fact, and would improve his opportunities" (*47*).

Growth of Farmers' Clubs

In the course of time, reading and study for cultural ends—for the enrichment of life—was more and more urged for groups rather than for lone individuals. Lone study by candlelight was still suggested for those whose aim was to get ahead in the world. But for general intellectual improvement it was advised that families spend their evenings reading and discussing good books, or that they form neighborhood clubs for that purpose. During the Civil War, and especially in the years immediately following, neighborhood farmers' clubs sprang up in great numbers. The common purposes were to overcome the isolation which was, significantly, for the first time being widely regarded as a social handicap, and to cultivate the intellectual interests and capacities of rural people. Both the motives and the methods of these farmers' clubs are evident in an article describing how to organize and conduct them that was printed in both the Country Gentleman and the New England Farmer in 1871:

> The long evenings are now at hand, and the farmer, finding a little leisure after the labors of the day, looks about him for some means of pleasure and

amusement wherewith to occupy the time. He will find no more profitable way to spend an occasional evening than in the meetings of a wide-awake Farmers' Club. * * * Here he can in a measure obtain that Mental Culture which is so much neglected by those who labor day after day upon their farms.

* * * Mind needs contact with mind to rub it into activity * * *. These Farmers' Clubs then, are just what is needed to draw the farmers together, and to give them an opportunity to bring their minds in contact * * *.

The Exercises of the Club should be varied to suit the tastes of different members. Discussions upon familiar farm topics should generally be held each evening, and every member should take part in them. * * * Essays upon the subjects which are to be considered, may be prepared and read by those who have a taste for putting their thoughts in writing. It is a good practice to assign topics six months or a year before hand, so that those who are to prepare essays may have ample time to "read up" their subject, or to experiment upon it on their farms * * * (*54*).

It is more than mere coincidence that the growth of community farmers' clubs came in the same period with the first rapid development of the Patrons of Husbandry. The Granger movement grew out of the same common desires and aspirations and ministered to the same needs, and in many instances the formation of a local farmers' club turned out to be a preliminary to the establishment of a Grange affiliated with the national organization. Thus the impulse to enrich rural life proceeded according to the familiar sequence of individual effort first, then local group action, and finally national organization.

The vogue of self-education should not be confused with the contemporary craze for refinement. Once the worst hardships of pioneer life were overcome, or as soon as progress permitted some leisure, small-town people and many of the more prosperous farmers sought to cultivate refinement in manners and gracious accomplishments. The job of refinement was in the forties and fifties frequently considered the special duty of young ladies, who were encouraged to cultivate the arts of fancy needlework, music, and home decoration. The French language and literature were also fashionable; and there was emphasis upon delicacy and even upon a kind of anemic fragility of manners in imitation of the pallid heroines common to some of the extremes of literary romanticism. But among most farm people there was a wave of strong feeling against such forms of refinement. Farm journals and other spokesmen for farm people expressed much outraged indignation at the excesses of this vogue. The common opinion was that: "The piano and lace frame are good in their places; and so are ribbons, frills, and tinsel, but you cannot make a dinner of the former, nor a bed blanket of the latter." And the rural reaction to the young lady who was the end product of this urban vogue of refinement was well expressed in a salty satire on "The Modern Young Lady" in the Prairie Farmer in 1860. This young lady at 10 in the morning—

Slowly * * * rises from her couch, the while yawning, for being compelled to rise so horrid early. Languidly she gains her feet, and oh! what a vision of human perfection appears before us! Skinny, bony, sickly, hipless, thighless, formless, hairless, teethless. What a radiant belle! What an ideal beauty! What an inspiration for an aspiring poet! What a model for a sculptor! What a tempting bait for some hopeless bauch! The ceremony of enrobing commences. In goes the dentist's naturalization efforts; next the witching curls are fastened to her "classically molded head." Then the womanly proportions are properly adjusted; hoops, bustles, & c., follow in succession, then a profuse quantity of whitewash, together with a "permanent rose tint" is applied to a

sallow complexion; and lastly the "killing" wrapper is arranged on her systematical and matchless form. The modern young lady is complete. But this is not all. The modern young lady is accomplished. She is talented. She can entertain an army of masculines. She is well versed in literary topics. Praises Milton, because she knows its safe. Never speaks of Byron—thinks he is immodest. Knows there is a number in Greek called duol, a tense called aorist, and a grammatical verb called tuptoo. She converses in French, can make "killing eyes," and say "*je pense a toi.*" She can thump immoderately on the piano; can scream up to E flat pure, head voice; can carry her chest notes down to F. She sings any quantity of those "sweet things of Madame Stockhausen's, but always has an awful cold." She "launches into the world of fashion;" considers herself quite a belle; falls in love with a pair of mustaches; thinks said mustaches are the "sweetest she ever saw;" mustaches is flattered by her smiles; thinks her vastly entertaining and asks "pa;" "pa" consents, and the twain are made one. Mustaches rejoices in the effigy of his painted squaw, and modern young lady, finds too late, that it takes a fool to make a fool.

THE DRIVE TO DEMOCRATIZE EDUCATION

The genuine vogue of self-education and self-improvement among farmers and working people was in a sense only an incident of their long campaign for enhanced educational opportunity. No sooner had agricultural fairs and farm journals begun to democratize book farming and improve methods of cultivation than agitation was begun for the establishment of schools and colleges that would give formal education in agricultural science. The drive for special agricultural education was joined to the growing and wider demand for a broad extension of common-school and general education. Farm leaders and spokesmen of the agricultural interests had unanimously a profound faith in education and an eager hunger for it. Education of a cultural nature was considered essential to their ideal of the dignity of agriculture and necessary to the proud independence and civic responsibilities of the farmer in a free republic; education of a practical nature was essential to the adoption of the improved methods of cultivation that science was revealing. For more than a generation, until the passage of the Morrill Land Grant College Act of 1862, education was the most constant and prominent political cause advocated by farmers and their leaders.

The Lyceum movement was the first phase of the organized drive for education for farmers and working-class people. Its father was Josiah Holbrook (1788–1854), who after trying his hand at conducting an industrial school in 1819 and an agricultural school at Derby, Conn., in 1824, hit on the idea of the Lyceum in 1826. Lyceums rapidly became very popular, and by arousing intellectual interests among rural people served to promote a desire for wider opportunity for formal education. By 1831 Lyceums in approximately 900 towns served to bring distinguished and learned men as lecturers before farmer and small-town audiences (*71, pp. 31–32*).

In the 1820's, agricultural spokesmen confined themselves generally to demands for State financial aid to agricultural societies and fair associations, which were in their way devoted to the dissemination of information concerning better farming methods. New York in 1819, New Hampshire in 1820, and Georgia in 1837 established State boards of agriculture, and Massachusetts in 1819 and Ohio in 1839 gave financial assistance for the encouragement of agriculture through

the medium of State-wide organizations of agricultural societies. The principal purpose of these organizations and appropriations was in all cases educational.

Public-school education meanwhile was being rapidly extended in the cities. Boston led by including a high school in its city educational system in 1821. In the following years, public-school education was rapidly expanded in the principal cities and towns. The educational revival in the cities, with Horace Mann as its greatest leader, flourished through the twenties, thirties, forties, and fifties.

In general, the popular demand for a broadening of educational opportunities by the establishment of public schools grew out of the democratic ideals of the people and constituted a protest against the aristocratic practices and purposes that characterized most of the private schools of that day. Private schools were generally available only to the children of families of means, and their educational methods were designed to give class-conscious "gentlemen" a literary and linguistic polish. Thus the movement for a broadened educational system was led by progressives and reformers and was politically dependent upon the mass support of the poorer classes of people because of the consistent opposition of most wealthy and conservative groups. Education being a common cause of farmers in the country and working and poor people in the city, their forces were joined in the fight for it.

Agricultural leaders, agricultural societies, and agricultural journals carried on an unceasing campaign for education. Beginning in 1823 when Judge Jesse Buel introduced the first bill to establish an agricultural college in New York State, this agitation continued in a mounting crescendo. Many manual-labor schools, and agricultural schools and academies such as the Gardiner Lyceum at Gardiner, Maine, the Agricultural Seminary at Derby, Conn., and the Boston Asylum and Farm School were first established privately in response to the growing demand for popular education. Rensselaer Institute, Washington (now Trinity) College of Hartford, Conn., Bussey Institution of Roxbury, Mass., Amherst College, Farmers' College at College Hill, Ohio, and other private institutions quickly offered or featured studies especially intended for farmers and mechanics.

But the growing agitation for Government support of agricultural education, of which first Elkanah Watson and later Judge Buel were important leaders, was finally rewarded by the legal establishment in Michigan in 1837 of a State university as an integral part of the public-school system. Instruction in agriculture was specified in the act establishing the university as an essential part of the curriculum; but for some years the desire for agricultural instruction was not actually realized because of lack of funds. Finally, in 1855, an agricultural college was established in Michigan separate from the university, and students were admitted in 1857. In 1853, after a long struggle and many disappointments, the New York State Agricultural College was founded by legislative act. Maryland passed an act to establish and endow an agricultural college in the State of Maryland in 1856; and in the next year Pennsylvania gave $25,000 to match an equal sum raised by private subscription for the establishment

of an agricultural college on the site of the present Pennsylvania State College.

Finally the inadequacy of State financing led to Federal support through the Morrill Act of 1862. The extent to which the drive for agricultural and mechanical education was the common purpose of both farmers and urban working people, as well as the degree to which it was a reaction against the aristocratic temper of the prevailing forms of higher education, is indicated by the words of Jonathan Turner, of Illinois:

> The industrial class need a * * * system of *liberal education* for their own class, and adapted to their own pursuits; to create for them an INDUSTRIAL LITERATURE, adapted to their professional wants, to raise up for them *teachers* and *lecturers*, for subordinate institutes, and to elevate them, their pursuits, and their posterity to that relative position in human society for which God designed them (*61, p. 69*).

It is easily observable that by the time the agitation for formal agricultural education had grown to effective proportions it had acquired a strong tendency to emphasize practical ends and aims. Intellectual improvement for its own sake declined in importance, and the idea of training for vocational and professional efficiency gained in proportion.

Education as a Means of Personal Advancement

Many forces joined from the very outset to alter slowly yet fundamentally the ideals and motives of education and self-improvement. The ideal of intellectual cultivation for its own sake began to give way to utilitarian motives almost before it was fully established. It did not, of course, completely disappear; it is present even today. Yet the very urgency of describing attractively the benefits of self-education led to claims that personal advancement up the social and economic ladder was the purpose of education.

The regularly repeated argument of advocates of education and self-improvement was that great men were once poor boys who by hard work and discipline had made themselves great.[9] And there was repeated appeal to the established and very real idea of opportunity. Optimism, respect for industry and accomplishment, and hunger for wide esteem for the class of hard-working common men reshaped educational desires into aspiration for mundane success. This was expressed in the Country Gentleman in 1862 as follows:

> Hold on! don't give up; in our country no social prejudices prevail which prevent the humble dyer from becoming the learned and skillful chemist; no barriers exist which deprive those whom the chances of life have made rude and unlettered, from becoming shining lights in the world of science. Most great inventors have sprung from the ranks of the brave daily workers, and the field is still a wide one, expanding every day; therefore * * * improve your spare hours in mental culture, and reward is certain.

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[9] "*The greatest of men have been trained up to 'work with their hands.'* If there is an encouraging sentence in the English language, it is the above. God ordained that man should live by *'the sweat of his face.'* and intelligence can breathe and live only in a being of an active life. Aikenside, the author of 'The Pleasures of Imagination,' was a butcher until twenty-one, and first took to study from being confined in his room, by the fall of a cleaver. Marshal Ney was the son of a cooper; Roger Sherman, Allan Cunningham, and Gifford, were shoemakers; Sir William Herschell was a fifer boy; Franklin, a printer's devil; Ferguson, a shepherd; Ben Johnson [sic] was a bricklayer; James Monroe, the son of a bricklayer; General Knox was the son of a bookbinder; General Green, a blacksmith; General Morgan, a wagoner; Burns, a plough-boy; Bloomfield was a farmer; Frazier, a stone-cutter; Crabbe and Keats, apothecaries; Sir Wm. Blackstone was the son of a silk mercer, and a posthumous child" (*10*).

Implicit in the repeated opportunity stories of poor boys who rose to greatness was the moral that the object of self-improvement was advance in rank. And in general the earthy practicality of the people tended in the long run to give emphasis to ideals that fitted the real desires of everyday life. Psychologically, there is no reason to assume that any contradiction necessarily exists between such variant motives of self-education. And historically it is a fact that they not only could but did live side by side. But what began as a vogue of self-improvement almost entirely for the sake of cultural enrichment of life rapidly became a vogue of self-improvement in order to advance in station. The former never died out, but the latter in the course of time became predominant and contributed to, as well as shared in, the success motif that has colored so much American thought and American life.

The individualistic and success philosophy that motivated much of the agitation for formal education and self-education was revealed in the answer of the Prairie Farmer to a Canadian query regarding the proud and intelligent way in which Americans articulated their opinions.

> The secret is to be found in our Common Schools, Lyceums, and the modes of conducting political canvasses. It is the natural and necessary result, of the doctrine "every man for himself"—that is, his *elevation* or depression, socially or politically, depends entirely upon his own exertions (*36, p. 100*).

Considerable significance is to be attached to the identity and accomplishments of the men who were judged to be great and who were held up as examples to the young. In the period before the Civil War, writers, philosophers, scientists, inventors, and political and military figures predominated among those named as illustrious. Among those most frequently named were Benjamin Franklin, Jeremy Bentham, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Linnaeus, George Washington, Robert Burns, and William Cobbett. There was a wide and varying assortment of contemporary governors, senators, and scientists and inventors who had been born poor but through extraordinary effort had made themselves famous and great. Almost never, during this early period, was a financier, industrialist, or businessman so mentioned; but there was a growing tendency to think of attainment in terms of commercial criteria, and this was, in the course of time, to alter the specific ideals of success. It is to be noted that farming was never cited as the vocation of great and illustrious men; models of success were invariably others than farmers. This is significant because farm youth were urged simultaneously to prepare for success and yet to stay on the farm and ignore the false lure and illusory rewards of the city.

Farm youth was already beginning to crowd to the growing towns and cities, thereby arousing the protest that cityward migration has immemorially excited. But among the masses of older rural people, the greatest opportunity was still believed to exist in farming, partly because of eternally expected rises in land values and prices generally, and partly because of the abundance of cheap lands and the financial ease with which one could become a free-holding farmer.

DEMOCRACY AND SECURITY A CENTURY AGO

An aggressively democratic and proud spirit was abroad in the land, combined with a lusty optimism that embraced almost everything from confidence in the future growth of population to faith in the inherent natural goodness and infinite perfectibility of man and society. Although many people were acquiring small fortunes, in rural areas in the nonslave States there were few great inequalities of wealth. A large proportion of the young people moved on to the West or the South or to the city when they came of age; but among the older generation and among those who remained there was much warm neighborliness and an almost complete social equality. There was very little stratification of society. The hired man was as often as not a neighbor's boy who lived in the house, ate with the family, entertained in the parlor, married the boss's daughter, and later established his own farm farther west. The small town itself was in that age much more a part of the agricultural countryside than it was to be later. The storekeeper, the blacksmith, the school teacher, the shoemaker, and the preacher were all farmers in spirit. Their habits of language, patterns of amusement, social usages, and everyday concerns not only were tied to the agricultural life of the community but were actually its product. Family ties were close, kinship meant much, and the family was an economic unit that could if need be face away from depression and survive adversity. The farm home was a Gibraltar of security that without question or faltering harbored the aged and fostered the young until they were ready to seek greater opportunities. Life might be hard and crude, but it was secure. There was nothing in the social code that forced a man to lose his self-respect because of poverty, for no one was far from hardship, and none had excess of ease; and when opportunity was not at hand, it could be found just over the horizon.

Such must be our general picture of farm life a century ago. Just as it does not refer closely to any specific locality, being a generalized picture, neither can it be tied down closely in time. Then, as now and always, society was dynamic and varied, no two years exactly the same, no two places exactly alike. Both the material facts of life and the psychology of men were undergoing continuous alteration. And the very forces and spirit that gave that period its most striking features were destined as they developed to change profoundly the character of agriculture and of rural life.

FORCES OF CHANGE: COMMERCIALIZATION, URBANIZATION, AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCE

The principal alterations in the pattern of agricultural life that have come during the past century may be summarized under the titles of commercialization, urbanization, and technological advance. The forces underlying these changes were present, and in varying degrees operative, a hundred years or more ago; but their total effect upon the everyday life of rural people was by no means then what it later became. Adjustment of the institutions, customs, and attitudes of a people to the slow intrusion of new factors is necessarily a gradual

process. Even revolution cannot effect social change any faster than people themselves change; and changes in people living together in society must be measured not in months or years but in terms of generations. Furthermore, the new factors and forces that have been the roots of change did not come all at once and remain constant thereafter; rather, they have been continually insinuated into the total circumstance, in various forms and in varying degrees at different times. There is no present end to them, nor is there ever likely to be. And the social adaptation to one new factor alters the adaptation to the next. Thus there has been a complex and accumulating crescendo that does not even yet seem to have reached the climax of the long sequence of change that began a century or more ago.

The most profound differences between rural life today and a century ago do not in any case consist intrinsically in an increased commercialization, or in a more advanced technology, or in a wider adoption of material things from the city. Many farms then sold as high a proportion of their products as do many commercial farms today. There were farms then that had as much labor-saving equipment as do many farms in this more modern mechanical age. The most profound changes in farm life—those that have had the greatest effect upon the destinies, the course of daily life, and the happiness or unhappiness of farm people—have not been the changes in material things themselves but those involved in the gradual alteration of habits, customs, institutions, and ideas that has constituted the social or cultural adaptation to material change.

The three kinds of change named above—commercialization, urbanization, and technological advance—are by no means intended as mutually exclusive. They are related and interdependent; there could not have been one without the others.

NEW ECONOMIC DEMANDS UPON AGRICULTURE

The extension of industrial technology, the growth of urban markets, the increase of transportation facilities, the general rise in the standard of living—all these and related things have exerted tremendous pressure upon the farmer to become a cog in a vast and infinitely complex economic machine. Urban industry has removed from the farm one by one the industrial functions that once were performed there. The farmer who once wore homespun from his own sheep now wears denim from Oshkosh and cotton shirts from Troy. Soap making is gone; and not one of a thousand farmers who grow wheat eats his own grain. Few farmers build their own houses; and their houses are not lighted with home-made candles or tallow wicks but with kerosene or electricity. Ordinarily they do not sell or barter a variety of produce for the use of nearby townfolk; their customers are 100 or 1,000 or 3,000 miles away.

Commercialization and specialization have been the necessary complements in agriculture to the factory system and mass production in industry. In the space of 60 years, between 1869 and 1929, the annual total of manufactured products turned out by American industries grew in value from about 3⅓ billion dollars to about 70 billions. During this same period, the number of those gainfully

employed in agriculture increased slowly from about 6½ to 10¼ millions, while nonagricultural employment quadrupled—from 12 to 48 millions. Vast urban accumulations grew up. In 1870 only a fifth of our people lived in places of 8,000 or more population; but in 1930 roughly half—over 60 millions—were residents of such places. And only a quarter of our people are now on the farm. All this has meant that agriculture must be commercialized, for in no other way could the urban and industrial masses be fed and clothed. It has also involved specialization, to which heavy advantages frequently accrue in production for the market. The rising standard of urban living has had the same commercializing effect as the growth of urban population. The growing demand for fresh fruits and vegetables in winter and the increasing substitution of delicacies for breadstuffs and heavier foods have tended to place a premium upon highly specialized production for special urban markets.

American agriculture was called upon, moreover, to supply a European market as well as a growing domestic demand. In the Civil War period and after, this Nation was still very young financially and industrially. There were few American manufactures with which to pay for the European goods sold in this country. It was largely American agriculture that paid this bill by vast exports of food and fiber for the crowded industrial peoples of Europe.

In the fiscal year 1850–51 total agricultural exports amounted to $146,717,000; from this they climbed gradually to a record figure of $260,280,000 in 1859-60. Cotton was then the single item accounting for most of the total. But after the Civil War, when farm products sold abroad came more and more to include a large quantity of breadstuffs, meats, and fruits, agricultural exports climbed to $296,962,000 in 1869–70, to $694,315,000 in 1879-80, fell back to $634,856,000 in 1889–90, and climbed again to $844,617,000 in 1899–1900. The slight rise to $869,244,000 in 1909–10 was merely a prelude to the tremendous World War expansion that skyrocketed the figure to $3,849,663,000 in 1919–20. During the 1920's, our agricultural exports regularly totaled between $1,500,000,000 and somewhat over $2,000,000,000.

The effect of the growth suggested by these figures was to increase vastly the involvement of American agriculture in a commercialized, specialized, interdependent world economy. American grain and meat production in the latter half of the nineteenth century became a cog in the international economic machine, just as tobacco production had become in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and cotton production in the early nineteenth. Thus the dominant American crops—tobacco and cotton, corn, pork, and wheat—became the special products of an agricultural plant geared to the needs of an international and interdependent economy of regional and national specialization.

Without this vast expansion of urban and industrial markets for farm products in both America and Europe the agricultural settlement of our grain-producing areas could neither have proceeded with the same speed nor have developed the same kind of farm economy. It would have had to depend on very limited local markets and would have been forced into diversification rather than specialization, subsistence practices rather than commercial dependency. Thus there

has been an irresistible impulse toward specialization and commercialization in American agriculture that was generated by forces as remote and impersonal as population trends, the rising standard of living, and changes in the national economy not only of this but of other countries. Involuntarily, and by dint of circumstances, the farmer has lost much of his old-time independence and has found himself tied to the market, to industry, and to the city.

Self-Sufficiency Gives Way to Interdependence

During the colonial period, the policy of the British Government to discourage manufactures in the Colonies had fostered the development of home industries in the northern and middle Colonies. Both cash and cash crops were scarce. During the 1750's and 1760's, especially after the passage of the Stamp Act, spinning, weaving, knitting, and other household manufacturing became very common. A list of domestic staples made up in 1753 includes more than 160 different articles (*73, pp. 188–189*). In some cases products were not finished in the home. Frequently the spinning was done at home and the weaving by professionals. Shoemaking was sometimes done in shops or by itinerant shoemakers instead of in the home.

It was upon such self-sufficiency that the traditional independence of the farm family was based. Equipped by habit and skill to supply its own needs for food, shelter, and clothing, the farm family could if necessary face away from the world and live completely and even happily upon the products of its own making. But in proportion as industries were transferred from the farm and home into the shop or factory and as rural people began to acquire new tastes for urban products and luxuries their independence was lost.

The shoemaking industry seems to have been among the first to pass into the shop stage, while the textile industry, generally speaking, was one of the last. The manufacture of such items as maple sirup and sugar, furniture, soap, and knit goods and the processing of various foodstuffs remained in the home after other tasks had passed to the factory. Between 1810 and 1840 industry was rapidly removed from the home to the factory. In this period, except in the most remote frontiers, farm families largely ceased to manufacture their own textiles and clothing. Grist-mills, flour mills, and sawmills became common and grew larger as they served increasingly wide areas.

In addition to the loss of home industry, which necessitated cash outlay for products previously supplied right on the farm, new needs were developed. In the Civil War period the sewing machine, based on Howe's patent of 1846 and Singer's patent of 1851, was coming into common use on the finer textiles that were issuing in increasing quantities from the looms of manufacturing towns. At about the same time kerosene began to be used widely for better lighting, and this too increased the need for cash outlay. There were to come telephones (in 1930, 34 percent of all farms reported telephones), electricity, modern plumbing, automobiles (in 1930, 58 percent of all farmers reported automobiles). Many farm families were destined in the first third of the twentieth century to give up home butchering and baking and buy all their meat from the butcher and all their

bread from the grocer or baker. Social prestige came more and more to be attached to the possession of various products that were supplied by industry and could be obtained only by cash outlay. Most of these changes and innovations have resulted in a higher standard of living, but they have also involved the surrender of economic independence.

THE INFLUENCE OF FARM BOOKKEEPING

Ever since Arthur Young first used cost accounting as a check for his experiments in England in the late eighteenth century, farm bookkeeping has been advocated by agricultural improvers. At first, the advice was ordinarily in such general terms as: "A clear, precise, and accurate system of book-keeping is an essential feature in an advantageous and well-arranged agricultural undertaking" (*69, p. 106*). But as time passed, the merchant was increasingly appealed to as a model in such matters. Thus the Monthly Journal of Agriculture in 1847 scolded a farmer who was inclined to rule-of-thumb systems of valuation:

> Does any one believe that a merchant or manufacturer, interested in a matter connected with his business to the amount of the value to the farmer of any one of these items, would rest until he had ascertained precisely how it bears on his *balance sheet*? (*7*).

In none of their efforts at agricultural improvement have the reformers and leaders of agriculture been more persistent or seemed in the end to have had greater influence than in their drive to enhance the commercial elements of farming practices.

After the Civil War the drive was intensified to induce farmers to think of their farms as a business and of themselves as businessmen. This meant the keeping of books, counting of costs, and determination of farm procedures on the basis of calculated commercial profits. In this vein the Southern Cultivator and Dixie Farmer preached in 1887:

> The time has come when the farmer must be a business man as well as an agriculturist. * * * He will have to keep farm accounts, know how much he spends, what his crops cost him, and how much the profit foots up.

It was not agricultural journalism alone that advocated the adoption of bookkeeping methods in farming. When the science of farm management developed, it was based crucially upon cost accounting and calculations of market values. And as agricultural education expanded, the teachings of farm management were increasingly disseminated, first through agricultural colleges and later through agricultural instruction in rural high schools. The direction of this instruction was always toward commercialized agriculture, with emphasis on cost accounting in imitation of urban business practices. Thus a high-school text in farm management printed in 1914 declared:

> Farmers are often criticized because they do not "keep books." In the criticism they are compared with the merchant and it is pointed out that the business man keeps books and knows just where he stands. * * * No merchant could long stay in business without some system of accounting to show his debits and credits.
>
> *Farm records desirable.* Farm records are just as desirable for the farmer as business accounts are for the merchant (*41, p. 177*).

During the past generation farm bookkeeping and cost accounting have been among the principal reforms advocated by various branches of the Department of Agriculture, modern farm organizations, and State agricultural colleges and extension services. When the American Council of Agriculture and the Committee of Twenty-two met in Des Moines in the summer of 1926, they agreed upon a calculation of annual operating costs of an average 160-acre Iowa farm that included such items as $1,184 interest on value of the land; $1,800 for "operator's salary"; $387 for depreciation on buildings, fences, tile, and water system; $315.56 for depreciation on machinery; $390 for hired labor; and $90.19 for fire and hail insurance. The total annual operating cost of this average 160-acre farm was estimated at $5,601.44 (*53*).

One of the most significant features of calculations of operating cost is the inclusion of such items as interest on land and operating capital, and appraisals of the monetary value of the farmer's own labor. The idea that the farm is an investment on which the farmer should expect to draw interest above and beyond the direct reward for his labor or that the farmer should make a monetary calculation of the value of his labor is an application of principles entirely harmonious with the modern commercial world of the city and industry, but it is a radical departure from the older agrarianism. The emphasis upon a paper concept of ownership, as opposed to a use concept, is obvious; and the remoteness from earlier attitudes which identified the farm as a home providing an opportunity for the production of the necessities of life by the sweat of the brow, where obstacles were natural rather than social, can hardly be exaggerated.

THE FARMER BECOMES A BUSINESSMAN

In spite of all the traditional hostility of rural people to the indirectness of urban economics, most changes in management that have been consciously effected have been sought under the slogan of urban economic efficiency. The farmer was repeatedly told that he was a businessman and that farming was a business. Upon such grounds and in the belief that this was the direction of progress the farmer was urged to specialize, even at the cost of forsaking time-honored subsistence practices. Thus under the progressive slogan, "How we have all advanced," the Prairie Farmer argued in 1868:

> The old rule that a farmer should produce all that he required, and that the surplus represented his gains, is part of the past. Agriculture, like all other business, is better for its subdivisions, each one growing that which is best suited to his soil, skill, climate, and market, and with its proceeds purchase his other needs (*15*).

A prominent agricultural educator and leader who for a generation has been one of the most distinguished spokesmen for modern trends in farm management and progress expressed very well the new point of view in an article written for the Cornell Countryman in 1904:

> Under pioneer conditions the object in agriculture was simply one of maintenance. The problem then, even though strenuous, was yet a simple one. To sow, to bestow a minimum of cultivation, and to harvest, all without regard to either the economy of production or its effects upon fertility—this indeed was simple farming. The only question at the end of the year was whether enough had been produced to last the family and their animals until another year.

> Now the object of farming is not primarily to make a living, but it is to make money. To this end it is to be conducted upon the same business basis as any other producing industry. No matter what the yield, it must have been produced at a profit or the farmer is not making money; again, no matter what the profits, the fertility of the land must not be allowed to run down or the capital stock will depreciate and the business will evaporate and come to naught even under conditions of apparent success (*48*).

By developing along such lines American agriculture increased vastly its cash income. But on the other side of the ledger its cash outgo was also increased. By 1929 American farmers paid out annually nearly a billion dollars for feed, over a quarter billion for fertilizer, nearly a billion for labor, nearly three-quarters of a billion for implements and machinery, and nearly fifty million dollars for electricity and power to power companies, exclusive of home generating outfits.

Much of the changed character of the farmer in this age has come about as the result of a long and persistent effort to identify farming directly with business and the farmer with businessmen. Increasing emphasis was given to the merchandizing aspect of farming. In an article entitled "The Farmer as a Merchant," this typical counsel was given in 1887:

> Given farms and farmers of equal productive power, the one who sells best will have the best success. The work of farming is only half done when the crop is made out of the ground; sometimes the biggest half is in making the money out of the crop. This branch of farm business needs cultivating; this (the merchant) side of the farmer needs development. Watch and study the markets, and the ways of the marketmen, and dealers in all kinds of goods, and learn the art of "selling well" (*22*).

When agricultural colleges began to carry their work to farmers through farmers' weeks, institutes, and so on, they too preached the ideal of the businessman. The Cornell Countryman announced in 1903 that the Farmers' Institute, held at the agricultural college there, was "a business meeting for business men * * *" (*24*).

In spite of all this, the most familiar stereotype of the farmer continued to be the ancient rubber stamp of the hayseed. Even in farm journals, the tradition remained so strong that cartoon abstractions of the farmer were generally of the hayseed type. Aware of this, the Country Gentleman from July to December of 1921 ran a series of cartoons and comments by nationally prominent cartoonists on the subject "What the Farmer Really Looks Like." Unanimously they agreed that the hayseed abstraction was wholly in error and that the farmer was essentially as modern and as much a businessman as anyone else.

CHANGED ATTITUDES TOWARD LABOR

One of the most significant phases of the long trend toward the identification of farmers with businessmen has been an almost complete reversal in attitudes toward labor. Whereas a century ago farmers generally identified themselves as of the working class and did not ordinarily distinguish themselves from other groups of workers, they have in the course of time acquired an employer consciousness and have developed a strong inclination to regard those who work for wages as of a different class, with other and even hostile interests.

In the period when farmers identified themselves so closely with

urban labor, a significant proportion of that labor was still of the pattern of the independent craftsman who owned his tools and shop and sold his product or his services directly to the consumer. A good deal of the time he came closer to being a small businessman than a wage worker in the modern sense. Independent craftsmen of this sort had much in common with farmers that was lost when they became mere factory wage hands.

During the past century, however, urban workers have been losing both economic independence and social status; and farm people, though losing economic independence, have continued to be proprietors in a world in which proprietors are relatively less common than before. Their living standards in terms of industrial products have been rising, and the social status of the more prosperous class of farmers has been greatly improved. A very real differentiation in economic and social position has thus developed between segments of society that once were united in interests and outlook.

Rural Opposition to Organized Industrial Labor

Farmers appear never to have been in a position to sympathize generally with organized industrial labor. So long as urban workers looked like independent craftsmen, their situation could be regarded sympathetically through symbols familiar to the farmer. Thus when in 1851 a group of New England workmen banded together to start a factory of their own, there was sufficient appeal to the farmer to win enthusiastic approval from the agricultural press under the slogan, "Labor is capital" (*11*). But by the time trade unions of a modern character began to develop, the farmer was conscious of himself both as an employer and as a commercial proprietor and was already partly converted to the association of virtue with economic status. Therefore, in spite of his continuing antipathy to trusts and great capital accumulations, he was not prepared to look kindly upon the outlandish innovation of militant unions or the violence incidental to strikes. And labor unions appeared as a companion monster of monopoly, both of which were set to prey upon the farmer. "While labor and capital strive to adjust their differences, the farmer peaceably grows the crops to feed both," was the typical comment of the Farm Journal in 1886 (*20*). At times there was a readiness to believe that capital and labor acted in collusion. Thus the Orange Judd Farmer expressed the opinion in 1903 that:

> Labor and capital engaged in the manufacture of window glass have apparently united to prevent any others going into the business. By this plan manufacturers expect to absolutely monopolize production and shove up prices at will, and under these circumstances they agree to give their help an increase in wages * * *. The farmer feeds them all, and when he gets tired of being robbed by such combinations, he will strike back.

Much of the trouble came from the fact that higher pay and shorter hour agitation by labor unions sometimes offended the rural mind, which out of its own experience had acquired a deep respect for long hours of hard work for humble rewards. The enforced dependence of the urban wage worker has never been sympathetically comprehensible to the farmer with his traditions of independence and individualism. In considering industrial disputes, country people have

tended to look upon work as a moral duty, to regard insistence upon conditions and terms of labor as a partial abrogation of that moral duty, and to project their own moral and nonexploitative outlook into the industrial situation. The milder form of this agrarian attitude is suggested by a statement written 30 years ago by L. H. Bailey, one of the grand old men of American agriculture:

> It is doubtful if city industrialism is developing the best type of working-men, considered from the point of view of society. I am glad of all organizations of men and women, whether working-men or not. But it seems to me that the emphasis in some of the organizations has been wrongly placed. It has too often been placed on rights rather than on duties. No person and no people ever developed by mere insistence on their rights. It is responsibility that develops them. The working-man owes responsibility to his employer and to society; and so long as the present organization of society continues he cannot be an effective member of society unless he has the interest of his employer constantly in mind (*37, pp. 139–140*).

The rural hostility toward labor unions has been so well appreciated by some agents of industrial interests that upon occasion farmer groups and representatives have been easily maneuvered into a front position of opposition to labor causes. An example of this was the case of the agitation for repeal of the Adamson eight-hour law about the time of the National Agricultural Conference in Washington in January 1922. When expenditures for the relief of urban unemployed became an issue in recent years, the cleavage between agricultural and labor interests in the rural mind was emphasized still further. Farm people, still clinging to ideals of thrift and industry, and as their own bosses conscious of the ever-present work to be done on their farms, tended to associate all unemployment with the idleness of laziness and to regard huge relief expenditures as prodigal waste.

The Widening Gap Between Proprietors and Hired Hands

Just as, in the course of a century, a social cleavage has developed separating farm people from urban working people, during the same period there has also been a strong tendency toward stratification within rural society, a widening gap between proprietors of farms and those who do farm work for wages. Until a half century or so ago there had not been in the North and West any widely prevailing class distinctions between operators and hired hands. The individual farm proprietor had as likely as not been a hired hand himself at one time; the rungs of the agricultural ladder were still in place, and the hired man likewise would probably be an owner in the course of time. They were social if not economic equals because what one was, the other had been or would be. Furthermore, the tendency of the freehold farmer to identify himself with the under-dog element of society endured in many applications until the collapse of the agrarian revolt in the Populist defeat of 1896. And as long as this attitude endured, the farmer could not with complete consistency separate himself from those who labored hard and honestly with their hands.

But such attitudes and the customs expressing such attitudes in everyday living were due in the course of time to change profoundly as the farmer became more and more a businessman—yet a businessman working under peculiar disadvantages.

All of the agrarian unrest of the post-Civil War period amounted in

sum to a protest against the primary dislocation caused by the impact of the new commercialism and industrialism. The frequent statement that it was the farmer as well as the South that lost the Civil War contains an element of important truth. For the Civil War confirmed the protectionist policies of the industrial Northeast and left the farmer no alternative but to buy in a protected, expensive market while having to sell in a cheap world market. With this initial disadvantage, he was forced increasingly by the march of mechanization and rising land prices into ever higher capital investment; and the increasing desire that spread to every hamlet in the land for more of the new products of industrial specialization placed a multitude of new demands upon him. Both factors increased the need for cash, and owing to the farmer's economic disadvantage, both resulted in a growing rural debt load. And always the farmer labored under disadvantages that prevented him from receiving a full share either of his own increased production or of the industrial goods that the improved technology of urban industry made possible. Farm living standards rose, but they did not rise in proportion to the farmer's increased efficiency or as rapidly as those of the urban middle class whose tastes and standards were increasingly important as models for rural emulation.

The farmer was becoming a businessman, but he was doing so under a great disadvantage. The main advantages were beginning to accrue to large-scale organization, and the farmer as a lone individual had to pay tribute. Not only did he get low prices for his products, but he frequently paid excessive freight charges to get his stuff to market because others could combine where he could not. Trusts and monopolies of various kinds upon occasion overcharged him exorbitantly. He bought stocks and bonds to secure market transportation that often failed to materialize. And when he sought redress for grievances, he frequently was thwarted by a wall of corporation legalisms.

He became a small, individual businessman just as the economic world began to be dominated by great and corporate businesses. He might have tried to return to the practices and ideals of an earlier agricultural life, but that was impossible. He was already a cog in the modern economic machine and had to turn as the adjacent cogwheel turned him. He himself wanted modern things; he was in debt; and there was no alternative to muddling through.

Because he was in debt, he participated in the Greenback movement, distrusted the "hard-money" men, and yielded to the lure of 16-to-1. Because distribution by middlemen was generally devious and frequently expensive and was always suspect to traditional agrarian ideals of directness and because he had to pay dearly for his credit, he naturally favored crop-credit and storage schemes such as the Sub-Treasury Plan. Because of the prices he had to pay and because he was still a consistent go-it-alone individualist, trusts and monopolies loomed like monsters.

Although he was the under dog in the struggle against great combinations of industry and finance, the farmer had assimilated the ideas and ideals of opportunity and business success to the extent that he found it just as impossible to join forces with impecunious wage labor below as to sympathize with great accumulations of capital above. And thus, after the great Populist disappointment of 1896, he was

heartened by the business revival that followed and recovered courage to face forward again on the path of the new commercialism. It should already have been clear that farmers of the dominant group, from having been proud and rebellious under dogs, were destined, after another brief flurry or two of rebelliousness, to become essentially defenders of the state of things as they are, or even of the state of things as they used to be.

This change in attitudes had been helped along by the increasing awareness among farmers of their own commercial proprietary interests, by the decline of economic self-sufficiency within family units, and by the discovery that regionally and by occupation farm proprietors had common commercial interests generally distinct from all others. The increasing acceptance of commercial ideals, the aspiration for higher material living standards, the faith in economic opportunity, the conversion of the self-improvement vogue into the success idea, and the moral optimism that believed virtue is inevitably rewarded, all combined to foster a rebirth of the Calvinistic notion that the Lord reveals His predilections by the bestowal of mundane favors. Thus the way was slowly prepared for a gradual subscription to the idea that right is the companion of wealth and station rather than of humble poverty, that success is a reward of virtue and failure the penalty of vice.

This change did not come quickly, nor has it ever been logically complete. But in many applications, this realinement of the virtues and the vices proceeded rapidly enough to make typical by the eighties the basic sentiments suggested in the following opinion of the Ohio Practical Farmer in 1885 (*19*): "Here are two grand divisions of society—the honorable and useful, and the poor, the vicious and criminal." Log-cabin birth was long considered a desirable attribute of public men—from 1840 on, practically a prerequisite to Presidential aspiration—because it signified sympathy for the humble; in the course of time it was increasingly considered as proof of having risen. Democratic sentiment thus began to shift from sympathy for the lower stratum to approval of the individual who rose above it. Basic attitudes thus tended to shift from resentment at the existence of privileged social strata toward a belief that social stratification was natural and that moral qualities were somehow correlated with economic levels.

This change has been related to the changing status of the hired man. The increased flow of immigration in the middle of the nineteenth century provided an incident for the first expression of altering attitudes toward hired help. Many of the more indigent newcomers went to work as hired hands and servants, and in many cases much of the hostility toward the strange ways of foreigners was directed toward the ranks they filled. Preceding the discovery by the farmer that he had a labor problem was a period of growing complaint at the supposedly declining quality of hired men and hired girls frequently attributed to their European origin and manners. The neighbor boy and the neighbor girl who had hired out were reported to be supplanted by "a distinct caste," "an inferior class" of foreigners whose incompetence, vice, and ignorance had a "tendency to degrade labor." And the frequent warning was repeated that—

While Cincinnatus held the plow, the cultivation of the soil was an honorable employment. But when the prisoners * * * were compelled to hold the plow, the cultivation of the earth became too degrading an employment for the Roman solider or citizen (*35*).

During and after the Civil War the rapid increase in the production of cash crops, particularly in the opening prairie lands where old-fashioned subsistence was impossible, made more emphatic the need for extra labor during busy seasons of the year. Partly as a result of this, the western farm proprietors began upon occasion to complain that the very effectiveness of the agricultural ladder increased their labor difficulties. Thus a subscriber of the Kansas Farmer complained in 1870 that—

Good farm labor is very scarce, from the fact that as soon as young men get a little ahead, in this country of cheap lands, they make arrangements to secure a farm of their own, marry the girl of their choice, and settle down to a staid and quiet life. This is all well enough, but the fact remains that the farmer needs more and better labor, and the question arises how shall he obtain it (*16*).

Hired labor has in fact become a very important consideration to agriculture generally and a personal concern to a substantial proportion of farmers. By 1929, according to census figures, there were over 2,600,000 farmers (nearly 42 percent of the total) who employed hired labor, paying a total cash labor bill in that year of nearly a billion dollars.

In addition to the conditions and facts that tended to place the farmer in the ranks of employers, the influence of farm journals and agricultural-reform agencies of all kinds was in the direction of making the farmer conscious of his status as a real or potential employer with interests different from those who worked on the farm for wages. By the eighties discussion of the "farm labor problem" became a frequent feature of farm journals. When the various branches of economics began to develop special applications to agriculture, farm management and agricultural economics sought to systematize and commercialize the handling of farm labor. Almost invariably the influence of the leaders, intellectuals, and educators and reformers working in agriculture was in the direction of stratifying rural society, because they emphasized making employer-employee relationships formal and contractual.

The mere segregation of labor management as a business problem, as well as the urging of contractual as opposed to personal relationships, has tended to emphasize the diversity of interests and the social differences between employers and employees. The older feeling of equality was dependent upon the informal relationship between proprietor and hired hand, and the careful attention to a legalistic conception of contractual rights and obligations urged upon the farmer has fostered the growth of caste distinction.

In spite of farm-management preachments, relatively few hired hands ever gave or received written contracts, but the spirit prompting the advice spread slowly over the land. It became the practice of farm-management experts to classify farm help into simple groupings, with blanket advice on the over-all virtues and defects of each. Thus a textbook on farm management published in 1921 had a chapter on "Farm Labor" in which hired help was divided into several classi-

fications: White (Irish and Swedish), Negro, Mexican, etc. In such advice as that on "Handling Hobo or Tramp Laborers" there was an unquestioning assumption of deep social stratification.

> These men should be provided with a reasonably warm, dry place to sleep, but as a rule no special housing is needed for them. They are satisfied to furnish their own bedding and sleep on a pile of hay, and to get plain food * * * if ample in quantity and well cooked.
>
> As a class they are easily disgusted with poor machinery, and if an implement continually breaks, they are likely to quit without notice. * * *
>
> These men will not stand crowding or pressing. If any attempt is made to drive them they will quit. Yet they can be held to the daily quitting time, although if over-time or extra work is attempted, a clear understanding must be had and extra money be paid. * * *
>
> Sunday work is usually taboo with the real hobo.
>
> One cannot afford to allow poker playing or gambling of any kind, or tolerate radical talk or preaching by discontented individuals (*32, pp. 520–521*).

Farmers in the traditional pattern of the family farm have generally been generous employers within the limits of their means. Being hard-pressed to make ends meet, they have sometimes had to pay low wages, but when farm prices boomed, as during the World War, good hired hands in the Middle West got as much as $75 to $125 a month with board and room. This fact, however, has not altered the course of the proprietor's growing feeling of separateness from those who work for him or might work for him. The hired hand has moved out of the parlor in most regions and out of the house in many. In some sections in the Middle West, where hired hands lived with the family a generation ago, they now live in town and carry their lunch to work.

This development has been partly the result of a complex of circumstances that has in effect frozen farm help into its inferior status. The old ladder from hiring out to proprietorship has been severely damaged, even working in reverse; and farm hands have in contemporary times become increasingly aware that they are farm hands permanently— not merely climbers on the first of a series of rungs that lead to farm ownership. The famous announcement of the Director of the Census in 1890 about the end of the frontier meant in effect that cheap land was gone and with it the opportunity for the poor man to become a proprietor. For as available land diminished, difficulties were multiplied by increased capital equipment costs. Commerce and industry became the sole remaining hope of the rural disinherited who wished to rise above poverty.

Farmers in general have inclined strongly toward paternalistic treatment of hired help. Although they have grown aware of caste distinctions, they have not in general inclined toward the psychology of exploitation. The attitudes of farmers toward the help they themselves hire has in general been subject to moral considerations of their own that prevent full development of exploitative motives. On this score farmers appear so far to have withstood partially the advice sometimes given by economists and farm-management experts, and they have seldom followed the examples of huge or highly industrial types of agricultural enterprises. The farmer's hostility to labor, where such hostility has really developed, has generally been directed, not against the farm labor with whom he has contact, but rather against urban labor or the urban aspects of labor. In this case, it would seem

that the immemorial distrust and dislike for the city has in effect undergone some change in that the specific urban objects of that distrust and dislike have been partially changed. Whereas a century ago the American farmer was inclined to concentrate his suspicion of the city upon the wealthy and aristocratic, he now tends more to look upon the idleness of the unemployed and the tactics of industrial unions as the most prominent symbols of urban corruption.

New Ideas About Success

The increasing acceptance of the success idea has been an important factor in the altering psychology and social institutions of farm people. It was preached with all the zeal of a religion by many popular authors, of whom Horatio Alger was most famous; and it was the social creed of influential publications. Originally an urban phenomenon, it soon penetrated into the country.

Peculiarly enough, the success idea generally repudiated the rugged self-reliance and individualism of the older agrarian creed. There was heavy emphasis usually upon the benevolence of those higher up who would reward young men who were unquestioning and even subservient in their obedience. Farm youths were told repeatedly, in explicit homilies or by implication in juvenile fiction, that by obeying their mothers they would become financially successful and that "a manly young fellow" who is "straight and clean" would be promoted as fast as possible by his employers, out of respect, apparently, for his moral qualities, and because "We always find the best men in the best places" (*58*).

THE PERSISTENCE OF SOME OLDER IDEAS

In very recent times, particularly in the last decade, popular confidence that virtue is inevitably rewarded by economic success has been somewhat dissipated; but the association of economic success with moral qualities remains. A strong tendency to suspect the means whereby great wealth has been acquired still exists. But cheap land and individual opportunity to win independence by thrift and industry were facts of existence for so long that a code of social ethics evolved that, persisting into a later day, seeks to solve the problems of the metropolis and the great society in frontier terms. Thus many believe that the cure for unemployment is hard work and the remedy for technological displacement, old-fashioned moderation and thrift. Both individuals and groups think and act only in terms of their experience. When they are confronted by a situation of crucial importance that is essentially novel, a confusion develops out of which they follow ordinarily one of two general types of behavior. They may appeal to a framework of fantasy, which in the case of social or political problems means faith in some utopian dream. Or they may recur to fragments of past experience connected with established patterns of behavior and, in an effort to escape their sense of inadequacy and insecurity in the new dilemma, emotionalize the older patterns of behavior into eternal standards of right and decency.

Being more at home within the older cultural pattern, farmers and rural people have been more inclined than others to see present diffi-

culties in the light of long-established practices and standards of value. For this reason, the startling new expedients and institutions that have developed within the urban culture to meet new situations that were primarily urban and industrial were bound to arouse a hostile rural reaction in a time of psychological crisis. Relief appropriations have been perhaps the most striking example. Although the country had been acquiring city ways, it was not prepared for such devices. And in its newer forms, the ancient antagonism of the farmer to the city has been directed principally at such innovations and in effect at that stratum of the urban population to whom the farmer once felt most akin.

CHANGING IDEALS IN AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

Ideals and practices in agricultural education have evolved in conformity with the increasing commercialization of farming and rural life. Agricultural education as originally conceived was to be practical in the sense of being vocational, and aggressively democratic in the sense of being a popular reaction against aristocratic theories of classic education for the few. Yet for a generation or more after the Civil War agricultural colleges failed to be the attraction to farm youth that it had been conceived they would be. The greatest number of farm boys who went to college actually went to study other professions or the liberal arts. Rural people who had faith in and the means to pursue higher education were not generally willing to gamble on agricultural education. There were probably many reasons for this. Many undoubtedly sought professional competence as a means to escape into another occupation. Others retained deep respect for the prestige of old-fashioned academic education. And some may well have suspected that agricultural education had less to offer of a practical nature than had been anticipated. The fact is that agricultural colleges were established before there was a solid and extensive body of agricultural science that could be taught. The agricultural applications of the various sciences had only begun to be worked out, and the best that agricultural colleges could offer was instruction in the basic sciences along the lines followed by academic colleges, with no more than a few incidental references to actual farm practices. In the course of time, agricultural experimentation in the colleges and, after the Hatch Act of 1887, in the experiment stations produced a fund of highly practical and teachable agricultural science; and it seems fair to say that as soon as agricultural colleges had much to offer they had students.

But it was inevitable that, in developing a tangible and applicable body of scientific knowledge, the agricultural colleges should foster specialization and should respond also to the new needs of the farmer created by the increasing economic pressure under which he was forced to operate. Only by conforming to the world could the colleges function within it. But this meant specifically that agricultural education must be purely vocational and technical, measurable only by the success standards of the commercial world. There was probably no real alternative once the frantic race toward commercialism and success ideals was begun.

There has, however, consistently been a conflict in ideals of agricultural education. There has always been a group that sought to include cultural graces and social understanding with purely vocational training. This is the element that in the tradition of the Lyceum, the self-improvement vogue, farmers' clubs and debating and literary societies, the early Grange, the country-life movement, and the Chautauqua movement has sought to improve farm life not only by economic and technological improvement but also by intellectual and social enrichment. Among agricultural educators, Kenyon L. Butterfield and Liberty Hyde Bailey were perhaps the best-known advocates of this intellectual leaven. Within the institutions of agricultural education, this group was not successful in diverting the drift toward increased emphasis upon technical specialization and commercial standards. But its participation in the country-life movement, in farm-life surveys and conferences and rural uplift generally, served nevertheless to hasten the growth of rural sociology as an academic and scientific discipline (*52*).

It is significant that the Country Life Commission was never given the political sanction of congressional support, for the vogue of rural uplift in the early twentieth century was limited principally to educators, clergymen, and small reform groups. It had no strong popular backing and even aroused resentment among many farmers, whose opinion seems to have been that what agriculture needed was more money, and that, with that simple need granted, farmers themselves would be amply able to look out for their own uplift. Social reform in agricultural life had in effect been professionalized; it lacked deep roots in workaday rural society. In the hands of an element largely removed from immediate contact with the soil and not harassed by the same economic difficulties that beset the farmer, it occasionally appeared to the rural mind to be both urban and condescending. The Prairie Farmer in its issue of June 15, 1913, described the continuing rural uplift movement as a case of "too much yeast in the dough," and expressed typical annoyance that—

> There are well up toward a dozen organizations in Chicago that are trying to uplift the farmer. For the most part they are financed and managed by city men.

During the first quarter of the twentieth century, agricultural economics was rapidly attaining academic respectability as well as a wide reputation for being practical. Economics was, in effect, a much more perfect response than uplift to the pressing needs and concerns to which the farmer was then subject.

THE POPULAR ACCEPTANCE OF SCIENCE APPLIED TO AGRICULTURE

The application of the physical sciences to agriculture, although unceasingly advocated throughout the nineteenth century by agricultural leadership, was once generally regarded contemptuously as impractical "book farming" by the masses of farmers. During a century of what was one of the most persistent and intensive propaganda campaigns in history, the benefits of science were advertised to the rank and file of farmers; but only in the present generation has

conclusive victory been attained. The intellectuals interested in agricultural progress, farm journals generally, and farm leaders and organizations, with immeasurable faith in scientific progress, have from every quarter urged farmers to adopt the latest scientific devices and methods. When Horace Greeley wrote his book on What I Know of Farming, he dedicated it—

> TO THE MAN OF OUR AGE, who shall make the first plow propelled by STEAM, or other mechanical power, whereby not less than TEN ACRES PER DAY shall be thoroughly pulverized to a DEPTH OF TWO FEET, at a cost of not more than two dollars per acre * * * (57).

In spite of the enthusiasm for science of most agricultural leaders—frequently as extravagant as Horace Greeley's hopes for a steam plow—and in spite of the ready adoption of mechanical devices by all who could afford them, farmers for generations remained generally skeptical of the heralded benefits of science in other forms. The resistance to new methods was slowly worn down, however, by the constant preaching of farm journals and other private agencies. Finally, in the years since the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 and the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, county-agent work, secondary education in agriculture, and demonstration and extension work generally have broken the last major resistance to agricultural science. A very large number of farmers lack the capital necessary to employ the most modern methods, but the great majority are ready to adopt whatever comes to them under the label of science. To an ever-increasing degree, farmers seek and apply the advice of technical experts, and the lapse of time between laboratory discovery and practical application upon the farm is a mere fraction of what it once was.

Technical Progress in Many Fields

The period between 1864 and 1890 saw the development of the gang plow and the sulky, barbed wire, wheel and two-horse cultivators, spring-tooth and disk harrows, the hay loader and baler, the wire binder, improved reapers, the twine binder and bundle carrier, the silo, the cream separator, and the refrigerator car. By 1890, 910 companies, employing 39,580 men and having a capital aggregating $145,313,997, were engaged exclusively in the manufacture of agricultural machinery. The census estimated that on the 4,564,641 farms enumerated that year there was farm machinery worth half a billion dollars. By 1890 or 1900 most of the major mechanical improvements practicable with horses for power had been developed. With the development of the tractor a great new wave of mechanization began. The 1930 census, taken before the recent great increase of mechanization based on the rubber-tired tractor and supplementary implements, reported 3⅓ billion dollars' worth of farm machinery on about 5,600,000 farms, or nearly $600 per farm.

The technology of plants and animals has developed similarly through introductions from abroad, scientific breeding, and the control of diseases and insects.

This technological progress has resulted in an increase in agricultural wealth so vast and complex that it cannot well be estimated. The agricultural domain has been extended by new varieties of plants resistant to disease, drought, and cold. Yields have been increased.

New plants have been found to supply special needs and to provide products that older plants could not. Losses from disease and pests have been greatly curtailed. Hand-labor requirements have been reduced, sometimes phenomenally, and the amount of land cultivable by a single farm family has been much increased (*60*). The reader will find elsewhere in this Yearbook a much fuller discussion of the nature and effects of agricultural technology (The Influence of Technical Progress on Agricultural Production, p. 509).

Technological advance has fostered specialization by increasing the need for and value of special skills. Technology has made economic specialization possible by counteracting the natural vulnerability to pests and diseases that accompanies concentration and specialization. It has increased the amount of necessary capital investment in equipment and working capital. Thus agricultural science and technology have made the farmer a much more efficient producer of agricultural supplies for the market, but they have also collaborated with other forces in the modern world to make him vitally dependent upon the working of an increasingly complex society.

The laboratory apron is rapidly becoming, for the farmer as for the rest of the world, a priestly vestment of authority. The slogans and fetishes that have accompanied the expansion of science and technology have been accepted along with sober scientific truth. If the judgment of advertisers is an indication, rural as well as city people are impressed by the vitamin content of everything from breakfast food to cold cream, and the approval of white-garbed scientists with test tubes in their hands can be a cogent recommendation of fencing, potash, hybrid corn, tooth paste, or tires for the tractor.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROFESSIONAL FARM LEADERSHIP

Traditionally, agriculture has been conducive to democracy. Responsible local leadership has tended to develop more freely and democratically among free-holding farmers than among most other social groupings. But in the process of adjustment to the great society, what was adequate to community organization has sometimes failed to apply on a national scale. A busy farmer may assume civic responsibilities in local matters without prejudice to his farming; but when the level of activity rises to embrace the State, the region, and the Nation, it generally becomes impossible to be both an active leader and a practicing farmer. Since agriculture has been drawn into a national economic orbit, agricultural concerns of the greatest importance have become national problems, and agricultural leadership has tended correspondingly to become national, and therefore professionalized. This professional leadership has been farm-reared; but, in becoming professionalized, it has sometimes grown urban. Farm leaders have of necessity taken urban residence, developed urban associations, become partly urban in outlook. A significant proportion of farm leaders have been farm youth who went to town, made or failed to make a fortune there, and then in later life became leaders of rural reform.

The oldest national farm organization of today—the Grange—illustrates this modern tendency toward urban and professionalized

farm leadership. None of the seven founders was by occupation a farmer for more than a small portion of his life. Of the 10 masters of the National Grange (second to eleventh) of whom biographical sketches are given in the official Semi-Centennial History of the Patrons of Husbandry (*34*), only two could be called practicing dirt farmers. Most of the others had spent their youth on the farm, and some engaged in farming as a hobby.

Agriculture has taken its political leadership from the town, too. The great agricultural State of Iowa, for instance, had a total of 419 elected Congressmen between 1844 and 1938. Only 15 of these are identified by the Iowa Official Register as farmers; of the rest, 309 were lawyers, 35 were bankers, 22 were editors, journalists, or publishers, 34 were businessmen (merchants, manufacturers, brokers, nurserymen, grain dealers, lumbermen) and 4 were of the learned professions. Of the total of 15 elected Congressmen who were farmers, 12 were elected to office in the period 1844–90, and not one was elected during the 40 years from 1892 to 1932. The other 3 were elected between 1932 and 1938.

In the far-flung agrarian unrest of the seventies, eighties, and nineties, a substantial proportion of the agricultural leadership rose to prominence directly from the farm. There were Sockless Jerry Simpsons as well as Ignatius Donnellys. And although agricultural leadership has in the course of the last generation or two become increasingly professionalized, there has continued to be much dirt-farmer leadership in purely economic causes. Probably no movement was ever more genuinely indigenous than the farm-holiday movement of the early 1930's. But the contemporary situation is such that noneconomic organizations and causes cannot ordinarily depend upon popular support or leadership from farm people; farm problems have become increasingly technical in nature as well as national in scope, and farm people have generally been content to have others act for them, retaining only a veto power.

PAPER VALUES VERSUS WORK VALUES

Farm people have taken over from urban culture the practice of thinking in terms of money and paper values and of expecting gain to come from mere legal possession. Ownership of the kind residing in the possession of paper, signed, sealed, and attested, has become of itself a morally justifiable claim upon income. This attitude is of course merely in accordance with prevailing institutions and doctrines, and its acceptance by farm people has been aided by the long experience of rising land values as the frontier moved westward and as population grew rapidly. But it is definitely in conflict with older pioneer and agrarian notions, which considered material wealth as the product of toil which by right should be distributed only on the basis of productive work actually performed, on actual possession and use, rather than on the basis of possession of paper symbols and insignia or by their manipulation. The right of corporate or urban groups to receive income from land on the sole basis of legal possession was challenged many times by the rural mind in an earlier period. As time passed, however, this challenge was made less frequently and

more and more on the grounds of appeal to other criteria; that is, the rural challenge of corporate and urban income from mere possession of capital was based increasingly on some charge that the capital was not honestly acquired or that it worked public harm rather than on the ground that income from merely legal ownership was wrong in itself, though the latter view was established and respected on the frontier because of the experience of squatters on unopened land.

When agriculture was drawn into the orbit of modern business practices, it was inevitable that modern business ideas and morals should in the course of time extend to the farmer; the farmer merely conformed, generally belatedly, to the changing world. Rationally, at least, he sought tariff benefits for himself only after becoming convinced that industry would never give up its own special tariff benefits. He sought to influence agricultural prices by combination and by political means only after a long and disastrous experience with trusts, monopolies, and administered prices in industry that would not or could not be broken down. The farmer's acceptance of modern capitalistic methods for his own use is in a large measure a defensive gesture.

FARMERS AND MIDDLEMEN

The old agrarian distrust of devious business methods and devices has persisted and has sometimes led to strange contradictions as agriculture has been increasingly commercialized. Dislike of middlemen is as old as history. Medieval law and trade regulations were full of statutes and rules intended to curb the power of middlemen to influence prices. "Middlemen" has essentially the same unfavorable connotation today to many people that "regrators," "forestallers," and "engrossers" had to medieval yeomen. Historically, farmers have been the most consistent of all economic individualists. No group has been more thoroughly or consistently hostile to combination and monopoly and to all that savored of Big Business. Whatever was indirect was under suspicion. This eternal tendency to distrust the agencies of distribution and to suspect them of profiteering is the psychological basis upon which cooperatives have been built.

In the name of a war on speculation, monopoly, and middlemen's unfair profits, producer cooperatives were developed; yet producer cooperatives frequently have declared control of prices an aim. Thus during the campaign for producer cooperatives in 1920, the Prairie Farmer in its issue of September 25 printed an article entitled "Almond Growers Act Like Real Business Men; They Fix Prices and Control Their Product, and Have Run the Speculator to Cover." The article itself, like the title, emphasized the price-fixing role, and told how directors of local associations met annually to fix prices. When in 1926 the Farm Journal told "What the Big Co-op Can Do" (*28*), it emphasized the adjective "big," and declared that, among other things, it—

* * * can fix, and force buyers to accept fair and uniform grades; can establish its own brands and maintain an exclusive market for them through advertising.

* * * can afford to hire a trained sales force familiar with markets and "the tricks of the trade" * * *.

* * * can secure and furnish to members reliable figures on production and consumption or probable demand.

* * * can block laws restricting co-operative sales methods, and keep legislative "hands off"; and secure and maintain any necessary tariff protection on its products.

A single farmer or a small co-op cannot do any of these things.

In January 1925 the Pacific Rural Press told with much enthusiasm how California poultry producers' cooperatives entered the market and by manipulative buying raised the price of eggs (*27*). Thus the economic necessity of holding one's own in the highly commercial modern world has forced the farmer to engage as best he can in the very practices which he was once inclined to condemn as the peculiar corruptions of urban economy.

THE COUNTRY ADOPTS CITY WAYS

Rural life has for a century been throwing off the characteristics that once distinguished it so sharply from urban life. The countryside has been undergoing a process of accelerating urbanization for nearly a century. Country people in America have generally aspired to the refinements of middle-class urban culture and have achieved them when possible. Most of the deliberate efforts toward rural improvement during the nineteenth century were inspired by a desire to relieve farm life of the roughness that the frontier had imposed upon it. These efforts mainly followed two lines. One was to increase the creature comforts and conveniences of country life, which in effect meant the adoption of urban devices and methods. The other was to refine and elevate the manners and intellectual concerns of country people upon the model of tastes and predilections in vogue in the city. The changes and improvements effected in rural life during the last century have amounted practically, therefore, to a process of urbanization.

The urbanization of country living has not come about because rural people explicitly desired urban life as such. Rather, the desirable innovations ready for adoption have been those for which urban culture had established a taste. The principal dynamics of the modern situation have originated almost exclusively in the industrial city. Hostility to urban culture as such has not disappeared, although perhaps it has declined and been altered in its manifestations. The rural world has come in large measure to accept urban ideas of success, though it has continued the ancient tradition of decrying rural exodus and deploring the false lures and illusory opportunities of the city.

But in spite of everything, the younger farm people have been attracted to the city and to city traits and behavior; and they have been important agents in the extension of the urban culture to the country. Sympathetic commentators upon the exodus of rural youth have repeatedly explained the exodus in terms of the progressive, up-to-date temper of youth, and the backwardness and conservatism of age; they have urged modernizing—urbanizing—farm equipment and household furnishings as the measure necessary to keep youth on the farm. Here is an example from the Nebraska Farmer of July 1, 1885 (*18*):

In most cases the trouble will be found with the farmer instead of his son * * *.

The old man is content with some improvements on the ideas of fifty years ago. He can't see why any one should want anything better than bare floors, Windsor chairs and cowhide boots. He would as soon go to meeting without a collar as with one. * * *

And now what's the matter with farmer's boys? They live in a new world—the father in an old one. No matter how little schooling they have had, they are better educated than he is. No matter if the father refuses to do more than subscribe to a weekly paper, his boys are fairly posted on all the daily happenings all over the world. He wants to farm after old ideas—they after new ones. * * *

The boys must have things to interest and amuse them. They want books, magazines and newspapers. If there's a chance to fix up a bowling alley let the boys go ahead and make one. * * * If one of the boys has a taste for music help him along with it. Let him have a fiddle, accordeon, organ, or whatever instrument he feels he can bring music out of.

It was realized that the traditional ideas and practices of agriculture did not conform to the commercial temper of the times that was spreading from the city to the country and that many farm boys left the country in order to pursue business careers. This was considered an additional reason for making farming more businesslike. The following typical comment was made in Farm and Fireside in 1907:

Many ambitious farm boys * * * have the business instinct, and they want a chance to develop it, so they turn to the city. * * * if all the farmers of the country would make their occupation more of a business * * * they would not only be more prosperous * * * the ambitious farm boys * * * would stay on the farm.

Commercialization was only one phase of the urbanization of farm life; and it was in effect merely the means whereby farm people could obtain the products of industry that the absorption of urban culture had taught them increasingly to desire. It was generally the case that as the agricultural frontier moved westward there had to be a period of development of the primary necessities and rudimentary capital equipment. For a time the struggle to accomplish this much exhausted the means and the energies of the agricultural settlers. But when these first needs were met, they generally sought the comforts, the refinements, the labor-saving devices, and the pleasures of a less arduous life.

When farm journals first began to print fiction, shortly before the Civil War, the stories that they ran were almost without exception especially written to fit the real or imagined tastes of a rural audience. The heroes were poor young farmers, the heroines were country girls, the villains were wealthy city men; after many vicissitudes rural simplicity and virtue triumphed over urban duplicity and corruption. But by 1900 or shortly thereafter, such fiction as appeared in farm journals—those with a large national circulation were the principal purveyors—was generally the same as that appearing in any class of popular magazines. Rural people thus read fiction based on the cultural assumptions and ideals of the urban reading masses; and country readers followed willy-nilly the vagaries and shifting fads of popular urban fiction.

The country has been motivated to seek some urban refinements as a defense mechanism, adopting customs of the town while continuing to decry them. Thus the Ohio Practical Farmer campaigned in 1885 for better table manners and more social refinement among farmers,

protesting meanwhile, perhaps too much, that crude table manners were not a confession of social inferiority.

> We do not believe you will find any better manners in the city than in the country, though you may find more awkwardness and restraint in society, simply the result of isolation or lack of society. True politeness, however, does not consist in the observance of arbitrary rules laid down, perhaps, by a brainless fop, but * * * is "kindness expressed in a pleasing manner * * * ." The man who insists that another is a boor because he does not eat pie with a fork, is lacking somewhere in the upper story. And the man who eats pie with his knife because it is the most convenient implement for the purpose, simply manifests good common sense instead of a lack of good breeding. We would make a wide distinction between true refinement and the "polish" of fashionable society (*17*).

There appears to have been among many farm people a continuous resistance to ambition that was risky and to refinements that were expensive. There is evidence that many farmers looked with deep distrust upon the financial dangers of reaching beyond themselves either for new farm machinery or for new comforts of living. This common feeling of distrust and foreboding is suggested in the letter of a Pennsylvania farmer in 1890:

> We find many farmers running in debt to "keep even" with their neighbors. Because Jones who owns bank stock and has good machinery, fine musical instruments, fast horses, etc., they think they must have them too, if they have to mortgage the farm to get them (*23*).

The misgiving aroused in the minds of many farmers by the decline of self-sufficiency and the spread of commercialization and urban ways, backward-looking though it sometimes was, amounted to a perception of the social and economic maladjustments that the modern world was bringing to the countryside. The farmer himself, pushed one way by the impact of the new and pulled the other by the persistence of the old, sensed the cultural conflict that was frequently ignored by professional experts, who were for the most part one-sided enthusiasts. Yet the greater force has been in the direction of change, and although there have been many regretful backward glances, farmers have, in their way, adjusted themselves to their times.

Rural free delivery, farm-to-market roads, and parcel post all resulted from agitation by farm leaders strongly supported by the masses of farmers. The mail-order house came in, disseminating widely a taste for the new products of industrial civilization by attractive illustrated catalogs and making new products actually available in remote places. The influence of these catalogs is suggested by the colloquial name for them—"wishing books"—that grew up in some of the more remote regions. Late in the nineties the movement to extend telephone service to the country began; and the building of cooperative lines, sponsored or at least suggested generally by farm organizations or farm journals, gained headway. All these things brought the farmer closer to town and served in the end to extend the town into the country.

Wartime and early post-war prosperity brought an accelerated wave of urbanization to the country that reached an initial climax in a blaze of silk-shirt glory before prices fell in the autumn of 1920. But the trend toward urbanization of country living survived the slump. By the middle 1920's, automobile manufacturers were sure enough of the urbanity of the farmers who read farm journals and

bought automobiles to advertise their product as "A regally luxurious motor car * * * beautifully engineered, beautifully built—and stylish as the *Rue de la Paix.*" Each new convenience, every new gadget, has bound the country more closely to the town and made it more like the town. Educational effort indicated the virtues of more and still more contrivances to make life easier; and although for most farmers possession of these things was a dream rather than a hope, their existence has been driving ever higher the minimum desired living standard. Farmer visitors to Farm Home Week at Cornell in 1929 were shown a model farm home whose kitchen was described by the Cornell Countryman in the following terms (*29*):

> In the kitchen * * * everything was arranged to give the housewife a convenient, pleasant work room. The electrical apparatus included a refrigerator, a range, a dish washer, and a food mixer. It had that great boon to the farm woman, a complete water system. The water was heated by an electric water heater. The range was one of the kind in whose oven you put the supper and go to town for the groceries and forget about it. The clock turns the heat on and the heat is regulated so that when you come in it is all done. The central light eliminates shadow. The switch for it also had an outlet in the bottom for a flat iron. There were local lights at the sink so you would not be working in your own shadow. There was a power outlet by the table for the food mixer, toaster, or grill, and one by the refrigerator. Every farm woman who saw it probably desired a kitchen like it, so spotlessly white and convenient with all the labor saving devices that are so needed on a farm.

The ephemeral fads and fashions of the city have penetrated to many farms. Beauty columns have entered into the farm press. We find in the Idaho Farmer, April 1935:

> Hands should be soft enough to flatter the most delicate of the new fabrics. They must be carefully manicured, with none of the hot, brilliant shades of nail polish. The lighter and more delicate tones are in keeping with the spirit of freshness.
>
> Keep the tint of your fingertips friendly to the red of your lips, and check both your powder and your rouge to see that they best suit the tone of your skin in the bold light of summer.

It is certain that few farm wives have a chance to heed such "beauty hints," even if they would; but the model is there, and the advice is not all lost, especially on the younger generation.

Several farm journals have for some time sponsored winter tours by farmers; and the idea has spread that farmers should get out and see the world, to broaden their outlook and to give them a vacation, in the urban sense, from the cares of everyday life. Thus, in the syndicated colloquialisms of the Lazy Farmer, from the Idaho Farmer, 1935:

> I planned to take Mirandy Jane and take a trip somewhere by train or in the car, and see some sights, nor have to go to bed of nights until we'd seen most ev'rything, nor have to rise at five, by jing. Us farm folks ought to travel more, we stay at home until we're sore at ev'rything, and raisin' hob, because we're too close to our job. It does us good to git away, when we come back some other day we're fresh in body and in mind, and if the work's a mite behind, we can pitch in and git it done, and, best of all, we've had our fun.

LOSS OF THE OLD WITH ACCEPTANCE OF THE NEW

It should be continually emphasized that the adoption of new things was inevitably followed, sooner or later, by the creation of new

customs and new dependencies. This, in turn, involved the desertion of old ways and codes of living. This fact was in one way or another repeatedly observed, generally with regret, because the standards of value and the moral codes that constitute social adaptation to material things always outlive the things themselves. Sometimes, too, the regret was based at least partly upon a sense of social maladjustment, upon a feeling that the efficiency of an older institution had been impaired without a new one rising to take its place. Thus as long ago as 1905 one writer on rural affairs observed (*68*):

> Social matters are not conducted as they once were among farmers. They are following in the wake of other people, and are putting more expense and formality in entertainments than of old. * * *
> * * * the "neighbor woman" has gone back on her record. The doctor and hired nurse have come to take her place. She doesn't know now the uses of sage tea and catnip, or of camomile and tansy. She can not take one of her own family through a bilious attack, or spell of colic, as the old-time mother with her garret full of herbs. * * *
> It takes more money to live now that people are not so serviceable nor so sociable. Farmers cannot afford to be sociable as sociability is conducted nowadays. * * * People want fine houses and furniture and expensive lighting and heating appurtenances; they want clipped horses and fine carriages, and they try to dress as near like the *elite* as possible, and to entertain their guests as sumptuously as those do who have thrice their wealth. All this is sociability run wild—it will not endure to the end.

When, late in 1929, Farm and Fireside conducted a questionnaire survey among its subscribers to determine the extent of rural social change and of resistance to change, the editors were impressed, more than by anything else, by the evidence of rapid decline of differences between farm and city people. Interpretation of the results of this poll must be consistently qualified by recognition of the fact that the circulation of Farm and Fireside was to a disproportionate degree among the more prosperous strata of rural society and that the opinions of this group would probably not correspond to those of the majority of the whole rural population. It should also be remembered, however, that the more prosperous elements of rural society have generally been in the lead in long-time trends of change. It is this group that has generally been the first to adopt innovations that later attained wide acceptance. Although the Farm and Fireside survey showed rural opinion heavily against easy divorce and repeal of prohibition, 67 percent favored "legalizing doctors to impart birth control methods to married couples who apply jointly"—an opinion that the editors called "a most astonishing departure from old-fashioned standards." The survey also disclosed that articles dealing with "world events and modern thought" were the most popular of all with Farm and Fireside readers. One of the most significant of all was the vote on consolidated schools. It was reported that 78 percent were in favor of them. On this vote Farm and Fireside commented (*30*):

> Distinctly on the side of progress is the vote as to consolidated schools. They cost money, a good deal of money; they represent what old-timers call citified, new-fangled nonsense, but the countryside of America clamors for them, four votes out of five.

What may well be the earliest complete repudiation of the old agrarian social code by a spokesman for agriculture occurred, as might

be expected, in a region where farming has been more industrialized and farm life less distinctly rural than in any other large section of the country. In 1915, the Pacific Rural Press reprinted a little story from a midwestern farm paper. This is the story:

A man and a woman sat together at a theater one afternoon last week. He wore a cheap suit of clothing that fitted him poorly. Her dress was not in the latest mode. Plainly, they were from the country.

Right behind them sat two women of the city. One of them put her lorgnette to her eyes, bent forward and looked critically at the woman in front of her. Then she settled back in her chair and said in a voice evidently intended for the woman in front to hear: "Why do some people have such awful taste as to dress as they used to before the flood?"

The woman in front heard it and her face went red. The man with her heard it too, and he quietly laid his hand upon his companion's arm and patted it lovingly.

A man who sat near, and had heard and seen this little tragedy, told of it afterward. "I knew the man from the country, and his wife," he said. "I know that she is his partner in running that farm. Her vegetables, butter and eggs provide an important part of their income. Now they have come to the city for an outing. To my mind they belong to the class who are really our best people, and the woman behind them with the lorgnette is just a coarse, vulgar frump" (*25*).

This was an almost perfect example of the stereotyped homily that had appeared thousands of times in farm journals for nearly a century in expression of the older agrarian social creed. But the Pacific Rural Press reprinted it only in order to make its modern comment:

Of course, our Middle West contemporary has to preach upon the text this incident presents, but it needs no sermon here. In the first place, we believe our rural women are relatively better dressed than elsewhere, and therefore the incident would have no local foundation. * * * Our point is that the contrast between rural and urban women in costuming is probably less in California than anywhere else in the world. And we are of the impression also that California rural women are not infrequently outfitted to do the lorgnette act toward the urban women were they not prevented by inborn politeness * * * (*25*).

The Conflict Between the Old and the New

The changes that have been coming to agriculture at a quickening pace in the past two or three generations are more than mere material changes. As things have changed, customs and ideas have changed. Notions of what it is proper to do, right to desire, and judicious to hope are altered under altered circumstances. Conceptions even of right and wrong are changed in the course of time. But moral ideas, though inevitably they change in the long run as the world changes, alter more slowly than most other customs and ideas. The basic attitudes developed in childhood and youth ordinarily cling with us as eternal verities until we die. This is the fundamental reason why every generation of old people inclines to look with uneasiness upon the ways of the young and feels sometimes that the younger generation is headed straight for perdition.

We are not coldly rational beings with minds like calculating machines. Rather we live according to the customs and habits of our cultural inheritance. In the world today are hundreds if not thousands of vastly differing cultures among different peoples, the only common characteristic of which is that the individuals integrated within each one regard their own culture as "right" and "natural." And they generalize upon the particular to the extent of believing beyond question that the standards of value, customs, moral notions,

and institutions they have grown up with are inevitable and universal, the product of rational determination as opposed to accidental inheritance. Thus the temporary expedients and ephemeral accommodations that evolve as a means of living together under one set of circumstances almost inevitably become moral codes and concepts of God and nature, of abstract and universal reason. Social adaptation and change to meet new circumstances is therefore bound invariably to result in conflict between old and new institutions, between old and new ideas of right and wrong.

American agriculture has lived through a long series of cultural conflicts during the past century. There has been almost continuous conflict between folkways and folklore on the one hand and applications of scientific rationality on the other. The intellectual and reform elements in agriculture have invariably sought to hasten and to alter the direction of our cultural evolution. There was a conflict in the middle-western agricultural regions in the ante bellum period between the matter-of-fact, severely practical culture, inherited principally from New England and the Middle Atlantic States, and the idealism and optimism fostered by the intellectuals of that period. There has consistently been a conflict between the moral concept of the farmer, developed in part out of older experience but perpetuated by the literary tradition of agrarian fundamentalism, and new realities brought into being by the commercialization of agriculture. Thus the literary tradition has it that the farmer is independent and secure unto himself—which in most cases he has manifestly ceased to be; that he is remote from the ills and corruptions of the market place and unenvious of urban luxuries—which ordinarily he obviously cannot be.

This concept of the farm as a gentle haven from the world's strife is in flat contradiction to the tendencies toward commercialization, mechanization, specialization, and urbanization that are the dominant trends of modern agriculture. And yet it is a fact that this idyllic agrarian fundamentalism has been perpetuated principally by the intellectual and reform elements that have been most active in modernizing American agriculture.

Farm people themselves, genuinely devoted as they may be to country life, have not fooled themselves in this way. They have been too close to the monotony of chores, the dust of harrowing, the threat of drought and pests and disease. Yet among some professional agricultural leaders and educators there has evidently been a desire to idealize rural life in a moral and aesthetic way, and also to see agriculture principally in terms of the most prosperous group of farmers. In order to establish good examples for emulation, or because of class or economic predilections, the farmer has thus been identified with a level of ease, equipment, well-being, and prosperity far above any average for the Nation as a whole. Thus a secondary school text in farm management, written 26 years ago by one of the most capable experts in the field, displayed as the first of many illustrations a photograph with the legend, "An American Farm Home" (*41, p. 8*). The inevitable implication was that the house shown was average or typical. Actually, however, the picture portrayed the hobby farm of a wealthy city man far out of the class of anything that could be called an average or typical farm. In another high-school text on

agriculture published in 1939 is a photograph flat-footedly captioned "An airplane view of a typical farm in the North Central Region" (*42, p. 3*). This "typical" farmstead includes a white house of apparently 8 to 10 rooms; a windmill and pump house; a poultry house large enough for at least 1,000 chickens, with incubator and brooder space extra; a dairy barn large enough for 40 or more milk cows in addition to stalls for horses; hog houses to take care of a dozen or more brood sows, and shelter also for shoats; a large milkshed; and in addition one large building that looks like a machinery shed, another apparently a garage or workshop, and another that seems to be a large crib for grain storage.

Incidents of this kind would be trivial were it not that they indicate the frequent confusion of the real and the ideal in thinking about agriculture and that—much more important—they illustrate the social stratification of agricultural ideas that corresponds to the social stratification that has been developing in fact. The majority of educational, reform, and adjustment programs have tended strongly to be directed toward the benefit of a class of farmers who came nearest to corresponding to the abstract conception of the farmer suggested by such illustrations as are noted above.

Thus both the deliberate attempts to improve agriculture and rural life and the untoward, uncontrolled social forces of this age have for the most part concentrated their benefits upon the more prosperous element of the farm population. For only the more prosperous ones have been able to take full advantage of modern technology and commercialism. And while this upper economic stratum has had its living standards raised rapidly, the lower stratum has not been able to follow. As a result the cleavage between the two has grown increasingly wider. The rising proportions of tenancy and farm indebtedness, the growing population pressure in many rural regions, the dramatic migrations of the disinherited are other symptoms of the growing stratification of rural society.

Beyond a doubt the present trends are forcefully directed toward a great split in the agricultural population—the upper group, inclined to take on more and more of the traits of the urban and small-town middle class, while the lower economic stratum seems destined for wage-labor status within a society in which caste consciousness and class lines based on economic means are developing to a rigidity previously unknown among freemen in this country.

The dynamic forces that are most profoundly affecting the nature of rural life today derive from the industrial city and the metropolitan community; and the most central characteristic of these forces is the economic interdependence that modern technology and industrialism have introduced into the country as well as the city. A situation has been created out of which new kinds of economic disparities and social dislocations have developed. Measures conceived in traditional terms, although helpful, have generally failed to achieve any substantial adjustment. The inadequacy of older institutions and arrangements, even as means to attain the substance of older ideals and aspirations, has become more apparent as the modern situation has intensified. As a result the boundless confidence and optimism by which the agricultural domain of this country was first settled and

made productive have been increasingly qualified by bewilderment and pessimism, and the former ideal of progress is giving ground to a new ideal of security. The bewilderment and pessimism are likely to endure until the way seems clear to the attainment of security--until institutions develop that within the modern situation can assure the safety of the more lasting needs and desires of men, even though these appear in altered form.

Such is the essence of the vast and complex changes that have taken place in the ideas and ideals of many millions of American farm people. And these changes, it must be emphasized, are not the exclusive products of men's minds--they are what the facts have made them.

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