

KENYON BUTTERFIELD

CHAPTERS IN
RURAL
PROGRESS

Kenyon Butterfield
Chapters in Rural Progress

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Содержание

PREFACE	5
INTRODUCTION	6
CHAPTER I	6
CHAPTER II	9
THE OUTLOOK	18
CHAPTER III	18
CHAPTER IV	21
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	25

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PREFACE

This book does not offer a complete analysis of the rural problem; but attempts, in general, to present some of the more significant phases of that problem, and, in particular, to describe some of the agencies at work in solving it. Several of the chapters were originally magazine articles, and, though all have been revised and in some cases entirely rewritten, they have the limitations of such articles. Other chapters consist of more formal addresses. Necessarily there will be found some lack of uniformity in style and in method of presentation, and occasional duplication of argument or statement.

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INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I THE STUDY OF RURAL LIFE

The American farm problem, particularly its sociological aspect, has not as yet had the attention that it deserves from students. Much less have the questions that concern rural social advancement found the popular mind; in truth, the general city public has not been deeply interested in the farmer.

But there seem to be recent indications that the sentiment is changing. The heated discussions in New England about Mr. Hartt's interesting clinic over a decadent hill-town, the suggestive fast-day proclamation of Governor Rollins of New Hampshire a few years ago, the marvelous development of agricultural education, the renewed study of the rural school, the widespread and growing delight in country life, have all aroused an interest in and presage a new attention to rural conditions. This is well. The sociologist can hardly afford to omit the rural classes from the scope of his study, especially if he desires to investigate the practical phases of his subject. Moreover, no one with intelligent notions of affairs should be ignorant of the forces that control rural life.

In view of this apparent change in the attitude of people toward the farm problem, it may not be idle to suggest some possible errors that should be avoided when we are thinking of rural society. The student will doubtless approach his problem fortified against misconceptions – he probably has thoughtfully established his view-point. But the average person in the city is likely to call up the image of his ancestral home of a generation ago, if he were born in the country, or, if not, to draw upon his observations made on a summer vacation or on casual business trips into the interior. Or he takes his picture from *Shore Acres* and the *Old Homestead*. In any case it is not improbable that the image may be faulty and as a consequence his appreciation of present conditions wholly inadequate. Let us consider some of these possible sources of misconception.

In the first place it is not fair to compare country life as a whole with the best city conditions. This is often done. The observer usually has education, culture, leisure, the experience of travel, more or less wealth; his acquaintance is mostly with people of like attainments. When he fails to find a rural environment that corresponds in some degree to his own and that of his friends, he is quick to conclude that the country has nothing to offer him, that only the city ministers to the higher wants of man. He forgets that he is one of a thousand in the city, and does not represent average city life. He fails to compare the average country conditions with the average city conditions, manifestly the only fair basis for comparison. Or he may err still more grievously. He may set opposite each other the worst country conditions and the better city conditions. He ought in all justice to balance country slum with city slum; and certainly so if he insists on trying to find palaces, great libraries, eloquent preachers, theaters, and rapid transit in each rural community. City life goes to extremes; country life, while varied, is more even. In the country there is little of large wealth, luxury, and ease; little also of extreme poverty, reeking crime, unutterable filth, moral sewage. Farmers are essentially a middle class and no comparison is fair that does not keep this fact ever in mind.

We sometimes hear the expression, "Country life is so barren – that to me is its most discouraging aspect." Much country life is truly barren; but much more of it is so only relatively and not essentially. We must admit that civilization is at least partially veneer; polish does wonders for the appearance of folks as well as of furniture. But while the beauty of "heart of oak" is enhanced by its "finish," its utility is not destroyed by a failure to polish it. Now, much of the so-called barrenness of country life is the oak minus the polish. We come to regard polish as essential; it is largely relative. And not only may we apply the wrong standard to the situation, but our eyes may deceive us. To the

uninitiated a clod of dry earth is the most unpromising of objects – it is cousin to the stone, and the type of barrenness. But to the elect it is pregnant with the possibilities of seed-time and harvest, of a full fruitage, of abundance and content for man and beast. And there is many a farm home, plain to an extreme, devoid of the veneer, a home that to the man of the town seems lacking in all the things that season life, but a home which virtue, intelligence, thrift, and courage transform into a garden of roses and a type of heaven. I do not justify neglect of the finer material things of life, nor plead for drab and homespun as passports to the courts of excellence; but I insist that the plainness, simple living, absence of luxury, lack of polish that may be met with in the country, do not necessarily accompany a condition barren of the essentials of the higher life.

Sometimes rural communities are ridiculed because of the trivial nature of their gossip, interests, and ambitions. There may be some justice in the criticism, though the situation is pathetic rather than humorous. But is the charge wholly just? In comparing country with town we are comparing two environments; necessarily, therefore, objects of gossip, interests, and ambitions differ therein. We expect that. It is no criticism to assert that fact. The test is not that of an existing difference, but of an essential quality. Is not Ben Bolt's new top buggy as legitimate a topic for discussion as is Arthur John Smythe's new automobile? Does not the price of wheat mean as much to the hard-working grower as to the broker who may never see a grain of it? May not the grove at Turtle Lake yield as keen enjoyment as do the continental forests? Is the ambition to own a fine farm more ignoble than the desire to own shares in a copper mine? It really does not matter so much what one gossips about or what one's delights are or what the carving of the rungs on ambition's ladder; the vital question is the effect of these things on character. Do they stunt or encourage the inner life? It must be admitted that country people do not always accept their environing opportunities for enjoying the higher life of mind and heart. But do they differ in this respect from their cousins of the town?

We must remember, too, that this is a large country, and that a study of rural conditions in a certain community, township, county, state, or section may not give us the correct basis upon which to determine the agricultural status of the country.

Nor must we make the mistake of confusing conservatism and decadence. That the city will in many particulars always progress more rapidly than the country is inevitable. But speed is not the ultimate criterion of a full life. Again must we apply the test whether the gain is relative or essential. Telephones, free mail delivery, electric car lines, operas, great libraries, cathedrals – all come to the city first, some of them solely to the city. The country cannot hope to be other than inherently conservative as regards such institutions. But may there not be found such adaptations of or substitutes for these institutions as shall not only preserve the rural community from decadence, but, indeed, build it up into strength, beauty, and purity?

Comparative lack of identical resources need not mean poverty of attainment. Let us agree that relatively the country will lag behind the town. Is the country continually gaining in those things that are fundamentally important and that minister to its best life? is the kernal question.

Perhaps the most common error in studying rural conditions is the failure to distinguish the vital difference between the urban problem and the rural problem. *Sociologically the city problem is that of congestion; the rural problem is that of isolation.* The social conditions of country and city are wholly different. Institutions that succeed in alleviating social disorders in the town may or may not succeed in the country – in any event they must be adapted to country needs. This applies to organizations, schools, libraries, social settlements. And the adaptation must be one not only of form but of spirit. In other words, the farm problem is a peculiar problem, demanding special study, a new point of view, and sometimes unique institutions.

Those accustomed to large cities make a pretty broad classification of "country." A town of five thousand people is to them "country." But it is not country. The problem of the village and the small town is not the rural problem, take it the nation over. The smaller the town, the more nearly it approaches to rural conditions, but its essential problem is not that of the farm.

And, finally, let no one suppose that philanthropy is the chief medicine for the social ill-health of the country. The intelligent student who possesses the true spirit of helpfulness may find in the rural problem ample scope for both his brain and his heart. But he will make a fundamental and irreparable error if he starts out with the notion that pity, charity, and direct gifts will win the day. You may flatter the American farmer; you cannot patronize him. He demands and needs, not philanthropy, but simple justice, equal opportunity, and better facilities for education. He is neither slave nor pauper.

To conclude: There is a farm problem, and it is worth solving. But it differs from the city problem. And if, as is to be hoped, the recently renewed interest in this question is to be permanent, we trust that those who desire to make it a special study, as well as those whose interest in it is general and widely human, may from the start avoid the errors that are likely to obscure rural conditions when viewed through city eyes.

CHAPTER II

THE PROBLEMS OF PROGRESS ¹

It is impossible to acquire a keen and permanent interest in the rural problem unless one first of all is cognizant of its significance. And lack of knowledge at this point may in part account for the fact already alluded to that in America the farm problem has not been adequately studied. So stupendous has been the development of our manufacturing industries, so marvelous the growth of our urban population, so pressing the questions raised by modern city life, that the social and economic interests of the American farmer have, as a rule, received minor consideration. We are impressed with the rise of cities like Chicago, forgetting for the moment that half of the American people still live under rural conditions. We are perplexed by the labor wars that are waged about us, for the time unmindful that one-third of the workers of this country make their living immediately from the soil. We are astounded, and perhaps alarmed, at the great centralization of capital, possibly not realizing that the capital invested in agriculture in the United States nearly equals the combined capital invested in the manufacturing and railway industries. But if we pause to consider the scope and nature of the economic and social interests involved, we cannot avoid the conclusion that the farm problem is worthy of serious thought from students of our national welfare.

We are aware that agriculture does not hold the same relative rank among our industries that it did in former years, and that our city population has increased far more rapidly than has our rural population. We do not ignore the fact that urban industries are developing more rapidly than is agriculture, nor deny the seriousness of the actual depletion of rural population, and even of community decadence, in some portions of the Union. But these facts merely add to the importance of the farm question. And it should not be forgotten that there has been a large and constant growth both of our agricultural wealth and of our rural population. During the last half-century there was a gain of 500 per cent. in the value of farm property, while the non-urban population increased 250 per cent. Agriculture has been one of the chief elements of America's industrial greatness, it is still our dominant economic interest, and it will long remain at least a leading industry. The people of the farm have furnished a sturdy citizenship and have been the primary source of much of our best leadership in political, business, and professional life. For an indefinite future, a large proportion of the American people will continue to live in a rural environment.

WHAT IS THE FARM PROBLEM?

Current agricultural discussion would lead us to think that the farm problem is largely one of technique. The possibilities of the agricultural industry, in the light of applied science, emphasize the need of the farmer for more complete knowledge of soil and plant and animal, and for increased proficiency in utilizing this knowledge to secure greater production at less cost. This is a fundamental need. It lies at the basis of success in farming. But it is not the farm problem.

Business skill must be added, business methods enforced. The farmer must be not only a more skilful produce-grower, but also a keener produce-seller. But the moment we enter the realm of the market we step outside the individualistic aspect of the problem as embodied in the current doctrine of technical agricultural teaching, and are forced to consider the social aspect as emphasized, first of all, in the economic category of price. Here we find many factors – transportation cost, general market conditions at home and abroad, the status of other industries, and even legislative activities.

¹ The material for this chapter is taken from an address entitled "Social Problems of American Farmers," which was read before the Congress of Arts and Science, section of The Rural Community, at St. Louis, September, 1904.

The farm problem becomes an industrial question, not solely one of technical and business skill. Moreover, the problem is one of a successful industry as a whole, not merely the personal successes of even a respectable number of individual farmers. The farming class must progress as a unit.

But have we yet reached the heart of the question? Is the farm problem one of technique plus business skill, plus these broad economic considerations? Is it not perfectly possible that agriculture as an industry may remain in a fairly satisfactory condition, and yet the farming class fail to maintain its status in the general social order? Is it not, for instance, quite within the bounds of probability to imagine a good degree of economic strength in the agricultural industry existing side by side with either a peasant régime or a landlord-and-tenant system? Yet would we expect from either system the same social fruitage that has been harvested from our American yeomanry?

We conclude, then, that *the farm problem consists in maintaining upon our farms a class of people who have succeeded in procuring for themselves the highest possible class status, not only in the industrial, but in the political and the social order – a relative status, moreover, that is measured by the demands of American ideals.* The farm problem thus connects itself with the whole question of democratic civilization. This is not mere platitude. For we cannot properly judge the significance and the relation of the different industrial activities of our farmers, and especially the value of the various social agencies for rural betterment, except by the standard of class status. It is here that we seem to find the only satisfactory philosophy of rural progress.

We would not for a moment discredit the fundamental importance of movements that have for their purpose the improved technical skill of our farmers, better business management of the farm, and wiser study and control of market conditions. Indeed, we would call attention to the fact that social institutions are absolutely necessary means of securing these essential factors of industrial success. In the solution of the farm problem we must deliberately invoke the influence of quickened means of communication, of co-operation among farmers, of various means of education, and possibly even of religious institutions, to stimulate and direct industrial activity. What needs present emphasis is the fact that there is a definite, real, social end to be held in view as the goal of rural endeavor. The highest possible social status for the farming class is that end.

We may now, as briefly as possible, describe some of the difficulties that lie in the path of the farmers in their ambition to attain greater class efficiency and larger class influence, and some of the means at hand for minimizing the difficulties. A complete discussion of the farm problem should, of course, include thorough consideration of the technical, the business, and the economic questions implied by the struggle for industrial success; for industrial success is prerequisite to the achievement of the greatest social power of the farming class. But we shall consider only the social aspects of the problem.

RURAL ISOLATION

Perhaps the one great underlying social difficulty among American farmers is their comparatively isolated mode of life. The farmer's family is isolated from other families. A small city of perhaps twenty thousand population will contain from four hundred to six hundred families per square mile, whereas a typical agricultural community in a prosperous agricultural state will hardly average more than ten families per square mile. The farming class is isolated from other classes. Farmers, of course, mingle considerably in a business and political way with the men of their trading town and county seat; but, broadly speaking, farmers do not associate freely with people living under urban conditions and possessing other than the rural point of view. It would be venturesome to suggest very definite generalizations with respect to the precise influence of these conditions, because, so far as the writer is aware, the psychology of isolation has not been worked out. But two or three conclusions seem to be admissible, and for that matter rather generally accepted.

The well-known conservatism of the farming class is doubtless largely due to class isolation. Habits, ideas, traditions, and ideals have long life in the rural community. Changes come slowly. There is a tendency to tread the well-worn paths. The farmer does not easily keep in touch with rapid modern development, unless the movements or methods directly affect him. Physical agencies which improve social conditions, such as electric lights, telephones, and pavements, come to the city first. The atmosphere of the country speaks peace and quiet. Nature's routine of sunshine and storm, of summer and winter, encourages routine and repetition in the man who works with her.

A complement of this rural conservatism, which at first thought seems a paradox, but which probably grows out of these same conditions of isolation, is the intense radicalism of a rural community when once it breaks away from its moorings. Many farmers are unduly suspicious of others' motives; yet the same people often succumb to the wiles of the charlatan, whether medical or political. Farmers are usually conservative in politics and intensely loyal to party; but the Populist movement indicates the tendency to extremes when the old allegiance is left behind. Old methods of farming may be found alongside ill-considered attempts to raise new crops or to utilize untried machines.

Other effects of rural isolation are seen in a class provincialism that is hard to eradicate, and in the development of minds less alert to seize business advantages and less far-sighted than are developed by the intense industrial life of the town. There is time to brood over wrongs, real and imaginary. Personal prejudices often grow to be rank and coarse-fibered. Neighborhood feuds are not uncommon and are often virulent. Leadership is made difficult and sometimes impossible. It is easy to fall into personal habits that may mark off the farmer from other classes of similar intelligence, and that bar him from his rightful social place.

It would, however, be distinctly unfair to the farm community if we did not emphasize some of the advantages that grow out of the rural mode of life. Farmers have time to think, and the typical American farmer is a man who has thought much and often deeply. A spirit of sturdy independence is generated, and freedom of will and of action is encouraged. Family life is nowhere so educative as in the country. The whole family co-operates for common ends, and in its individual members are bred the qualities of industry, patience, and perseverance. The manual work of the schools is but a makeshift for the old-fashioned training of the country-grown boy. Country life is an admirable preparation for the modern industrial and professional career.

Nevertheless, rural isolation is a real evil. Present-day living is so distinctively social, progress is so dependent upon social agencies, social development is so rapid, that if the farmer is to keep his status he must be fully in step with the rest of the army. He must secure the social view-point. The disadvantages of rural isolation are largely in the realm of the social relations, its advantages mostly on the individual and moral side. Farm life makes a strong individual; it is a serious menace to the achievement of class power.

A cure for isolation sometimes suggested is the gathering of the farmers into villages. This remedy, however, is of doubtful value. In the first place, the scheme is not immediately practicable. About three and one-half billions of dollars are now invested in farm buildings, and it will require some motive more powerful than that inspired by academic logic to transfer, even gradually, this investment to village groups. Moreover, it is possible to dispute the desirability of the remedy. The farm village at best must be a mere hamlet. It can secure for the farmer very few of the urban advantages he may want, except that of permitting closer daily intercourse between families. And it is questionable if the petty society of such a village can compensate for the freedom and purity of rural family life now existing. It may even be asserted with some degree of positiveness that the small village, on the moral and intellectual sides, is distinctly inferior to the isolated farm home.

At the present time rural isolation in America is being overcome by the development of better means of communication among farmers who still live on their farms. So successful are these means of communication proving that we cannot avoid the conclusion that herein lies the remedy. Improved

wagon roads, the rural free mail delivery, the farm telephone, trolley lines through country districts, are bringing about a positive revolution in country living. They are curing the evils of isolation, without in the slightest degree robbing the farm of its manifest advantages for family life. The farmers are being welded into a more compact society. They are being nurtured to greater alertness of mind, to greater keenness of observation, and the foundations are being laid for vastly enlarged social activities. The problem now is to extend these advantages to every rural community – in itself a task of huge proportions. If this can be done and isolation can be reduced to a minimum, the solution of all the other rural social problems will become vastly easier.

FARMERS' ORGANIZATION

Organization is one of the pressing social problems that American farmers have to face. The importance of the question is intrinsic, because of the general social necessity for co-operation which characterizes modern life. Society is becoming consciously self-directive. The immediate phase of this growing self-direction lies in the attempts of various social groups to organize their powers for group advantage. And if, as seems probable, this group activity is to remain a dominant feature of social progress, even in a fairly coherent society, it is manifest that there will result more or less of competition among groups.

The farming class, if at all ambitious for group influence, can hardly avoid this tendency to organization. Farmers, indeed more than any other class, need to organize. Their isolation makes thorough organization especially imperative. And the argument for co-operation gains force from the fact that relatively the agricultural population is declining. In the old days farmers ruled because of mere mass. That is no longer possible. The naïve statement that "farmers must organize because other classes are organizing" is really good social philosophy.

In the group competition just referred to there is a tendency for class interests to be put above general social welfare. This is a danger to be avoided in organization, not an argument against it. So the farmers' organization should be guarded, at this point, by adherence to the principle that organization must not only develop class power, but must be so directed as to permit the farmers to lend the full strength of their class to general social progress.

Organization thus becomes a test of class efficiency, and consequently a prerequisite for solving the farm problem. Can the farming class secure and maintain a fairly complete organization? Can it develop efficient leaders? Can it announce, in sound terms, its proposed group policy? Can it lend the group influence to genuine social progress? If so, the organization of farmers becomes a movement of pre-eminent importance.

Organization, moreover, is a powerful educational force. It arouses discussion of fundamental questions, diffuses knowledge, gives practice in public affairs, trains individuals in executive work, and, in fine, stimulates, as nothing else can, a class which is in special need of social incentive.

Organization is, however, difficult of accomplishment. While it would take us too far afield to discuss the history of farmers' organizations in America, we may briefly suggest some of the difficulties involved. For forty years the question has been a prominent one among the farmers, and these years have seen the rise and decline of several large associations. There have been apparently two great factors contributing to the downfall of these organizations. The first was a misapprehension, on the part of the farmers, of the feasibility of organizing themselves as a political phalanx; the second, a sentimental belief in the possibilities of business co-operation among farmers, more especially in lines outside their vocation. There is no place for class politics in America. There are some things legislation cannot cure. There are serious limitations to co-operative endeavor. It took many hard experiences for our farmers to learn these truths. But back of all lie some inherent difficulties, as, for instance, the number of people involved, their isolation, sectional interests, ingrained habits of independent action, of individual initiative, of suspicion of others' motives. There is often lack of

perspective, and unwillingness to invest in a procedure that does not promise immediate returns. The mere fact of failure has discredited the organization idea. There is lack of leadership; for the farm industry, while it often produces men of strong mind, keen perception, resolute will, does not, as a rule, develop executive capacity for large enterprises.

It is frequently asserted that farmers are the only class that has not organized. This is not strictly true. The difficulties enumerated are real difficulties and have seriously retarded farm organization. But if the progress made is not satisfactory, it is at least encouraging. On the purely business side, over five thousand co-operative societies among American farmers have been reported. In co-operative buying of supplies, co-operative selling of products, and co-operative insurance the volume of transactions reaches large figures. A host of societies of a purely educational nature exists among stock-breeders, fruit-growers, dairymen. It is true that no one general organization of farmers, embracing a large proportion of the class, has as yet been perfected. The nearest approach to it is the Grange, which, contrary to a popular notion, is in a prosperous condition, with a really large influence upon the social, financial, educational, and legislative interests of the farming class. It has had a steady growth during the past ten years, and is a quiet but powerful factor in rural progress. The Grange is perhaps too conservative in its administrative policy. It has not at least succeeded in converting to its fold the farmers of the great Mississippi Valley. But it has workable machinery, it disavows partisan politics and selfish class interests, and it subordinates financial benefits, while emphasizing educational and broadly political advantages. It seems fair to interpret the principles of the Grange as wholly in line with the premise of this paper, that the farmers need to preserve their status, politically, industrially, and socially, and that organization is one of the fundamental methods they must use. The Grange, therefore, deserves to succeed, and indeed is succeeding.

The field of agricultural organization is an extensive one. But if the farm problem is to be solved satisfactorily, the American farmers must first secure reasonably complete organization.

RURAL EDUCATION

It is hardly necessary to assert that the education of that portion of the American people who live upon the land involves a question of the greatest significance. The subject naturally divides itself into two phases, one of which may be designated as rural education proper, the other as agricultural education. Rural education has to do with the education of people, more especially of the young, who live under rural conditions; agricultural education aims to prepare men and women for the specific vocation of agriculture. The rural school typifies the first; the agricultural school, the second. Rural education is but a section of the general school question; agricultural education is a branch of technical training. These two phases of the education of the farm population meet at many points, they must work in harmony, and together they form a distinct educational problem.

The serious difficulties in the rural school question are perhaps three: first, to secure a modern school, in efficiency somewhat comparable to the town school, without unduly increasing the school tax; second, so to enrich the curriculum and so to expand the functions of the school that the school shall become a vital and coherent part of the community life, on the one hand translating the rural environment into terms of character and mental efficiency, and on the other hand serving perfectly as a stepping-stone to the city schools and to urban careers; third, to provide adequate high-school facilities in the rural community.

The centralization of district schools and the transportation of pupils will probably prove to be more nearly a solution of all these difficulties than will any other one scheme. The plan permits the payment of higher wages for teachers and ought to secure better instruction; it permits the employment of special teachers, as for nature-study or agriculture; it increases the efficiency of superintendence; it costs but little, if any, more than the district system; it leaves the school amid rural surroundings, while introducing into the schoolroom itself a larger volume, so to speak, of world-

atmosphere; it contains possibilities for community service; it can easily be expanded into a high school of reputable grade.

There are two dangers, both somewhat grave, likely to arise from an urgent campaign for centralization. Even if the movement makes as great progress as could reasonably be expected, for a generation to come a large share, if not a major portion, of rural pupils will still be taught in the small, isolated, district school; there is danger that this district school may be neglected. Moreover, increased school machinery always invites undue reliance upon machine-like methods. Centralization permits, but does not guarantee, greater efficiency. A system like this one must be vitalized by constant and close touch with the life and needs and aspirations of the rural community itself.

Wherever centralization is not adopted, the consolidation of two or three schools – a modified form of centralization – may prove helpful. Where the district school still persists, there are one or two imperative requirements. Teachers must have considerably higher wages and longer tenure. There must be more efficient supervision. The state must assist in supporting the school, although only in part. The small schools must be correlated with some form of high school. The last point is of great importance because of the comparative absence in country communities of opportunity near at hand for *good* high-school training.

Agricultural education is distinctively technical, not in the restricted sense of mere technique, or even of applied science, but in the sense that it must be frankly vocational. It has to do with the preparation of men and women for the business of farming and for life in the rural community.

Agricultural education should begin in the primary school. In this school the point of view, however, should be broadly pedagogical rather than immediately vocational. Fortunately, the wise teaching of nature-study, the training of pupils to know and to love nature, the constant illustrations from the rural environment, the continual appeal to personal observation and experience, absolute loyalty to the farm point of view, are not only sound pedagogy, but form the best possible background for future vocational study. Whether we call this early work "nature-study" or call it "agriculture" matters less than that the fundamental principle be recognized. It must first of all *educate*. The greatest difficulty in introducing such work into the primary school is to secure properly equipped teachers.

Perhaps the most stupendous undertaking in agricultural education is the adequate development of secondary education in agriculture. The overwhelming majority of young people who secure any agricultural schooling whatever must get it in institutions that academically are of secondary grade. This is a huge task. If developed to supply existing needs, it will call for an enormous expenditure of money and for the most careful planning. From the teaching view-point it is a difficult problem. Modern agriculture is based upon the sciences; it will not do, therefore, to establish schools in the mere art of farming. But these agricultural high schools must deal with pupils who are comparatively immature, and who almost invariably have had no preparation in science. Nor should the courses at these schools be ultra-technical. They are to prepare men and women for life on the farm – men and women who are to lead in rural development, and who must get some inkling at least of the real farm question and its solution. The agricultural school, therefore, presents a problem of great difficulty.

A perennial question in agricultural education is: What is the function of the agricultural college? We have not time to trace the history of these colleges, nor to elaborate the various views relative to their mission. But let us for a moment discuss their proper function in the light of the proposition that the preservation of the farmers' status is the real farm problem; for the college can be justified only as it finds its place among the social agencies helpful in the solution of the farm question.

In so far as the agricultural college, through its experiment station or otherwise, is an organ of research, it should carry its investigations into the economic and sociological fields, as well as pursue experiments in soil fertility and animal nutrition.

In the teaching of students, the agricultural college will continue the important work of training men for agricultural research, agricultural teaching, and expert supervision of various agricultural enterprises. But the college should put renewed emphasis upon its ability to send well-trained men

to the farms, there to live their lives, there to find their careers, and there to lead in the movements for rural progress. A decade ago it was not easy to find colleges which believed that this could be done, and some agricultural educators have even disavowed such a purpose as a proper object of the colleges. But the strongest agricultural colleges today have pride in just such a purpose. And why not? We not only need men thus trained as leaders in every rural community, but, if the farming business cannot be made to offer a career to a reasonable number of college-trained men, it is a sure sign that only by the most herculean efforts can the farmers maintain their status as a class. If agriculture must be turned over wholly to the untrained and to the half-trained, if it cannot satisfy the ambition of strong, well-educated men and women, its future, from the social point of view, is indeed gloomy.

The present-day course of study in the agricultural college does not, however, fully meet this demand for rural leadership. The farm problem has been regarded as a technical question, and a technical training has been offered the student. The agricultural college, therefore, needs "socializing." Agricultural economics and rural sociology should occupy a large place in the curriculum. The men who go from the college to the farm should appreciate the significance of the agricultural question, and should be trained to organize their forces for genuine rural progress. The college should, as far as possible, become the leader in the whole movement for solving the farm problem.

The farm home has not come in for its share of attention in existing schemes of agricultural education. The kitchen and the dining-room have as much to gain from science as have the dairy and the orchard. The inspiration of vocational knowledge must be the possession of her who is the entrepreneur of the family, the home-maker. The agricultural colleges through their departments of domestic science – better, of "home-making" – should inaugurate a comprehensive movement for carrying to the farm home a larger measure of the advantages which modern science is showering upon humanity.

The agricultural college must also lead in a more adequate development of extension teaching. Magnificent work has already been done through farmers' institutes, reading courses, co-operative experiments, demonstrations, and correspondence. But the field is so immense, the number of people involved so enormous, the difficulties of reaching them so many, that it offers a genuine problem, and one of peculiar significance, not only because of the generally recognized need of adult education, but also because of the isolation of the farmers.

It should be said that in no line of rural betterment has so much progress been made in America as in agricultural education. Merely to describe the work that is being done through nature-study and agriculture in the public schools, through agricultural schools, through our magnificent agricultural colleges, through farmers' institutes, and especially through the experiment stations and the federal Department of Agriculture in agricultural research and in the distribution of the best agricultural information – merely to inventory these movements properly would take the time available for this discussion. What has been said relative to agricultural education is less in way of criticism of existing methods than in way of suggestion as to fundamental needs.

THE ETHICAL AND RELIGIOUS PROBLEM

Wide generalizations as to the exact moral situation in the rural community are impossible. Conditions have not been adequately studied. It is probably safe to say that the country environment is extremely favorable for pure family life, for temperance, and for bodily and mental health. To picture the country a paradise is, however, mere silliness. There are in the country, as elsewhere, evidences of vulgarity in language, of coarseness in thought, of social impurity, of dishonesty in business. There is room in the country for all the ethical teaching that can be given.

Nor is it easy to discuss the country church question. Conditions vary in different parts of the Union, and no careful study has been made of the problem. As a general proposition, it may be said

that there are too many churches in the country, and that these are illy supported. Consequently, they have in many cases inferior ministers. Sectarianism is probably more divisive than in the city, not only because of the natural conservatism of the people and a natural disinclination to change their views, but because sectarian quarrels are perhaps more easily fomented and less easily harmonized than anywhere else. Moreover, in the city a person can usually find a denomination to his liking. In the country, even with the present overchurched condition, this is difficult.

The ideal solution of the country church problem is to have in each rural community one strong church adequately supported, properly equipped, ministered to by an able man – a church which leads in community service. The path to the realization of such an ideal is rough and thorny. Church federation, however, promises large results in this direction and should be especially encouraged.

Whatever outward form the solution of the country church question may take, there seem to be several general principles involved in a satisfactory attempt to meet the issue. In the first place, the country church offers a problem by itself, socially considered. Methods successful in the city may not succeed in the country. The country church question must then be studied thoroughly and on the ground.

Again, the same principle of financial aid to be utilized in the case of the schools must be invoked here. The wealth of the whole church must contribute to the support of the church everywhere. The strong must help the weak. The city must help the country. But this aid must be given by co-operation, not by condescension. The demand cannot be met by home missionary effort nor by church-building contributions; the principle goes far deeper than that. Some device must be secured which binds together the whole church, along denominational lines if must be, for a full development of church work in every community in the land.

Furthermore, there is supreme necessity for adding dignity to the country parish. Too often at present the rural parish is regarded either as a convenient laboratory for the clerical novice, or as an asylum for the decrepit or inefficient. The country parish must be a parish for our ablest and strongest. The ministry of the most Christlike must be to the hill-towns of Galilee as well as to Jerusalem.

There is still another truth that the country church cannot afford to ignore. The rural church question is peculiarly interwoven with the industrial and social problems of the farm. A declining agriculture cannot foster a growing church. An active church can render especially strong service to a farm community, in its influence upon the religious life, the home life, the educational life, the social life, and even upon the industrial life. Nowhere else are these various phases of society's activities so fully members one of another as in the country. The country church should co-operate with other rural social agencies. This means that the country pastor should assume a certain leadership in movements for rural progress. He is splendidly fitted, by the nature of his work and by his position in the community, to co-operate with earnest farmers for the social and economic, as well as the moral and spiritual, upbuilding of the farm community. But he must know the farm problem. Here is an opportunity for theological seminaries: let them make rural sociology a required subject. And, better, here is a magnificent field of labor for the right kind of young men. The country pastorate may thus prove to be, as it ought to be, a place of honor and rare privilege. In any event, the country church, to render its proper service, not alone must minister to the individual soul, but must throw itself into the struggle for rural betterment, must help solve the farm problem.

FEDERATION OF FORCES

The suggestion that the country church should ally itself with other agencies of rural progress may be carried a step farther. Rural social forces should be federated. The object of such federation is to emphasize the real nature of the farm problem, to interest many people in its solution, and to secure the co-operation of the various rural social agencies, each of which has its sphere, but also its limitations. The method of federation is to bring together, for conference and for active work,

farmers – especially representatives of farmers' organizations, agricultural educators, rural school-teachers and supervisors, country clergymen, country editors; in fact, all who have a genuine interest in the farm problem. Thus will come clearer views of the questions at issue, broader plans for reform, greater incentive to action, and more rapid progress.

CONCLUSION

In this brief analysis of the social problems of American farmers it has been possible merely to outline those aspects of the subject that seem to be fundamental. It is hoped that the importance of each problem has been duly emphasized, that the wisest methods of progress have been indicated, and that the relation of the various social agencies to the main question has been clearly brought out. Let us leave the subject by emphasizing once more the character of the ultimate farm problem. This problem may be stated more concretely, if not more accurately, than was done at the opening of the paper, by saying that the ideal of rural betterment is to preserve upon our farms the typical American farmer. The American farmer has been essentially a middle-class man. It is this type we must maintain. Agriculture must be made to yield returns in wealth, in opportunity, in contentment, in social position, sufficient to attract and to hold to it a class of intelligent, educated American citizens. This is an end vital to the preservation of American democratic ideals. It is a result that will not achieve itself; social agencies must be invoked for its accomplishment. It demands the intelligent and earnest co-operation of all who love the soil and who seek America's permanent welfare.

THE OUTLOOK

CHAPTER III THE EXPANSION OF FARM LIFE

Narrowness is perhaps the charge most often brought against American farm life. To a certain extent this charge may be just, though the comparisons that usually lead up to the conclusion do not always discriminate. It must be remembered that there are degrees of desirability in farm life, and that at the least there are multitudes of rural communities where bright flowers still bloom, where the shade is refreshing, and the waters are sweet. But, granting for the time that in the main rural life is less pleasant, less rich, less expansive than city life, we shall urge that this era of restriction is rapidly drawing to a close. There are forces at work that are molding rural life by new standards, and the old régime is passing. We shall soon be able to say of the country that "old things have passed away; all things have become new."

This statement may seem too optimistic to some who can marshal an array of facts to prove that bigotry, narrowness, and the whole family of ills begotten by isolation still thrive in the country. It is true that our picture is not all of rose tints. But what of that? If it were not true there would be no farm problem; the country would have to convert the town. The fact remains that rural life is undergoing a rapid expansion. Materially, socially, and intellectually, the farmer is broadening. Old prejudices are fading. The plowman is no longer content to keep his eye forever on the furrow. The revival has been in slow progress for some time and has not yet reached its zenith; indeed, the movement is but well under way. For while the new day came long ago to some rural communities and they are basking in a noonday sun, yet in far too many localities the faintest gray of dawn is all that rouses hope.

The fundamental change that is taking place is the gradual adoption of the new agriculture. "Book-farmin'" is still decried, and many "perfessers" have a rocky road to travel in their attempts to guide the masses through the labyrinth of scientific knowledge that has been constructed during the last decade or two. This difficulty has not been wholly the farmer's fault – the scientist would often have been more persuasive had his wings been clipped. But there is a decided "getting together" nowadays – the farmer and the man of science have at last found common ground. And while the pendulum of agricultural prosperity shall always swing to and fro, there are, to change the figure, reasons for believing that an increasing number of farmers have rooted the tree of permanent success.

To enumerate some of these reasons: (1) Thousands of farmers are farming on a scientific basis. They use the results of soil and fertilizer analysis; they cultivate, not to kill weeds so much as to conserve moisture; horticulturists spray their trees according to formulas laid down by experimenters; dairymen use the "Babcock test" for determining the fat content of milk; stock-feeders utilize the scientists' feeding rations. (2) The number of specialists among farmers is increasing. This is a sign of progress surely. More and more farmers are coming to push a single line of work. (3) New methods are being rapidly adopted. Fifteen years ago hardly a fruit-grower sprayed for insect and fungus pests; today it is rare to find one who does not. The co-operative creamery has not only revolutionized the character of the butter product made by the factory system, but it has set the pace for thousands of private dairymen who are now making first-class dairy butter. (4) In general the whole idea of *intensive* farming is gaining ground.

This specialization, or intensification, of agriculture makes a new demand, upon those who pursue it, in the way of mental and business training. This training is being furnished by a multitude of agencies, and the younger generation of farmers is taking proper advantage of the opportunities thus offered. What are some of these regular agencies? (1) An alert farm press, containing contributions

from both successful farmers and scientific workers. (2) Farmers' institutes, which are traveling schools of technical instruction for farmers. (3) The bulletins issued by the government experiment stations located in every state, and by the federal Department of Agriculture. (4) Special winter courses (of from two to twelve weeks), offered at nearly all the agricultural colleges of the country, for instruction in practical agriculture. (5) Regular college courses in agriculture at these same colleges. (6) Extension instruction by lectures and correspondence. (7) A growing book literature of technical agriculture. (8) More encouraging than all else is the spirit of inquiry that prevails among farmers the country over – the recognition that there is a basis of science in agriculture. No stronger pleas for the advancement of agricultural education can be found than those that have recently been formulated by farmers themselves.

If this regeneration of farm life were wholly material it would be worth noting; for it promises a prosperity built on foundations sufficiently strong to withstand ordinary storms. Yet this is but a chapter of the story. Not only are our American farmers making a study of their business, bringing to it the resources of advancing knowledge and good mental training, and hence deriving from it the strong, alert mental character that comes to all business men who pursue equally intelligent methods, but the farmers are by no means neglecting their duty to broaden along general intellectual lines. Farmers have always been interested in politics; there is no reason to think that their interest is declining. The Grange and other organizations keep their attention on current problems. Traveling libraries, school libraries, and Grange libraries are giving new opportunities for general reading, and the farmer's family is not slow to accept the chance. Low prices for magazines and family papers bring to these periodicals an increasing list from the rural offices. Rural free mail delivery promises, among many other results of vast importance, to enlarge the circulation of daily papers among farmers not less than tenfold.

The really great lesson that farmers are rapidly learning is to work together. They have been the last class to organize, and jealousy, distrust, and isolation have made such organizations as they have had comparatively ineffective. But gradually they are learning to compromise, to work in harmony, to sink merely personal views, to trust their own leaders, to keep troth in financially co-operative projects. There will be no Farmers' Party organized; but the higher politics is gaining among farmers, and more and more independent voting may be expected from the rural precincts. Farmers are learning to pool such of their interests as can be furthered by legislation.

It is also true that the whole aspect of social life in the country is undergoing a profound evolutionary movement. Farmers are meeting one another more frequently than they used to. They have more picnics and holidays. They travel more. They go sight-seeing. They take advantage of excursions. Their social life is more mobile than formerly. Farmers have more comforts and luxuries than ever before. They dress better than they did. More of them ride in carriages than formerly. They buy neater and better furniture. The newer houses are prettier and more comfortable than their predecessors. Bicycles and cameras are not uncommon in the rural home. Rural telephone exchanges are relatively a new thing, but the near future will see the telephone a part of the ordinary furniture of the rural household; while electric car lines promise to be the final link in the chain of advantages that is rapidly transforming rural life – robbing it of its isolation, giving it balance and poise, softening its hard outlines, and in general achieving its thorough regeneration.

This sketch is no fancy tale. The movement described is genuine and powerful. The busy city world may not note the signs of progress. Well-minded philanthropists may feel that the rural districts are in special need of their services. Even to the watchers on the walls there is much of discouragement in the advancement that *isn't* being made. Yet it needs no prophet's eye to see that a vast change for the better in rural life and conditions is now in progress.

No student of these conditions expects or desires that the evolution shall be Acadian in its results. It is to be hoped indeed that country sweets shall not lose their delights; that the farmer himself may find in his surroundings spiritual and mental ambrosia. But what is wanted, and what is rapidly

coming, is the breaking down of those barriers which have so long differentiated country from urban life; the extinction of that social ostracism which has been the farmer's fate; the obliteration of that line which for many a youth has marked the bounds of opportunity: in fact, the creation of a rural society whose advantages, rewards, prerogatives, chances for service, means of culture, and pleasures are representative of the best and sanest life that the accumulated wisdom of the ages can prescribe for mankind.

CHAPTER IV THE NEW FARMER

All farmers may be divided into three classes. There is the "old" farmer, there is the "new" farmer, and there is the "mossback." The old farmer represents the ancient régime. The new farmer is the modern business agriculturist. The mossback is a mediaeval survival. The old farmer was in his day a new farmer; he was "up with the times," as the times then were. The new farmer is merely the worthy son of a noble sire; he is the modern embodiment of the old farmer's progressiveness. The mossback is the man who tries to use the old methods under the new conditions; he is not "up" with the present times, but "back" with the old times. Though he lives and moves in the present, he really has his being in the past.

The old farmer is the man who conquered the American continent. His axe struck the crown from the monarchs of the wood, and the fertile farms of Ohio are the kingdom he created. He broke the sod of the rich prairies, and the tasseling cornfields of Iowa tell the story of his deeds. He hitched his plow to the sun, and his westward lengthening furrows fill the world's granary.

The new farmer has his largest conquests yet to make. But he has put his faith in the strong arm of science; he has at his hand the commercial mechanism of a world of business. He believes he will win because he is in league with the ongoing forces of our civilization.

The mossback cannot win, because he prefers a flintlock to a Mauser. He has his eyes upon the ground, and uses snails instead of stars for horses.

The old farmer was a pioneer, and he had all the courage, enterprise, and resourcefulness of the pioneer. He was virile, above all things else. He owned and controlled everything in sight. He was a state-builder. Half a century ago, in the Middle West, the strong men and the influential families were largely farmers. Even professional men owned and managed farms, frequently living upon them. The smell of the soil sweetened musty law books, deodorized the doctor's den, and floated as incense above the church altars.

The new farmer lives in a day when the nation is not purely an agricultural nation, but is also a manufacturing and a trading nation. He belongs no longer to the dominant class, so far as commercial and social and political influence are concerned. But none of these things move him. For he realizes that out of this seeming decline of agriculture grow his best opportunities. He discards pioneer methods because pioneering is not now an effective art.

The mossback sees perhaps clearly enough these changes, but he does not understand their meaning, nor does he know how to meet them. He is dazzled by the romantic halo of the good old times, dumfounded by the electric energy of the present, discouraged and distracted by the pressure of forces that crush his hopes and stifle his strength.

Economically, the old farmer was not a business man, but a barterer. The rule of barter still survives in the country grocery where butter and eggs are traded for sugar and salt. The old farmer was industrially self-sufficient. He did not farm on a commercial basis. He raised apples for eating and for cider, not for market – there was no apple market. He had very little ready money, he bought and sold few products. He traded. Even his grain, which afterward became the farmer's great cash crop, was raised in small quantities and ground at the nearest mill – not for export, but for a return migration to the family flour-barrel.

The new farmer has always existed – because he is the old farmer growing. He has kept pace with our industrial evolution. When the régime of barter passed away, he ceased to barter. When the world's market became a fact, he raised wheat for the world's market. As agriculture became a business, he became a business man. As agricultural science began to contribute to the art of farming, he studied applied science. As industrial education developed, he founded and patronized institutions

for agricultural education. As alertness and enterprise began to be indispensable in commercial activity, he grew alert and enterprising.

The mossback is the man who has either misread the signs of the times, or who has not possessed the speed demanded in the two-minute class. He is the old farmer gone to seed. He tries to fit the old methods to the new régime.

But it is not sufficient to picture the new farmer. You must explain him. What is it that makes the new farmer? Who is he? What are his tools? In the first place, you cannot explain the new farmer unless you know the old farmer. You cannot have the new farmer unless you also have the mossback. The new farmer is a comparative person, as it were. You have to define him in terms of the mossback. The contrast is not between the old farmer and the new, for that is merely a question of relative conditions in different epochs of time. The contrast is between the new farmer and the mossback, for that is a question of men and of their relative efficiency as members of the industrial order. Then, of course, you must observe the individual traits that characterize the new farmer, such as keenness, business instinct, readiness to adopt new methods, and, in fact, all the qualities that make a man a success today in any calling. For the new farmer, in respect to his personal qualities, is not a sport, a phenomenon. He does not stand out as a distinct and peculiar specimen. He is a successful American citizen who grows corn instead of making steel rails.

But you have not yet explained the new farmer. These personal traits do not explain him. It may be possible to explain an individual and his success by calling attention to his characteristics, and yet you cannot completely analyze him and his career unless you understand the conditions under which he works – the industrial and social environment. Much less can you explain a class of people by describing their personal characteristics. You must reach out into the great current of life that is about them, and discern the direction and power of that current.

Now, the conditions that tend to make the new farmer possible may be grouped in an old-fashioned way under two heads. In the old scientific phrases the two forces that make the new farmer are the "struggle for life" and "environment," or, to use other words, competition and opportunity.

Competition has pressed severely upon the farmer, competition at home and competition from other countries. At one time the heart of the wheat-growing industry of this country was near Rochester, N. Y., in the Genesee Valley; but the canal and the railway soon made possible the occupation of the great granary of the west. A multitude of ambitious young men soon took possession of that granary, and the flour-mills were moved from Rochester to Minneapolis. This is an old story, but the same forces are still at work. There has been developed a world-market. The sheep of the Australian bush have become competitors of the flocks that feed upon the green Vermont mountains and the Ohio hills. The plains of Argentina grow wheat for London. Russia, Siberia, and India pour a constant stream of golden grain into the industrial centers of Western Europe, and the price of American wheat is fixed in London. These forces have produced still another kind of competition; namely, specialization among farmers. Localities particularly adapted to special crops are becoming centers where skill and intelligence bring the industry to its height. The truck-farming of the South Atlantic region, the fruit growing of western Michigan, the butter factories of Wisconsin and Minnesota, have crowded almost to suffocation the small market-gardener of the northern town, the man with a dozen peach trees, and the farmer who keeps two cows and trades the surplus butter for calico. These things have absolutely forced progress upon the farmer. It is indeed a "struggle for life." Out of it comes the "survival of the fittest," and the fittest is the new farmer.

But along with competition has come opportunity. Indeed, out of these very facts that have made competition so strenuous spring the most marvelous opportunities for the progressive farmer. Specialization brings out the best that there is in the locality and the man. It gives a chance to apply science to farming. Our transportation system permits the peach growers of Grand Rapids to place their crops at a profit in the markets of Buffalo and Pittsburg; the rich orchards and vineyards of Southern California find their chief outlet in the cities of the manufacturing Northeast – three

thousand miles away. During the forty years, from 1860, the exports of wheat from this country increased from four million bushels annually to one hundred and forty million bushels; of corn, from three and one-third million bushels to one hundred and seventy-five million bushels; of beef products, from twenty million pounds to three hundred and seventy million pounds; of pork products, from ninety-eight million pounds to seventeen hundred million pounds. And not only do the grain and stock farmers find this outlet for their surplus products, but we are beginning to ship abroad high-grade fruit and first-class dairy products in considerable quantities. Low rates of freight, modern methods of refrigeration, express freight trains, fast freight steamers – the whole machinery of the commercial and financial world are at the service of the new farmer. Science, also, has found a world of work in ministering to the needs of agriculture, and in a hundred different ways the new farmer finds helps that have sprung up from the broadcast sowing of the hand of science.

But perhaps even more remarkable opportunities come to the new farmer in those social agencies that tend to remove the isolation of the country; that assist in educating the farmer broadly; that give farmers as a class more influence in legislature and congress, and that, in fine, make rural life more worth the living. The new farmer cannot be explained until one is somewhat familiar with the character of these rural social agencies. They have already been enumerated and classified in a previous chapter; they will be more fully described in subsequent chapters.

It must not be supposed that every successful farmer is necessarily a supporter of all of these social agencies. He may be a prosperous farmer just because he is good at the art of farming, or because he is a keen business man. But more and more he is coming to see that these things are opportunities that he cannot afford to disregard. Indeed, some of these institutions are largely the creation of the new farmer himself. He is using them as tools to fashion a better rural social structure.

But they also fashion him. They serve to explain him, in great part. Competition inspires the farmer to his best efforts. The opportunity offered by these new and growing advantages gives him the implements wherewith to make his rightful niche in the social and industrial system.

It would be erroneous to suppose that the new farmer is a *rara avis*. He is not. The spirit pervading the ranks of farmers is rapidly changing. We have been in a state of transition in agriculture. But the farther shore has been reached and the bridge is possible. The army of rural advancement is being recruited with great rapidity. The advance guard is more than a body of scouts, it is an effective brigade.

I want also to make a plea for the mossback. He must not be condemned utterly. Remember that competition among farmers has been intense; that rural environment breeds conservatism. Remember also that the farmer cannot change his methods as rapidly as can some other business men. Remember, too, that there is comparatively small chance for speculation in agriculture; that large aggregates of capital cannot be collected for farming, and consequently, that the approved means for securing immense wealth, great industrial advancement, and huge enterprises are nearly absent in agriculture. Remember that the voices calling from the city deplete the country of many good farmers as well as of many poor ones. Moreover, there are many men on farms who perhaps don't care for farming, but who for some reason cannot get away. On the farm a man need not starve; he can make a livelihood. Doubtless this simple fact is responsible for a multitude of mossbacks. They can live without strenuous endeavor. Possibly a good many of us are strenuous because we are pushed into it. So I have a good deal of sympathy for the mossback, and a mild sort of scorn for some of his critics, who probably could not do any better than he is doing if they essayed the gentle art of agriculture. I also have sympathy for the mossback particularly because he is the man that needs attention. The new farmer takes the initiative. He patronizes these opportunities that we have been talking about. But the mossback, because he is discouraged, or because he is ignorant, or perhaps merely because he is conservative, takes little interest in these things. About one farmer in ten belongs to some sort of farmers' association. Thousands of farmers do not take an agricultural paper, and perhaps millions of them have not read an agricultural book. Right here comes in another fact. Every "new" farmer

when full grown competes with every mossback. The educated farmer makes it still harder for the ignorant farmer to progress.

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