

AGRICULTURE IN RUSSIA.

A VAST COUNTRY DEPENDENT ON HER NATURAL RICHES.

Agricultural Interests Must be Developed in the Central and Southern Districts, Leaving the North, Where the Soil is Poor, to the Factories.

Russia is and always must be chiefly dependent on her natural richness so long as criminal improvidence and reckless housekeeping have not wholly exhausted them, and among these the direct produce of the soil and the agriculturist's labor would be almost inexhaustible were the money employed in creating artificial branches of national income used in introducing and teaching the peasantry improved methods of cultivation, in preventing the impoverishment of the soil, or rather in reclaiming it, for the impoverishment is an accomplished fact, and in effecting the irrigation and canalization which the destruction of the forests has rendered necessary by causing countless springs and small lakes to dry up. Such at least must be the programs for the center and south, leaving factories for the north, where the best that can be done with the soil is to coax from it crops sufficient to feed the tillers from year's end to year's end.

In the last quarter of a century Russian industry has increased fourfold. While in 1877 the total sum of manufacturing industry hardly reached 540,000,000 it had in 1897 mounted to 1,800,000,000, and now, in 1891, it has attained and may soon pass the two milliard mark. Some branches have increased twenty-five fold; 74,000,000 worth of steel was made in 1897, while 1877 had only 3,000,000 worth to show.

There is no doubt that Russian industry has taken abnormally gigantic strides. But how is it meanwhile with farming? It is at a standstill, to say the least. The destruction of forests for fuel and for railway sleepers has denuded Central Russia. Hand in hand with this destruction, droughts are getting to be a chronic evil, and so are famines. At the same time the rapid increase of population makes the land allotments more and more insufficient, and the country people, growing poorer and poorer, stop buying things. Under such conditions most of the undertakings rest all their hopes on government orders and fall if orders are not forthcoming in time.

And still we push on, and on; still we go on "promoting" and "floating" new companies, draining the country's savings where there are any left, and when these give out calling in foreign capital. The result is production out-running demand, and when that is the case only one end is possible.

There is no need to dwell on the revolution effected in the rural economy of the country by the transition from serf labor to hired labor, for Americans—at least southerners—have gone through much the same experience during the same years, too. There is this difference, that Russian landholders were compelled to give up the largest part of their lands and received the price of them in a lump. It would seem at first sight as though, being thus placed in possession of a handsome capital, cash down, they had a chance to start farming on their greatly restricted domains on broad, rational principles and according to the most up-to-date methods. That is theory. Practically, it was the last thing they could have done.

Most of the estates lay under heavy mortgages, the amount of which being deducted from the redemption payments left the owners in many cases but a slender cash residue. Then—and that was the worst of the situation—most of them knew very little about farming and less about management, thrift and business generally. The money somehow slipped through their fingers and they were left with lands which, to only too many, were more a hindrance than a means of support. Many began to sell their lands piecemeal—to village communes, to wealthy shopkeepers, to individual peasants of the genus known as "fists" (usurers, buyers of anything and everything that promises a sure profit), making, of course, disastrous bargains. Some rented to farmers for money or on shares (the latter arrangement generally proving unsatisfactory); some sent a bailiff to managed the estate, collect the income, and send them as much of it as he chose. A few braced up for real work and went to live on their estates, sensibly expecting to learn as they went, and to gather the prosperity which mother earth keeps in store for those who do not hold themselves above devoting their best powers to the care of her.

What has been accomplished, under untold difficulties, by these few, is more than sufficient to show what immense results might be achieved if what is now the exception became the rule. Unfortunately, such a course requires, first of all, some of the very qualities in which the average Russian character is conspicuously deficient—a stubborn will, great perseverance and contempt of obstacles, patience under rebuffs, and under the thousand and one worries born of misdirected conservatism in some quarters and the wholesale ignorance of the masses. All these things have to be fought and conquered, and that they can be conquered, slowly it is true, and by bits, the few who hold out are showing.

The average Russian, generous and well-meaning, takes hold enthusiastically, works resolutely for a time, but is quickly discouraged. Stolidity, ill-will, lack of comprehension, wound him most of all, lame him, and he goes away. Few, indeed, are content to plough and sow and tend the crop

which they cannot live to harvest. But there are such.—Z. Ragozin, in the New York Commercial Advertiser.

IN THE PROPERTY ROOM.

A Varied Collection of Articles in the Old Boston Museum.

Some idea of the varied collection of objects which accumulate in the property room of a theatre is to be obtained from a description of the contents of the old Boston Museum property room. In a general way the public has learned to know that the "property man" of a theatre is one who looks after such details of the productions as concern chairs and tables, the bottles that the people pour their liquor from, and the pen and ink used by the heroine to indite her loving messages.

The master of properties must still be a resourceful person, but in the old days, where the frequent changes of bills necessitated additional "props" every week or to, the ingenuity of this functionary was often taxed to the utmost.

The apothecary's shop in "Romeo and Juliet" wasn't a circumstance to the old property-manufacturing shop in the cellar of the museum, where may be seen the skulls and crossbones stuffed animals of both wild and domestic species, wings for witches, angels and devils, and other curious things that can't be enumerated in a column. The animals, both real and of papier mache, repose on shelves all around the walls, a weird, grinning, motley troupe of once indispensable stage characters that would have brought their possessor to the stake in witchcraft days, and all destined for the dirt heap within a few days.

There are the wolves' heads with gleaming teeth, fangs and eyes, that were wont to be thrust beneath the door of the log cabin which the stout arm of Frank Mayo held in place in the thrilling honeymoon scene in "Davy Crockett." The big bellows with which Tilly Slowboy once blew the fire in "The Cricket on the Hearth" hangs upon the wall, and the cradle in which she rocked the baby lies in the corner. In another corner are stacked old rusty muskets, including some flintlocks that defended the breast works in Dr. Jones' centennial drama, "The Battle of Bunker Hill," twenty-eight years ago.

From the center of the ceiling suspended by strings hang three many-looking stuffed animals that were once features in everything the moral lessons taught by the waxwork tableaux, sold more than a decade ago. For sixty years these animals, a domestic cat, a dog and a monkey, have been comrades, but they must now go the way of all else identified with the museum.

The cat and dog, now half hairless and showing repulsively their dried-up gums and loosened teeth, used to be pictures of ease and contentment when representing the sole objects of the affection of the old maid and the old man in a wax tableau.

The monkey had his mission to fill also, but what it is now forgotten. Of late years he has been hung by a movable string before the door of the room in such a way that he would drop with a dull thud on the breast of any one entering the door, a startling experience for an unsuspecting stranger, which has contributed to the enjoyment of the property man's life, however.

In another part of the cellar is stored a raft of stage furniture of every kind. There are the seats of Caesar and Brutus from the senate house, the royal chairs of Macbeth and his restless helpmate, the big, glittering chair in which John Wilkes Booth was crowned as Richard III, and the gracefully formed mediaval chairs in which Hamlet has oft pondered the proposition, "To be or not to be."

There are stacks of spears and halberds and Roman standards, and a pathetic souvenir in the shape of a rude effigy of Ophelia, over which the queen strews flowers and weeps and says, "Sweetest to the sweet fair maid."—Boston Globe.

How the Fish Was Drowned.

A German scientist—he could only have been German—once conceived, we are told, a plan to train a fish to live out of water. He placed a farthing little carp in a small tank and with infinite patience and great exactness removed from the tank one spoonful of water every day, at the same time increasing gradually the amount of oxygen in the water. In time the water barely covered the carp, and still it thrived. The quantity of water continued to diminish and, by slowly adapting its method of breathing to the new conditions, the fish began to breathe air, and, indeed, became quite terrestrial in its habits before the tank was entirely dry. The scientist had grown to love the carp. He fed it from his own hand, and now that it was living in the same element with himself, he took it from the tank and left it as free to follow its own devices as was the family cat. The little fish also loved its master. It followed him about from place to place, flopping along after him, stopping only occasionally to leap for a passing fly. One day the scientist was crossing a bridge. The carp, as usual, was at his heels, enjoying the pleasant air of the country side and uttering from time to time a little sound expressive of delight and contentment. About the middle of the bridge a fat house-fly was sunning itself on the rail. The carp spied the insect and jumped for it, but miscalculating the distance, went over the rail into the river—and was drowned.

The Great Rural World.

The Problem of Preserving Liberty.

By Arthur T. Hadley.

President of Yale University.

THE theory that each man should be left free to do what he pleased, especially in economic matters, with a little restraint from law as possible, was very popular during the first half of the nineteenth century. During the last half of that century there was a reaction.

The philanthropist, the labor leader, the railroad manager and the protectionist each saw reasons which seemed to him good from making exceptions of considerable importance to this rule of non-interference. And even among those who had no special interests of this kind there was a growing disposition to see that self-interest of individuals did not protect the general public as fully as we had supposed.

In a contest between organized capital and organized labor, like that of the recent coal strike, the interests of the consumer may be sacrificed in the worst fashion by the total cessation of production of one of the necessities of life. Three important methods have been suggested for giving better protection to the interests of the consumer.

First—The extension of the system of contracts between companies and their operatives, so that incorporated capital shall deal with incorporated labor in a responsible fashion.

Second—An extension of the conspiracy laws so that combinations adverse to the interests of the consumers as a body can be treated as criminal and suppressed by the organized force of the community.

Third—An extension of the principle of direct government management—the so-called socialistic principle—to those industries where continuous production or service is a matter of ethical standards none of these remedies will really meet the evil. If we really believed that the laborer or capitalist was pursuing self-interest as a business principle, to the disregard of all other things, was doing wrong we should have little trouble in putting him in prison on the cases where that wrong wrought great public harm.

In order really to meet these evils we need something more than contracts, or conspiracy laws, or municipalization of industry. We must get back to the conception of some higher motive than self-interest, and some better measure of value than self-aggrandizement. In the centuries immediately past we have had to do with the problem of securing liberty. Today we have to face the problem of preserving it. The hardships and dangers connected with it are less tangible, but they are on that account all the more difficult to assume.

Freedom has always required the exercise of courage to defend it from the assaults of its adversaries. It today requires the exercise of public spirit and personal self-restraint to meet the perils which come from the action of those who deem themselves to be its friends. Only by the exercise of this widened sense of responsibility and by the growth of this public spirit can we hope that freedom, so laboriously wrought out in the centuries past, may be successfully preserved through those to come.

Fire and the Forest Reserves.

By Charles S. Newhall.

IN ALL serious cases fire is much the best agent with which to fight fire. Usually, at such times, it is not only the best agent but the only one. A chief element in the make-up of a good fire fighter is his knowledge and skill in regard to back-firing. If a man loses his head, his back-fire may escape, and may itself in turn become a forest fire.

To illustrate: A fire that had been smouldering for days unexpectedly gained such a sudden and furious headway that there was no chance whatever to meet it at the ridge, where under ordinary conditions it could have been stopped. It reached and leaped the ridge, and then, helped by a strong wind, swept on into a thick dry forest. A quarter of a mile or so in front was a good country road. On the east and west the men in charge ran a narrow furrow through the pine needles and low brush. Then along the inner side, the fireward side, of the furrows and the country road they kindled their small back fire. By the time these met the main fire, they had overrun a strip too wide for it to jump. The only further danger was from the falling and rolling of the tall trees. It was a bad fire, and in each direction it burned up to the firebreak but nowhere crossed it.

Next in importance to fire as a substitute for water is dirt. One who has never seen it tried would be surprised at the effectiveness of a spade-ful swept heavily over a stretch of creeping fire or against burning logs. In the fire referred to above a great five-foot tree, badly decayed and hollowed, had burned at the base until it fell. It fell parallel to the length of a mile or so in front was a good country road. On the east and west the men in charge ran a narrow furrow through the pine needles and low brush. Then along the inner side, the fireward side, of the furrows and the country road they kindled their small back fire. By the time these met the main fire, they had overrun a strip too wide for it to jump. The only further danger was from the falling and rolling of the tall trees. It was a bad fire, and in each direction it burned up to the firebreak but nowhere crossed it.

Many fires can be easily beaten out with any extemporized fall arrangement—green boughs, for example, when they can be found, or gunny sacks from camp, or bare sticks if there is nothing better.

Every ranger is expected to have with him or at his camp an iron-toothed saw, a shovel, and an axe, and some camps are supplied in addition with rakes, pickaxes, brush-hooks, and canvas buckets. With preparatory and defensive work, carefully and systematically planned and executed along lines such as have been indicated, and with a body of men in charge who are clear-headed, trustworthy, strong, brave, and not working perfunctorily, but with real esprit de corps, much has been accomplished for the safeguarding of the forests. The fire-record of the government reserves as a whole, in the few years since there has been serious effort at protection, is satisfactory. The results are to the credit of the rangers and supervisors in immediate charge; but the seeds are evident—the need of continuous work of more men, of larger appropriations. Even the forests of the Old World are not absolutely safe from fire; and the caring for them is child's play as compared with the service which these splendid forests of the New World demand.

Race Suicide Fatal in Wealthy Homes.

By Percival Chubb.

IT IS the calamity of the children of the rich that there are too few of them.

Let the modern man, with a genius for money making, beware lest in his eagerness for riches he children, too, perish as living souls at the blighting touch. The child can thrive only in an atmosphere of love and heartiness and companionship. The children of the rich are deprived of this too often by being too few in number.

The cares, distractions and social ambitions which riches and power and place bring with them, the rounds of visits and dinners and functions, make it difficult for the rich parent to give the child its due, to fulfil the impulse of all true parents to live with and for their children. There is a close connection between plain living and high thinking. Human character cannot flourish in an atmosphere of luxury. Whatever doubts we may have of this there is no doubt of its application to children. I count it the fit calamity of the children of the rich that there are too few of them; that the old hearty and populous family life is unknown to them; that the ruddy cheer of the glowing hearth is less and less; that the passion of maternity wanes. It is the symptom of disease; the disease that has marked all ages to decay. It is the blight of the life of pleasure, luxury and self-indulgence to which riches are always tempting. A child's life may be as easily marred by superfluity as by want. Do the children of the imperilled rich need no ministering? The more a man has the more difficult it is for him to save his own soul and the souls of his children.

The Girls Learned Something.
The school entered a fashionable candy shop on Chestnut street. Their school was about to give an amateur dramatic performance, and they had with them a poster advertising the play. "We would like," they said to the owner of the shop, "to put this poster in your window." The man looked at it. It was artistic and not too big; no bigger, in fact, than 12x18 inches. "Weh," he said, "I'll put it in my window for—\$25. Usually I charge \$50, but this poster is so small that I'll give you a reduced rate." The little girls were horror-stricken. "Oh," they said, "we had no idea—we did not suppose—there would be any charge." And the departed with their poster, going to other fashionable and exclusive shops. It was everywhere the same story, the girls found that there is no form of advertising so expensive as the display of posters in fashionable shop windows. "We thought," they said to the last shopman, "that this kind of advertising cost nothing." "That," replied the man, "is what everybody thinks. But we shopmen don't care for this trade. Hence we put up an almost prohibitive price on the use of space in our windows. Otherwise concert posters would leave us no room for the exhibition of our 'poods.'"—Philadelphia Record.

A woman never quite forgives her husband for not having kept her love letters.

TROUBLES OF TWO ARTISTS.

Why Both of Them Have Aversion to Badly Warmed Halls.

A concert company in which Mr. Seeböck was the pianist had been playing in some of the smaller towns during February and had suffered considerable inconvenience through insufficiently heated halls. One evening, after an unusually cold experience, Seeböck related an incident which had occurred on a tour some months previous. The violinist of the company had received notice of the time of departure at such a late hour that in the haste of packing he neglected to include in his wardrobe his dress trousers. The omission was not discovered until an hour before the concert. Naturally he was greatly disconcerted upon realizing that he would be forced to appear in dress coat and gray trousers. In this dilemma he called Seeböck into consultation. Both men were nearly of a size and Seeböck hit upon the plan of both using the same trousers, performing a "lightening change" between appearances. The plan was adopted, Seeböck appearing first. As quickly as possible after reaching his dressing room he divested himself of his trousers and the violinist donned them with equal haste. The first selection of the violinist was long, difficult and was so well received that an encore was demanded. "It was then that I fully appreciated the criminal neglect of improperly heating halls," said Seeböck. "When the time for my next appearance arrived and with it my trousers I was in a half-frozen condition. Some consolation, however, was to be derived from the thought that the violinist was shivering in the dressing room during my number, which also received an encore. But of the whole it was a wretched evening. Eight times we alternately wore and went without those trousers. If the audience had known the cost of that performance in physical discomfort to at least two of the performers I believe it would have been even more appreciative than it was, though I could have well dispensed with several of the encores accorded the violinist."

TIRED OF THE MONOTONY.

Why George Grossmith's Butler Was Leaving His Service.

Many and various and weird are the reasons given by servants for wanting a change of place. Here is a tale told by George Grossmith, which adds a rare and wondrous instance to the long and eccentric list:

His butler, who had been with him for nearly twenty years, went to him one day and said:

"If you please, sir, I want to leave." Mr. Grossmith was sorry, and asked the man his reason.

"I would rather not say, sir," was the mysterious reply. This was uncomfortable, and Mr. Grossmith pressed the question again. "Come," he said, "you have been with me for so long and have never complained before. Surely I have almost a right to know why you wish to leave. Your secrecy is unpleasant, and I must really beg of you to tell me your reason for leaving my service."

The butler thought a moment and then said:

"Well, sir, as you insist, I must tell you. But I don't want to. (A pause.) The fact is, sir, I've been with you for close upon twenty years, and I'm tired of the sight of you and all your family!"

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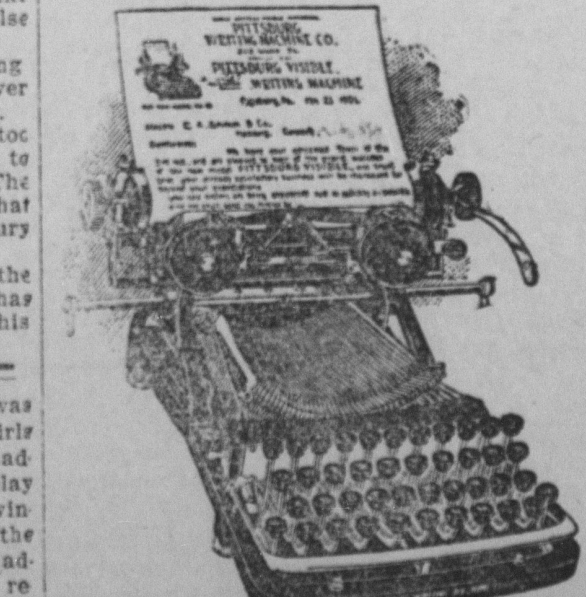
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