

The Farm and Fireside.

Our Agricultural Population.

I do not claim for agricultural life in modern times the Arcadian simplicity of the heroic ages; but it is capable, with the aid of popular education and the facilities of intercommunication, of being made more favorable than it has been heretofore. The degree of skill and happiness to which we may reasonably aspire in the present imperfect stage of being. For the same reason that our intellectual and moral faculties are urged to the highest point of culture by the intense competition of the large towns, the contagion of vice and crime produces in a crowded population a depravity of character from which the more thinly inhabited country, though far enough from being immaculate, is comparatively free. Accordingly, we find that the tenure on which the land is owned and tilled—that is, the average condition of the agricultural masses—decides the character of a people. It is true that the compact organization, the control of capital, the concentrated popular talent, the vigorous press of the great cities, the pre-eminence of numbers—but this is far less the case in the United States than in most foreign countries, where the land is held in large masses by a few powerful landholders. Divided as it is in this country into small or moderate-sized farms, owned for the most part and tilled by a class of fairly-educated, independent and intelligent proprietors, the direct influence of large towns on the entire population is far less considerable than in Europe.

What the public character loses in concentration and energy by this want of metropolitan centralization is more than gained by the country in the virtues of mediocrity, the decent frugality, the healthfulness, the social tranquility of private life. I trust I do full justice to the elegant refinements, the liberal institutions, the noble charities, the creative industries, the world-encompassing energy of the cities, but the profound expenditure of the bourgeoisie, the unfurnished wretchedness of the destitute, the heaven-defying profligacy of the corrupt, the insane spirit of speculation, the frantic haste to become rich, the heartless dissipation of fashionable life, the growing ferocity and recklessness of a portion of the public press, the prevailing worldliness of the large towns, make me tremble for the future. It appears to me that our great independence, under Providence, must be more and more on the healthy tone of the population scattered over the country—strangers to the excitement, the temptations, the revolutions of trade, and placed in that happy middle condition of human fortune, which is equidistant from the giddy heights of affluence, power and fame, and the pinching straits of poverty, and as such most favorable to human virtue and happiness.—Edward Everett.

Labor by the Hour.

The spirit of hiring farm labor by the hour is attracting attention as the best method of settling the number of hours that shall constitute a day's work. It makes provision for paying men for the time they are actually engaged, and utilizing for days and the time they are standing still. A correspondent of the *Rural New Yorker* has it, and says: I find it pays. I keep three men—usually one by the month. The men I hire by the day usually have families to support. When I paid them by the day, without any understanding as to its length, they arrived late or early, as was convenient for them. Now that I pay by the hour, they generally want to work full as many hours as I need them; but if they do not, they know that they will get paid only for the work they do; and if they do not regard my wishes somewhat, laboring until the work is accomplished, they feel very certain that I shall hire some one who will stick by me; and I find men are more willing to accomplish all the work, regardless of the number of hours, if they are sure of being paid proportionately, as they are by the hour system. I think we shall adopt the same rule in reference to household help. It requires a little time to break in and make laborers understand it; but when they do, they like it better, and so do I.

Good Rules for Farmers.—The following are among the rules adopted by the proprietor of a large livery stable in this city: "First, no man will be employed who drinks intoxicating liquor; his men, like his horses, must drink water cold and clean. Second, no man must speak loud to any of the horses, or in the stable where they are. Horses of good blood are nervous, and loud, excited conversation is felt by every horse in the stable where he hears it. Excited words addressed to one horse are felt by every other horse in the stable, and keep them all nervous and uneasy. Third, no man may use profane language in the hearing of the horses. They are gentlemen's horses, and understand what profane language and the excited tones which accompany it mean."

At a meeting of the Brandywine Farmers' Club at Chester county, Penn., David Brauson hung an ear of corn thirteen and a half inches long, and containing 2,450 grains.

A bee-keeper at Bridgeport, Conn., has sold, the present season, 2,000 pounds of honey. Mr. Phelps, of Iowa, has sold 1,000 pounds the present season, and has a large quantity on hand.

It is stated that there are now no less than two hundred and fourteen varieties of weeds which have been introduced into the United States from foreign countries, and principally from England.

In the Maine Legislature a bill has been reported exempting from taxation, for 20 years, lands set apart for the encouragement of the growth of forest trees.

John O. Ashcroft, of Hadley, Mass., slaughtered Dec. 19th, three pigs from a litter of ten that were eleven months old, which weighed, respectively, 645, 489 and 475 lbs.

California papers complain that the yield of wheat in that State has fallen from forty bushels an acre down to twenty bushels; and that, if the present improvident style of farming continues, the crop will not average over twelve bushels per acre.

The returns from one hundred and fifty seven points throughout the West this year give a total of 3,432,201 hogs packed, the estimate for the entire season being 4,382,000. The whole number packed last season was 3,520,817, making a difference in favor of this year of 85,607. The number killed thus far this season, Chicago has slaughtered \$80,635, against 602,373 head for the corresponding period last season.

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