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WHAT THE GRANGE CAN DO.

A Valuable Discussion of the Question
 by Hon. George T. Powell.
 [Special Correspondence.]

In very much of the public discussions of grange meetings speakers dwell upon and recount over and over what the grange has done. While we may take pride in the past history of the organization, to dwell so continually upon it does not always interest members, either old or young. Interest centers more in the present than in the past. It is the problems of the day, the work of the present, that are of greater importance to farmers and grange members, and in proportion as these are taken up, considered and effort made to solve them will the organization grow in strength, numbers and influence.



HON. G. T. POWELL.

At the close of the civil war the agriculture of our country became most seriously depressed. Most farmers were heavily in debt, their farms mortgaged to an extent that made life discouraging; they had to pay high rates of interest, with transportation charges on their products so high in cost as to leave little profit after marketing.

The grange was organized to meet these conditions, and through the principles and methods of co-operation it undertook, and with a large degree of success, to improve the depressing conditions in farming and to awaken in farmers a higher appreciation of their work and of their influence in the community in which they lived, as also upon important questions of public policy.

The grange needs to do more of this kind of work. Wherever a grange exists or a new grange is organized it should take first of all the problems that affect the highest welfare of that community. What are those most prominent? We should say the condition of the public school is one first in importance. What is the school doing for the farm life of the neighborhood? Are the children being taught anything about the soil? Are they getting any instruction in the plant life with which they have to deal? Are they gaining any conception of the possibilities that are before them in intelligent co-operation and in the cultivation of the important plants that are grown about their farm homes and upon which the prosperity and success of farm life are entirely dependent? Is the school in the rural community in which a grange exists teaching the children anything about the insect life that is destroying the farm crops to a degree that year after year seriously reduces the income of the farm or anything of the blights and diseases of plants that still further reduce the income and add to inability to meet debts to make improvements and to bring to the home the comforts that add to the pleasure of living? Is there any information imparted to the children on the animal life of the school district, in the woods, in the water or on the farm? Is the schoolhouse and its surroundings pleasant and inviting to the children or is it barren and repellant to the best impulses of their nature? Are there few children in the school and little public interest in the education that is being given them, and if so is there any relation between the total absence of all of this beneficial and all inspiring teaching and the diminishing numbers of children in rural schools? And, further, is there any relation between the absence of this kind of school instruction and the desire of the young people to get away from the farm and into our villages and cities, to the final neglect of many a farm home and its sale at a large sacrifice in value?

Is there not here a work of most vital importance that the grange has not done and one which it may yet do with large possible results in the up-building of farm values and of more active interest in farm life? What may and should the grange do for the community in which it exists in other directions that affect its welfare? Do the members look after the local government? Do they see that efficient and trusted men are administering the expenditures of the town property? Are the highways, of so much importance to farmers, made as good as they should be for the money that is collected for that purpose? Why do so many farmers and highway commissioners allow year after year weeds to grow along the highway, to scatter their seeds over the farms of the entire neighborhood to contend with their grass and grain crops the occupancy of the soil that yields such discouragingly small profits? Why is an important law in relation to the cutting of weeds

along the highway and of vital importance to farmers ignored and violated so universally? Does the grange assume any responsibility or make its demands and influence felt in so important a matter as this? The grange is not a political organization, but the object is to promote and build up agriculture, and, as the population of our townships is largely made up of farmers, they should be the responsible power and influence in the administration of the affairs of the town rather than a mere handful of irresponsible hangers on, of a few men about rural villages who under the direction of a political boss often equally irresponsible go through the form of holding caucuses and putting men in nomination for important public offices whose personal rather than the public interests are too often the issue at stake. The grange should be a

greater power in public affairs and should have a larger agricultural representation in all legislative bodies as the result of its activity in this up-building of the interests of rural communities.

There should be a grange in every school district, and the schoolhouse should be the place for holding the meetings; but, under the present law, farmers have no right to hold such meetings in school buildings, although these should be the live, active centers of agricultural educational work. A half dozen farmers, with the co-operation of their wives, could in time change the entire character of the farm life of a small district. They could hold grange meetings in their homes. Ritualistic work could well give way somewhat or be modified to meet the conditions of thousands of farmers and their families in school districts where they can more easily get together and without driving miles to reach a grange hall. Vast numbers of farmers are in a more or less discouraged condition over their farms. With higher ruling prices for farm products, many cannot benefit from them because of the high cost of labor and the great difficulty of obtaining it. Many do not keep pace with the times, do not study the changed demands in methods and keep on in the old ways, producing things of lower value while there is an unsatisfied demand for different products of higher value.

These and other problems farmers must work out themselves, and they will find great help through the co-operative methods which the grange encourages. For seven months in a year, with comparatively long evenings, farmers may get together to study and work out these problems. At the same time they can consider the social needs of their farm life, which will interest the young people as also those older. Through these means it would not be difficult for every farmer so associated to increase his yield of potatoes twenty-five bushels per acre, hay one ton per acre, milk 600 to 800 quarts per cow per year. This increase, while not large, would change the entire conditions in every farm community. It would enable farmers to better meet the high labor cost and to give farm laborers more steady employment and would give new impetus, life and interest to farming.

More in this line of work should be done. The organization of school district granges when once started would reach far greater numbers than have yet been won. In so doing the grange would be carrying out to an even greater degree the original object of its founders—the promotion of the agriculture of our nation and the elevation of those engaged in it.

GEORGE T. POWELL,
 Columbia County, N. Y.

INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION.

Agricultural High Schools in Ten Per Cent of the Congressional Districts.
 Hon. Willet M. Hays, assistant commissioner of agriculture of Washington, discussed the subject of industrial education at a meeting held under the auspices of the Massachusetts state grange. He spoke in favor of such education as is provided for in a bill introduced in the last congress by Mr. Davis of Minnesota. It would establish secondary schools which would train teachers capable of introducing agriculture and home economics into the rural schools, and when the training of leaders and technical teachers for elementary farm schools is provided for in a system of collegiate and secondary schools the last and greatest of all country life educational movement will be to reorganize the rural school.

The interests of more than 10,000,000 farm boys and girls and nearly 20,000,000 city boys and girls are wrapped up in this bill, he said. It provides for very greatly increased facilities for teaching mechanic arts and home economics in city high schools as well as agriculture and home economics in agricultural high schools. "About 10 per cent of our congressional districts have already established agricultural high schools," said Mr. Hays.

Wetery.
 "Looks like rain today," said the milkman as he poured the customary quart from his can to the picher.
 "It always does," replied the housewife, compressing her lips with cold significance.
 Stifling an oath, he took up his liquid burden and departed heavily. — New Orleans Times-Democrat.

After the Races.
 The curfew tolls the knell of parting day; the grouchy herd winds slowly o'er the lea. They failed to guess, as sporting people say, which was the shell that hid the little pea. — Washington Herald.

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