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New Work for Agricultural Societies.

EDS. COUNTRY GENTLEMAN.—That much good is accomplished through agricultural societies, there can be no question. The stimulus they give to improvement in farm products, the practical knowledge they disseminate, and the experiments they cause to be made, undoubtedly result in real and permanent benefit. But the plans by which they seek to improve farming, though very good, are susceptible of improvement. They should seek to improve *the farmers themselves*, and then first-class products will naturrally follow. In the premium lists we find scores of prizes for superior punmkins, squashes, potatoes, &c., but none for superior men. The points of merit are considered with extreme nicety in horses, cattle, swine and poultry, but the excellencies and accomplishments of our sons and daughters are never rewarded. Is a splendid ox more likely to improve agriculture than an industrious, skillful and temperate young farmer? At fairs the premium is invariably awarded to the ox.

A new feature should be added to the premium list. A series of prizes should be offered for the intelligence, efficiency and morality of our young men and women who are to become farmers or farmer's wives. Let a premium be offered to the farmer's son and daughter who have acquired the most thorough education without attending a high school; to the farmer's son who can do the best piece of work, repairing an agricultural instrument in the shortest time: to the farmer's daughter who can make the best roll of butter, the best loaf of bread, do the best piece of sewing, play the best on the melodeon or piano, and has the finest flower-bed, cared for by herself. All accomplishments necessary in a farmer or a wife, might receive rewards from agricultural societies. Every young farmer who has thoroughly acquired the rudiments of a good education, who is industrious and energetic at his work, who uses no strong drink, and who is wide awake to the principles and requirements of his calling, should have a free life-membership conferred upon him by both his county and State society, as soon as he has reached the age of twenty. It is this class of men we keep on the farm if progress is to be made. So long as our most intelligent young men leave the farm and seek employment in other departments of industry, so long will agriculture degenerate; for the quality of any work depends on the quality of the workman. Whatever influence societies may possess in making farming attractive to young men, should be exerted without stint.

Another way in which societies may aid agriculture is by encouraging the invention of improved machinery. The experiments necessary to demonstrate new ideas in mechanics, involve such great expenses that very few are willing to hazard them, however sound their ideas. But what are mountains to an individual, are mole hills to a wealthy society. Let it be made known that inventors can have their ideas carefully considered by a committee of honest men, thoroughly posted on past experiments in the same field, and prepared to cause new inventions to be practically tested, in cases where there seems to be sufficient probability of success, and there would soon be a hundred heads grappling unsolved problems, where there is now one. There is still ample room for improvement in farm machinery, notwithstanding its present great efficiency. The benefits which inventors have conferred upon agriculture during the last two decades, ought to make every society of farmers their warmest friends. But still they are compelled, not only to bear the great cost of experiments, but if successful, they must often force their improvements through the most bitter prejudices of the very class they are seeking to aid.

A word of criticism concerning the management of fairs. If they cannot be made profitable without horse racing, we had better let them die.

The same may be said of the tenth-class shows that so often infest these assemblies. An agricultural fair ought not to be a harbor for this kind of nuisance.

Of course these suggestions as here given are very crude, but there is certainly a germ of practicability in them.

The Old Way Crossing the Plains.

The most curious and perfect of all the pony expresses was that which used to run across the plains. Of course you know what I mean by the plains. When I was a boy almost the whole country between the Mississippi River and the Pacific Ocean was called, on the maps, the "Great American desert," and in my geography it was described as a wide, sandy plain. In my mind it was not unlike the Desert of Sahara, with fiercer tribes inhabiting it. Schoolboys nowa-days have better maps and geographies, and know this country by the names of the great States of Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado and Nevada, which have been formed of it. What was desert to *us* is prairie to *you*, boys; what we thought barren, sand you know to be rich soil; and you cross it by rail in three days where we, in stage-coaches, used to make the trip in seventeen. The Pacific Railroad killed the pony express; but in its days the latter was a great institution, which would have put to the blush the pony express of the Russians and Tartars, or our own army couriers. It was not a Government line, either; private enterprise started and kept it going on a grand scale. It "used up" and "broke down" more than a thousand horses and Indian ponies a year. It employed nine or ten hundred couriers and coach-drivers and station keepers, and more than one hundred Concord coaches. Every day in the year one of these stages started from the east end and one from the west end of the route, and often as many as fifty were making the trip at the same time. The coach stations were ten miles apart, and there were more than two hundred of them in all. The route led from Atchison, Mo., across the plains for five days to Denver, Col.; then five days more up the Rocky Mountains to Salt Lake City, Utah; then seven days more down the mountains to Sacramento city, Cal. At one station the stage-coach reached a level of 5,000 feet above the plains, and in the summer months it was the custom of the drivers to stop there ten minutes, not for refreshments, but to allow the passengers the novel pleasure of snow-balling each other in July. In these dreary mountains few persons were then to be met, other than members of the family of Mr. Grizzly Bear, who, if he happens to be hungry, is a very unpleasant fellow to travel with. On the plains the enemy most dreaded was the red-skinned tribes, whose roving bands almost daily attacked the coaches. To repel such attacks each passenger was required to carry a rifle as part of his baggage. A "crack driver" was one who could drive four horses at full speed with the reins in his teeth and a rifle in his hands. Every station was a fort, with soldiers to defend it. Often the coaches had to be guarded from station to station by the soldiers, who followed on horse-back, and at times the soldiers, and passengers were forced to fortify themselves in the coach and fight until help came by the approach of other coaches. Seventeen days of a trip like this would furnish almost enough adventure for a life-time.

But it was the swift mail-couriers of this line who ran risks and led adventurous lives full of daring and danger. They ran the gauntlet of the Indians all alone—at night as well as by day—and a rough time many of them had of it. Their stations were twenty-five miles apart, and the trips between them had to be made at a full gallop, and in two hours and a half, winter or summer, day or night, over plain or mountains. The horses were hardy Indian ponies, swift and sure of foot; but the service killed them very rapidly. The riders were old pioneers, who knew the ways of the Indians and how to avoid them. Still many of them fell victims to their daring and their sense of duty. The long trip of 2,000 miles occupied the mail-cariers eight days, at the rate of more than ten miles an hour; but important election news was carried at a still more rapid rate. But at length the harnessed lightning and the iron horse distanced the pony on his track, and he has gone farther west to pastures new. —*From "The Pony Express," in St. Nicholas for September.*

The Frost King.

A few days ago, the first announcement of the probabilty of frost, was made by the weather telegrams, and now we are having a general invasion of the Frost King. So severely has he laid his hands upon mother earth, that at one time it looked as though he would have to give way to his foster brother, Winter. Farmers are most interested in the first appearance of frost, and they look eagerly for his first footprints, but with timely notice, they have not so much to apprehend from his visitation.

It is important to agriculturists generally, to know that the gateway of American autumn and winter, lies in that deep, broad furrow of the Continent, less than 800 feet above the sea, and stretch from Minnesota, northwestwardly, to the shores of the Arctic Ocean. Through this long channel, several hundred miles wide, the winter winds and boreal conditions of the frozen North seem to advance southward at this season with the steadiness of a tidal swell, until they exercise a controlling influence on the weather of the United States. This fact, which has been frequently overlooked, affords an insight into the meteorology of this country, the value of which cannot be overestimated by those whose rural labor is dependent upon weather provisions. After the passage eastward of the last storm of Friday last the area of its low barometer appears to have been quickly filed up by indraught from the frosty regions of British America, and the indrawn masses of freezing air to have inundated the Northwest and the country around the upper lakes.

The farmers in these sections have, of course, less premonition of severe frosts than those in the Central and Middle States, but enough for wariness and energy to avert the destructive effects on outstanding harvests. The present frost wave, if it does not close the growing season for tobacco and some of the vegetable crops, ought, at any rate, to warn growers in the Middle and Eastern States not to delay harvesting everything that may be killed by frost. There is an old saying that the weather repeats itself, which has, perhaps, some foundation in fact. At any rate, the present irruption of the Frost King will not improbably be repeated more vigorously and extensively within the next week or ten days. Let our rural population, therefore, be well forewarned, and employ the interval in carefully harvesting and husbanding whatever is exposed in the field.

Eggs vs. Meat.

Would it not be wise to substitute more eggs for meat in our daily diet? About one third of an egg is solid nutriment. This is more than can be said of meat. There are no bones and tough pieces that have to be laid aside. A good egg is made up of ten parts shell, sixty parts white and thirty parts yolk. The white of an egg contains eighty-six per cent. water; the yolk fifty-two per cent. The average weight of an egg is about two ounces, prastically an egg is animal food, and yet there is none of the disagreeable work of the butcher necessary to obtain it. The veterans of England use eggs freely, and many of these men are eighty and ninety years old, and have been remarkably free from illness. A good egg is alive. The shell is porous and the oxygen of the air goes through the shell and keeps up a kind of respiration. An egg soon becomes stale in bad air, or in dry air charged with carbonic acid. Eggs may be dried and made to retain their goodness for a long time, or the shell may be varnished, which excludes the air, when, if kept in a moderate temperature they may be kept good for years. The French people produce more eggs than any other, and ship millions of them to England annually. Fresh eggs are more transparent at the centre, old ones on the top. Very old ones are not transparent in either place. In water in which one tenth of salt has been dissolved good eggs sink and indifferent ones swim. Bad eggs float in pure water. The best eggs are laid by young healthy hens. If they are properly fed the eggs are better than if they are allowed to eat all sorts of food. Eggs are best when cooked four minutes. This takes away the animal taste that is offensive to some, but does not harden the white or yolk as to make them hard to digest. An egg if cooked very hard is difficult of digestion, except by those with stout stomachs, such eggs should be eaten with bread and masticated very finely. An excellent sandwich can be made with eggs and brown bread. An egg spread on toast is food fit for a king, if kings deserve any better food than anybody else, which is doubtful. Fried eggs are less wholesome than boiled ones. An egg dropped into hot water is not only a clean and handsome but a delicious morsel. Most people spoil the taste of their eggs by adding pepper and salt. A little sweet butter is the best dressing. Eggs contain much phosphorus, which is supposed to be useful to those who use their brains much.—*Poultry Review*, Eng.

Child Life in Shakerdom.

The Pittsfield (Mass.) *Eagle* says that children placed with the Shakers at Lebanon are indentured to Benjamin Gates, or some authority, until they "become of age," he agreeing in the papers to provide them food, clothing, &c. They are then placed in the "children's order," under the charge of a sister designated to care for them, and she commences at once to instill into their minds the glories of the creed. In their management never a blow is struck. Refractory ones are punished by being laid flat upon the floor, face down. When they have been kept thus prostrate for a length of time, they are taken up and "talked to," the enormity of their offences pointed out, and are exhorted to behave better in the future. Those from eight to a dozen years of age "go to confession" every Saturday, and "own up" (or are supposed to) the little sins of the week that have escaped the notice of their guardians. And as they receive special approval for an apparently very full confession, they early learn to conjure up enormous stories, knowing that they "gull" their confessors into a deeper belief of their penitence. "Now don't you feel better after confessing all that?" asks the ancient virgin who has heard the story. "Yea, yea," saps the little miss, and tipping a wink to her companions she walks out as sedately as a spinster of seventy. Another method of punishment is to put the youngster into a large sack, tying it lightly roand the neck. Should the child refase to get into the bag it is drawn over the refractory one, and then, head, feet, and all enveloped, he or she is left to repent of the offensive disobedience. The children are sent to school four months each year—the boys in the Winter and the girls in the Summer. Co-education has not the slightest support there. The girls and boys must not converse together. If they happen to meet, and if a roguish youngster is bold enough to break the silence with some pretty maiden, the maiden must be deaf and dumb to him. "Isn't there some boy here that you are just a little fonder of than others?" is a standing question in the confessional. The reply already is "nay," and the blind old goodies believe it!

The Food of Primitive Man.

In the present status of research, the earliest authentic traces of man on earch go no further back than the age of ice, so called, and the accompanying or subsequent formation of the diluvium or drift. The relics of man dating from an earlier epoch, the upper Miocene formation, that is, the middle of the Tertiary group, which are said to have been found in France, are at least very questionable. But there have been preserved for us in caverns remains dating from the Ice age, which tell us of the food used by man in those times. Man then inhabited Central Europe in company with the reindeer, the cave-bear and the mammoth. He was exclusively a hunter and fisher, as is shown by the bones of animals found in his cave-dwellings. The miocene vegetation, which abounded in arbored fruits, had disappeared during the long period of the subsequent pliocene formations, the climate of Central Europe, meanwhile, having gradually become colder. Nature supplied no fruits for the food of man. What food he got by hunting and fishing was precarious, and there were intervals of famine; for fortune does not always smile on the hunter, and the beasts of the forest are not always equally numerous. The food, too, was uniform, and not altogether adapted for man, for the flesh of the wild animal lacks fat. The man of those times had not enough of the heat-producers in his food; and that he felt this want we learn from his taste for the marrow of bones. All the long bones of animals that are found in cave-dwellings are cracked open lengthwise, in order to get out the marrow. Now this insufficient, uniform food has its counterpart in the low grade of culture which then prevailed, as evidenced by the mode of life, the weapons and the tools. Man then lived isolated, without social organization; he dwelt in caverns, and his only protection against the cold was the skins of animals and the fire on the hearth. His tools were of stone, unpolished, unadorned; so rudely fashioned that only the eye of the connoisseur can recognize in them man's handiwork.—*Popular Science Monthly.*

How to Have Good Cider.

Professor Horsford, of Harvard University, has published a recipe for improving and preserving cider, by means of which the progress of the vinous and acetic fermentations may be arrested at pleasure, and the cider preserved in just such a state as may be desired. It is this:

"Put the new cider into clean casks or barrels, and allow it to ferment from one to three weeks according as the weather is cool or warm. When it has attained to a lively fermenation, add to each gallon three-fourths of a pound of white sugar, and let the whole ferment again until it possesses nearly the brisk, pleasant taste which it is desirable should be permanent. Pour out a quart of the cider, and mix with it one quarter of an ounce of sulphite of lime for every gallon the cask contains. Stir it until it is intimately mixed, and pour the emulsion into the liquid. Agitate the contents of the cask thoroughly for a few moments, then let it rest that the cider may settle. Fermentation will be arrested at once, and will not be resumed. It may be bottled in the course of a few weeks, or it may be allowed to remain in the cask and used on draught. If bottled, it will become a sparkling cider of surpassing excellence."

Professor Horsford was the first to use the sulphite of lime for this purpose, and to him is due the credit of first calling attention to its usefulness. It is in no respect deleterious, as the sulphite into which the sulphite is changed by the liberation of sulphurous acid is entirely insoluble, and remains at the bottom of the vessel. Remember, it is the sulphite of lime, not sulphate, must be used. The quality of the cider will remain unchanged for years.

A FAMINE IN NEBRASKA.

A TERRIBLE STATE OF DESTITUTION—SEVERAL DEATHS FROM STARVATION ALREADY REPORTED—A RELIEF COMMITTEE APPOINTED IN CHICAGO.

CHICAGO, Oct. 22. Death from starvation for the actual want of food is a calamity that stares in the face 2,000 men, women and children, within 18 hours' travel of Chicago, and in the heart of the grain-growing region of the country. Gen. Ord commanding the Department of the Platte, and who is personally cognizant of the facts, addressed the Board of Trade to-day, telling in plain direct terms the sad story of the destitution in Western Nebraska, caused by the ravages of the grasshoppers. From the reports of his officers on the ground and among these people, he has trustworthy information as to the actual condition of affairs. He states that several cases of actual death have already taken place. Fathers have been compelled to abandon their families and seek work and food. In one house the corpse of a child was found that had perished for want of food and near it the mother, prostrate and dying from the same cause. He states that in Boone, Greeley, Sherman, Howard, Buffalo, and all the other counties 50 miles west of the Missouri River, two-thirds of the people are destitute of all the necessaries of life. They have neither clothing nor shoes, and food is impossible to get. A committee to take steps for the relief of these poor people was appointed as follows: Messrs. Geo. Armour, L. Z. Letter, George C. Walker, John L. Hancock, C. M. Henderson, John B. Drake, N. R. Fairbank, Edson Keith, W. M. Egan, and C. G. Cooley. They will receive and forward contributions of flour, meal, pork, or bacon, for food. They want shoes, shawls, blankets, coats, pantaloons, and stockings.

Important Decision.

The Bloomsburg *Columbian* published an important opinion recently given by Judge Elwell in the Common Pleas of Columbia county, fixing the maximum rate of school tax at ten mills on real estate. By his construction placed on the act of Fed. 23, 1866, exempting real estate from the three mills tax for State purposes, it also operated as a reduction of a like amount on that species of property for school purpose. This is a very important decision, as it conflicts with the opinion of the School Department, which has assumed that thirteen mills, instead of ten, was the maximum rate to be collected for school purposes, and the former amount has been generally levied and collected throughout the State where occasion required it.

An Interesting Geological Discovery.

The Virginia (Nevada) *Enterprise* describes it as follows: In the bottom of the main shaft of the Virginia City Coal Company, El Dorado canon, Lyon county, has been encountered the trunk of a large tree four feet in diameter—a lone relic of an ancient and extinct forest. Where cut through by the shaft this old tree is found to be perfectly carbonized, turned into coal. Outside the old log is completely crusted over with iron pyrites, many of which are so bright that the crystals shine like diamonds. These crystals also extend into the body of the log, filling what were once cracks or windshakes, and even forming clusters about what once was the heart of the tree. This relic of an old time forest lies far below the two veins of coal the company are about to open. The finding of this old trunk is evidence that the country was at some time, ages ago, covered by a forest of large trees; though the native timber growth, when the country was first visited by the whites, and as far back as the traditions of the Indians extend, was but a scrubby species of nut pine. A few miles from the shaft in which this carbonized tree was found, are to be seen on the surface the petrified remains of many large trees. The water, lines on the hills show that the whole country was filled with lakes, and the petrified trees lying here and there on the surface of the ground probably floated out on the extinct lakes, and finally sank to the bottom in the places where they are now found.

The End of the Ross Case:

The search for the missing Ross child seems to be finally at an end, as detectives, parents and the public have at last been compelled to acknowledge their inability to find the child. The miseries of that household can better be imagined than described, but we read in the daily papers that Mrs. Ross is completely broken down and threatened with insanity, while the condition of the father is but little better. The following report is from their attending physician published in the Philadelphia papers: "I know Mr. C. K. Ross, and am his physician. He is in a very prostrate condition. I saw him this morning. He is not able to leave his house or bed. He has been in that condition since Sunday. He is in a condition of prostration in which he is unable to concentrate his thoughts or to express his meaning. His brain is affected to that extent. He has no disease that I can recognize at present. He is very thin, and is falling away daily. He does not take his natural sleep. He is certainly seriously indisposed, and it will be a long time before he will begin to react from his present condition. I cannot speak of the ultimate result."

In commenting upon the above the New York World says: "There is an intensity and yet a vagueness—the inability "to concentrate thought and express meaning"—in this that is terrible to think of. It looks very much as if, before long, we may have to read of two more deaths in that desolated vicinage."

How Soil was Made.

Professor Agassiz said that all the materials on which agricultural process depends are decomposed rocks, and not so much those that underlie the soil, but those on the surface, and ground to powder by the glaciers. Ice all over the continent is the agent that has ground out more soil than all other agencies put together. The penetration of water into the rocks, forests, running water, and baking suns, have done something, but the glaciers more. In a former age the United States was covered with ice several thousand feet thick, and the ice moving from north to south, by the attraction of the tropical warmth or the pressing weight of the snow and ice behind, ground the rocks over—which was called sod. These masses of ice can be tracked by the hunter. He has made a study of them as far south as Alabama, but he has observed the same phenomenon in Europe, particularly in Italy, where among the Alps, glaciers are now in progress. The stones and rocks ground and polished by the glaciers can easily be distinguished from those scratched by running water. The angular boulders found in meadows and the terraces of ravines not reached by water can be accounted for only in this way.

The wet weather last week had a depressing effect on the elephants in Barnum's Hippodroome, at Baltimore; but it cleared on Friday, and they indulged in a lively frolic. The American says: "They frisked their ponderous bodies about, butted each other, and then the three smaller ones got tired of pushing and tumbling about in rough but good humored play, each seized with his trunk one of the legs of old Bensey, and after the hardest kind of wrestling they upset the great, good humored old beast, who seemed to enjoy the fun as much as any one of them."

The famine in the East Indies, or rather in the province of Bengal, has so far abated that the British government has to feed *only* 600,000 unfortunates daily. The latest report from Calcutta is that heavy rain continued to fall, that the rainfall in September was equal to that of ordinary years, that in the most doubtful Bengal districts there was no longer any apprehension either of a second famine or of serious distress, and that the fever which had raged fearfully had further abated, though it possibly might reapper during the autumn, and had been extremely devastating.