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1911

THE FARMER'S MIND

E. E. ELLIOTT

THESIS.

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THE FARMER'S MIND

**A Study of the Mental Habits and
Intellectual Processes of Men
Whose Energies Are Absorbed in
the Tilling of the Soil.**

By

E. E. Elliott

Of the

University of Idaho.

1911

Thesis for the degree M.S., 1911.

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--THE POINT OF VIEW--

The most familiar sight from my window is a bit of a mountain. It is an unpretentious peak, altho lifting its head a half mile above the surrounding country in which it is located and easily dominating the low foothills which support it. For years this particular feature of the landscape has duly impressed its form and outlines on my vision, but always from one direction, until this form and outline had become fixed in my mind as the only one which was real and exact.

One day chance took me on an overland journey and the trail wound up from the lower levels over a ridge which jutted out upon the open prairie. There turning in the saddle I caught a new view of my mountain, looming up a hundred miles away, and in the distance, with fields and forms and cities lying between, it seemed to rise with a majesty and enchantment that the nearer and more familiar view had never given. On another occasion a complete tour of the mountain was made and as point after point in the journey was reached there was constant change in the view point and a corresponding change in the aspect of this well known feature of the landscape. At times, as from the surface of some lake or river, it loomed large, again, with other peaks and hills competing, it appeared almost insignificant, relatively dwarfed. During all these years the mountain has stood, as it still

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stands, unchanged and immovable but to the onlooker has come a wider, more comprehensive aspect and tho with each recurring day there comes the old familiar vision from my own window I know that elsewhere there are other eyes gazing on this same object from other angles and to these it presents a vastly different impression. It all depends on the point of view. A study of the point of view is always interesting and when certain results are desired such study is essential. The object toward which the eye may be directed has many sides but it remains inherently the same no matter what may be its nature, but viewed from different angles or only in part it presents a variety of aspects. The more numerous the angles of vision the more complete will be the comprehension of the picture thus obtained and even when but one point of view is granted, it goes without saying that if it have breadth and clearness and be taken advantage of judiciously the resultant grasp of scene is vastly improved. We have pushed this figure of speech far beyond its original meaning, for the eye is, after all, but one of the outlooks of the human mind and "the point of view" passes in its meaning from the purely physical sense to the deeper one of a mental and spiritual survey.

--INDIVIDUALITY AND THE MENTAL VISION--

The Human Mind, when studied individually, presents

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a bewildering diversity. No two people see, think or act alike. Were the impulses of heredity, the bonds of custom, and the influences of environment all removed and each intelligence permitted to expand of its own volition, there would be an appalling multiplicity of difference. It is fortunate that in human development there is a tendency toward the suppression of individuality and its merging into cooperative groups. With each intelligence thinking and moving on its own individual plane human progress would be barred, and it has advanced largely in proportion to the degree of concentrated and combined effort that has been obtainable. We have seen the individual merged into the family group, the clan, the class, individualism giving way to the claims of the larger number, personal privileges and rights constantly being surrendered because of the necessity for a union of forces which would bring about the greatest good to the greatest number. This surrender of individuality has not always been granted willingly. Most frequently it has been forced from the individual by pressure, which he could not resist and continue to live. Sometimes it was brought about through the need of protection from a common enemy; often the influence was the securing or control of a food supply, but in every instance this surrender had first to take place before

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the highest results were attainable.

--THE SURRENDER OF THE INDIVIDUAL--

In the development of civilization there has grown up what we call the social organization. At the beginning this organization was of a distinct elemental nature, and therefore these social combinations are usually referred to as "primary groups"*. These primary groups, as is well shown by this author, are founded essentially on the primitive instincts of the human heart and intelligence. This gathering together into the social groups common to society, the family, the neighborhood, the playground or in any other way where similar ideas and sentiments may prevail is an evidence of the instinctive communism that is to be found everywhere among humanity. Says De Tocqueville, "It is man who makes monarchies and establishes republics, but the commune seems to come directly from the hand of God"°. Human nature, the outgrowth of the best and noblest impulses of the human heart and intelligence is responsible for this grouping and cooperative effort and the more primitive the group the more perfectly will it be found to illustrate the

* (Cooley: Social Organization, p.26-29)

° (Democracy in America, Vol. 1. Chap. 5)

truest and simplest aspects of human life. It may not be illogical to assume that the more primitive, using this term, not in a historic sense, the life may be, the more natural will be its expression. The farther removed the life is from nature and the simplicity which characterizes it, the more artificial it becomes and therefore less accurate and true. It is not unreasonable, therefore, to conclude that if we would seek the most natural and perfect expression of human intelligence we must look for it in those more primary groups of the social order and among the people whose manner of life, while not lacking in development is yet pristine and devoid of artificiality.

--THE FARMER AS A MEMBER OF A PRIMARY GROUP--

The lines of cleavage which separate society into its numerous groups are easily traceable altho they extend in all directions and oftentimes cross each other in a bewildering manner. The particular line of cleavage which sets aside the farmer and places him in a group by himself is one that is as ancient as the race. The farmer's occupation is more primitive than any other. Furthermore it has to do with the essential things of human existence. Primarily the farmer is a producer of the products which are consumed as food or manufactured into clothing, food and raiment being the two elemental

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requirements of the human body. Dealing in such products it has naturally resulted that the needs of himself and family have been his first and chief consideration, and only his surplus has been placed at the disposal of his fellow man. Living thus within his own resources the farmer has always been possessed of an independent turn of mind and habit of life. He and his family have inclined to live within themselves in both a social, as well as economic way. More than this, the home and business life of the farmer are so complicated that it is difficult to consider them apart. For these reasons the farmer can only be classified as a group by considering him as a unit rather than in the mass. In the effort to classify him little cohesion will be found between the units altho each will reveal many common characteristics. When considered in this manner, however, it will be discovered that there he constitutes a distinct and definite social group possessing ideals, habits, customs and temperaments which are in a measure different from other groups and which make up a composite character for him. Since the farmer, then, deals with the elemental things of life and has done so since the beginning, we may expect to find with him more of the primary conceptions of life and social organization. More than any other class he has retained the

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characteristics which are peculiar to his kind, many of which reach back to prehistoric men whose thought has gone to build it up. We may find that because of the very nature of his occupation he has developed a particular attitude toward all other occupations and the world in general and that any marked mental peculiarities which he may reveal are but the natural result of the reflex influence of his daily life.

--THE FARMER AS A UNIT--

As intimated previously, the farmer is inclined toward individualism and the best way to approach an understanding of him as a group or class is to study him as an individual. A comparison of a large number of individual studies should show a series of similarities in character which, taken collectively, would present a fairly accurate estimate of his habit of mind. We should be able to discover his point of view and find the formula to calculate his angle of vision. As an individual it is easy to separate him from the mass of his fellows since he naturally inclines to stand alone and for the same reason it is always difficult ever to find him so massed in any collective way as to permit of any opportunity for study. This present investigation is therefore based on a considerable number of personal observations and upon statistical data gathered directly

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from individual farmers. The information sought was intended more to bring out the farmers way of thinking than to accumulate an assortment of facts, altho the facts themselves have an important bearing on the entire investigation. It was hoped to secure, first; an impression of the way the farmer looked at himself, personally, by bringing out certain facts in his own history, second; his class consciousness, third; his intellectual habits, fourth; his moral and religious perceptions, fifth; his philosophy of life. Not all of these have been fully developed nor is the present study by any means exhaustive.

-- THE OBJECT OF THIS STUDY--

To acquire the farmers point of view, individually and, finally, collectively, is to get upon a common ground of understanding with him. Says Professor Cooley; "No matter how mean or hideous a man's life is, the first thing is to understand him."# A lifetime of close association with those who till the soil, together with unusual opportunities for the comparison of such people under different conditions has led to the conviction that, to an extreme degree, they possess a peculiar habit of mind, and a failure to comprehend this will be fatal so far as any exercise of influence is

#(Cooley: Social Organization, p. 15.)

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concerned.

--SOURCES OF INFORMATION--

In order to classify this mental temperament the writer has employed three principal methods of gathering and preparing the desired information. The first was the collection of fugitive material, such as notes of conversations, interviews, and public addresses made by farmers under various circumstances. Many of these conversations were between two or more persons and being overheard were recorded from memory. Some were engaged in with a definite purpose in mind. Notes were taken of farmers' gatherings, where addresses were made by farmers themselves and on topics of personal interest to him, Grange meetings, Farmers' Unions, Pioneer Associations, Farmers' Institutes, various agricultural conventions, School meetings and similar occasions. One of the most fruitful was a convention held in a northwestern state in which the presidents of the three largest trans-continental railroad systems met by arrangement a great mass meeting of farmers and wheat growers in an apparent effort to adjust differences as to transportation rates. It was an opportunity, not often afforded, to note the relative strength of mind between trained financial magnates and the everyday farmer. An extensive correspondence with farmers during ten years of agricultural experiment work has also supplied much valuable data.

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A second source of material was afforded by an extensive inquiry of a somewhat similar nature to that undertaken by President Roosevelt's Country Life Commission but antedating it. In this connection a study was made of a large number of manuscripts dealing with certain topics relating to rural life and competing for prizes. While limited in its scope this inquiry was extremely valuable because of the large number of personal opinions presented for comparison. The most systematic survey was undertaken by the sending out of a carefully prepared list of questions intended to draw out from the correspondents, not only certain facts from which valuable inferences could be deduced, but also views and opinions regarding many things on which the average farmer is not accustomed to express his mind freely. This list of questions was prepared with great care in order not to give offence or awaken distrust. Remembering that the farmer, as a rule, is averse to much use of the pen, the questions were worded so as to require the minimum of effort in their reply. In order to disarm suspicion a full explanation of the purpose of the inquiry accompanied each blank. The letters were addressed to nearly two hundred names selected from an extensive list. This list probably represented a type of men above the average; taken, as it was, from a class,

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which, through correspondence and other associations had previously shown an interest in the larger life. In order to make the inquiry genuine only those who were known to be actual farmers were selected and so far as possible none who had turned to agriculture after following some other career or occupation were to be considered. It was desired that only those who by inheritance, instinct, and training had persisted in sticking to the farm should be included since they alone would be truly representative of that type of mind which would be distinctive. It was expected that a large number of the circulars sent out would never be answered but it was gratifying to find that fully half of them were returned and in every instance the replies were very complete and satisfactory.

--SUMMARY OF THE REPLIES.--

A brief summary of these replies is here given. They all come from the three northwestern states of Oregon, Washington and Idaho. As would be expected few could claim these as the land of their nativity- only four of the entire number having been born in Iowa while Wisconsin, Illinois, Ohio and Missouri were each well represented.

TABLE SHOWING NATIVITY OF CORRESPONDENTS.

States represented:

Idaho	34
Washington	29
Oregon	2
Native State; Iowa	13
Wisconsin	8
Illinois	6
Ohio	6
Canada	3
Sweden	2
Norway	2
Missouri	4
Kansas	1
West Virginia	1
Indiana	1
Utah	4
Oregon	3
Pennsylvania	2
Arkansas	1
Minnesota	3
Idaho	1
Scotland	2
Michigan	1

12.

The table is significant as showing the wide range from which the farming class of the northwest has been drawn. It is interesting to note the small number from the southern states. The insignificant number of foreign born farmers is accounted for by the fact that they failed to respond to the inquiries sent them. These replies, therefore, represent as cosmopolitan a group of farmers as could have been selected by any method and they represent perhaps a more progressive list than would have been the case in any of the eastern states. The average age of the respondents was forty-six and five tenths years and the replies can be considered as coming from mature men who had attained their full philosophy of life, lived out the usual round of experiences common to mankind and reached the sober age when mental traits and opinions are absolutely fixed. It may be said that these men, perhaps, cannot altogether classify as "born farmers" thirty-nine out of sixty-five having worked at some other occupation during the years of their early manhood. On this account their point of view may be broader than that of the man who has lived always on the farm and has not enjoyed the educative influence of other associations. It would have been better for the purposes of this investigation if it had been based entirely on the reports of men who had at no time been anything else than tillers

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of the soil and themselves the products of it, but with material drawn at random from the farms of the west it would be impossible to do this.

--HUNTING FOR A HOME--

Out of the historical data secured many facts can be gleaned which show the effect of the constant search for Ultima Thule. Many of these men had wandered far and long before finally selecting a final dwelling place. Many had left the boyhood farm to follow the call to other fields of enterprise only to return to the first love at last. Two men report years of travel as commercial salesmen. The mines had claimed five for awhile as had that other western attraction, the timber. One had been a tinner, three had been carpenters, and eight had engaged in some form of merchandise. In some way or other, either on railway, steamboat or overland freight wagons, eight had at some time given their energies to the great question of transportation. Seven had taught school for awhile, but all of these mentioned a disinclination for this work and it was plainly merely a temporary diversion. It is evident that most of these had at some time or other met the temptation to forsake the farm and fully half had, for awhile, left the green fields and running brooks on adventure for wealth, happiness or contentment. Here are some terse biographies:-

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W. A. R. Walla Walla, Wash., "Raised on a farm, one year telegraph operator, one year school teaching, three years general store. Came to Walla Walla in 1889. Went back to the soil and have been raising fruit and vegetables, buying and selling land ever since". G. A. C.

Grangeville, Idaho. "Have lived, Wisconsin, Oregon, Idaho. Various vocations; from farmer to teacher, book-keeper, post-master, storekeeper, warehouseman down to sheepshearer,-- back to the farm again". W. J. F.

Wendall, Idaho. "Born on a farm, lived there until thirty-two years old. Agent C.R.I. & P.Ry. Post-master, engaged in retail grocery eight years, travelling salesman for coffee, spice and cracker factory eleven years. Milling Co. one year. Grocery and meat market two years. Now farming a Carey Act Homestead". J.G. Melrose,

Idaho. "Born in Scotland, Sailed one year. Did not like it and went to work on a farm. Bought a butcher shop, didn't like that. Came to Canada and worked on a farm four years. Too long hours. Went to Dakota. Worked on a farm, too dry. Sold out and came to Idaho. Worked in mines six years, got married and have farmed ever since". A striking instance of a return to first love is this; as he apparently came back to the farm four or five times after trying something else. Some of these had traversed the continent, stopping for awhile in different

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locations, seeking and testing the claims and pretensions of each as a permanent abiding place. Most of them had lived in three or more states, and one claimed to have lived in eighteen. The average western farmer is a wide travelled man as as a rule has rarely moved directly from his native state to the place where he finally settled. The search for the "Rock Candy Mountain" of the childhood story, has taken him a long, tiresome journey and sometimes he has been well tired out before he has found it.

--EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES--

It is surprising how limited an education was enjoyed by the most of these farmers. Only four or five attended a graded school. The common rural school, with one teacher, supplied the large majority with all the schooling they received. Quite a few reported that they had spent less than ten months time altogether in the school room and few had completed the full course of study which would be the equivalent of completing the 8th Grade. It is significant that the list does not include a single student, much less a graduate, of an agricultural school of any sort except in the case of one foreign born farmer who had attended an elementary agricultural school in Sweden, and one other who reported a terms work at Illinois Agricultural College.

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Here and there were found men who had evidently tried to secure a better education than was to be secured in the Common Schools, but only two or three had finished a High School course. The cheaper sort of an education had attracted some, Business courses and Law schools which required little preparatory training. Some had studied at State Normals and taught perhaps a short time. It is to be noted that three out of sixty-five had attended Valparaiso(Ind)Normal University. One held an A.M. from Knox College(Ill.) and one was a graduate of Andover, Harvard, Columbia Law School, and had studied a year in Berlin. Out of these reports one can glean the constant note of regret that the education received was so limited and meagre. The tone was constantly apologetic and the wonder is that so many of these farmers were able to express themselves in such intelligible language and for the most part in such readable handwriting. Surely it may be hoped that the present day generation will be unable to report such limited educational opportunities even on the frontier and the farther hope may be expressed that the larger education and training now being so freely offered may show results in proportion to that of the earlier day.

Out of these items of personal history as given in the handwriting of each correspondent, there may be drawn

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these conclusions, first; The American Farmer, and in particular the western farmer, is versatile, even somewhat restless in temperament. This does not mean that he is discontented but merely that he is governed by a desire to find for himself and family, the best attainable, first in home and then in fortune. In the second place these men are by instinct farmers, although many of them were unaware of the impulses driving them from one occupation to another and leading them through the devious paths so many of them have traversed. Third; The artificialities of the schools have not had a prominent place in direct-their sphere of life. Success came not because of education but in spite of it. The two or three men who had the advantage of College and University years are known to me personally and they are farmers, if such they may be called, of a different type from the majority. They have the instinct but not the genuine spirit that actuates the real tiller of the soil.

--CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS--

Any student of rural folk can not fail to be impressed with their self consciousness. Among his own kind the farmer is at ease, place him in the company of any other class and he reveals a timidity and self repression that is difficult to understand. "Farmers are a class among classes" Says President Butterfield,

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and he is constantly aware of the fact. In his latest book Professor Ely concedes the existence of an agricultural class: "We must acknowledge that we have classes in the United States. We have groups of individuals who possess common characteristics. They have their own peculiar habits of body and mind and their own peculiar needs. The farmer has his own way of looking at things, the merchant another way. The wage earner, especially as he develops, as he is doing, class consciousness, has still other ways of doing things and viewing affairs"[#]. Now this class consciousness in the farmer may be instinctive or it may be a reflection of the manner of life he is called to live. "However isolated from his class fellows the individual may be, he sees, thinks, and feels regarding his more immediate concerns as his class interest and function determine; and the color and direction given by his primary interests tinge and direct his beliefs and influence his actions in most other matters"^o. It may be properly stated that many farmers have actually inherited from farmer parentage temperamental distinctions which place them naturally in the category of "born farmers". On the other hand,

[#](Ely: Studies in the Evolution of Individual Society)

^o(Ghent: Mass and Class, p. 57)

however, these feelings and convictions are not so fixed in the individual that they are not easily shifted when he passes out of the farming class into another. We have known farmers to become transformed by virtue of prosperity into bankers and under the influence of new interests they quickly develop new beliefs and standards of conduct, many of which were at variance with those which had been religiously maintained previously. Self-consciousness in the individual farmer and consciousness of himself as a member of a class, or class consciousness are not necessarily one and the same thing. The reserve and other temperamental differences which so often characterize men of this class may probably be considered as mental reflexes produced by those vocational functions and interests which are the foundation of his existence. The true class consciousness is not so prominent among farmers as their own individual consciousness of themselves as belonging to a large body of workers who are accidentally engaged in a similar occupation. At the same time these men have an appreciation of their avocation and it is of interest to us to estimate this if possible.

WHY ARE YOU A FARMER?

Sixty-five answers were given to this question, "Why are you a farmer? If you had your choice would you remain

a farmer? Would you want your children to be farmers?" The replies were definite and positive and revealed a surprising community of opinion. By far the larger number spoke in some manner of the satisfaction that farm life afforded, the enjoyment of working with nature, the attractions of Science, the pleasure and enjoyment of the open air life. That, deep in the hearts of these men rested an appreciation of the aesthetic side of life, could not be overlooked. No less than seventeen per cent of the replies used such superlative language as "I like farming." "I love stock." "I always loved the farm." "I am a farmer because I love farming." Here is the statement of a grizzled old veteran who states that he has made a fortune of \$75,000. by the plow. "Because I love to farm and farm well, I like to out do my neighbors and set a good example, I have my choice to be a farmer." Here is another: "My wife and I both love the farm and stock. I would rather be a farmer than President." One of the best replies is this: "Because we have a touch of the cosmopolitan in our make up; we delight in old clothes; to get next to the soil. We love to experiment, to plan, and enjoy the labor necessary. We take pleasure in thoroughness, realizing that each step or operation must be perfect in itself, must harmonize with the succeeding performance. Because it is

the grandest opportunity on earth to exercise every trait found in humanity." This feeling of satisfaction arises naturally from different sources. Some found it in the out door life, others in the fact that they were producers, ministering to the needs of the world. Not less than five expressly referred to the dignity and nobility of the farmer's calling and the influence it had on the formation of character.

"Farming affords opportunities for properly balanced manhood." "I am a farmer because I think it one of the most honorable ways of making a living." "I believe it is one of the most noble and honorable occupations which a man can engage in today." It is not likely that men, engaged in any of the ordinary trades and vocations will be found in any large numbers giving expression to such sentiments regarding the work they are doing. Nor will many be found who would speak as do these farmers so emphatically of the pleasure and satisfaction to be found in the pursuit of their particular calling. Occasionally in these replies there was a depressing note of dissent. Five men reported that they were farmers simply because their fathers before them were farmers. Three complained that they knew nothing else when they came to manhood. Three gave the excuse of poor health, while circum-

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stances more or less uncontrollable had caused eight to follow the plow. A large number spoke definitely of the independence and freedom of the rural life as being the real reason why they were thus engaged. One impressive fact is to be noted. These men, almost without exception, were able to give a clear and concise reason for being farmers and had evidently thought it out long before hand.

WOULD YOU REMAIN A FARMER?

When asked the question what they might do today if given free choice, the replies are still more positive and show that, whatever might have been the original influence which made them tillers of the soil they would not from choice do otherwise at the present time. Four only gave the negative replies, all of these belonged to the list of unfortunates just mentioned. One was a man who had stated that he was farming because he didn't know any better, another had poor health, which had first put him on the farm, a third was a farmer "through misfortune", and the fourth, a personal friend of the writer, known as a prominent socialist, evidently regarded himself as belonging to an oppressed class altho he is known to be worth in land and chattels over \$200,000, all of which was accumulated through farming and stock raising.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR CHILDREN?

Most of these farmers preferred that their children stay on the farm. It is significant that many desired that they have the privilege of choice and adaptibility is frequently referred to. I quote. "I believe a child should do that for which he has a natural liking. For myself, I always liked machinery and think I would have been successful as a mechanic or engineer, however, I am a farmer from choice and will be well satisfied if my children grow up to be good farmers" Another says: "I would not want to spoil a good carpenter to make a poor farmer. If they liked the farm, yes, otherwise, no." A significant statement has an economic bearing. Several replies aver that they preferred their children to be farmers, if at the same time they could be land owners. Evidently the thought of being tenant farmers was repugnant and I doubt not that many others would have presented the same opinion had this point occurred to them.

COMPARED WITH OTHER AVOCATIONS AND LINES OF INDUSTRY IS THE FARMER GETTING THE SHOW HE IS ENTITLED TO RECEIVE?

The above question was included in the list for the direct purpose of bringing comparative opinions and discovering what jealousy, if any, might be

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entertained by farmers toward other classes. There is little reason to believe that we shall find, what political economists call class hatred, on the part of the farmer, for it is not apparent that he has any clear idea of what constitutes his class rights and privileges.

A summary of the answers reveal the fact that a large majority, forty-eight, think the farmer does not get a fair show, compared with other classes, fifteen believed he does and two dodge the question. There is some clinging to the old belief that the farmer is down-trodden and the prey of the speculator but on the whole the views expressed are sane and sensible and the reasons given are honest and self critical. The lack of any appreciation is largely charged to the farmer himself. Many lay the blame on his failure to assert his rights in legislative halls, and see the remedy in organization and cooperation. So many speak of the need of the farmer to get together that it cannot be overlooked that the sentiment in favor of organization is making rapid growth. Strangely enough, but a single reference was made to the tariff as having any influence. A few extracts, to show the drift of opinion are here appended. "No, but he is gaining in influence, in this northwest country, at least, and is not a despised "hayseed" anymore but a respectable farmer." Here is a

study in economics. "No, he neither prices his commodities, coming or going; the other fellow does both and in this fact lies the trouble in keeping people on the farm." This one tells a plain truth. "I think he does, his mode of praise should only be in keeping with his individual effort in improving the conditions of his environment." Here are two sides of the argument: "Yes and No. Yes compared with other manual labor, no, in regard to laws and his say-so in financial affairs. Perhaps his own fault, as he does not take time to study and think for himself and learn business methods." Here is offered another remedy. "I do not think the farmer is getting all that is coming to him but it is his own fault. If the farmers will throw off the apathy which envelopes them and get together they can have anything they want." The last quotation to be given expresses a different idea from any other but has doubtless a lot of truth in it: "No, because his business will not permit him to dress as well and take the care of himself necessary to make a good appearance." To summarize these sentiments, we may conclude that while the farmer as a farmer has a keen appreciation of his place in the social scale and economic kingdom, he hardly thinks of himself as a class of workers whose interests are all alike. That this consciousness is

increasing is evidenced by the frequent references to the need of education, to special legislation, presumably to be secured only by united effort and to the desire for cooperation and organization as the solution for all his problems.

--THE FARMERS INTELLECTUAL HABITS--

The mental attitudes of men are usually betrayed by their intellectual habits. To some extent it is possible to fathom the depths of the mind of another, to discern his mental processes, to trace his thought, but it is not always so. We may, in one way or another, extract from him views, ideas and opinions all of which are indicative but not conclusive, for few men are as easily read as the pages of an open book and no one knows absolutely the heart of another. A knowledge of his reading habits may also help us to gain an insight into a man's mind, for what, when and how a person reads must certainly be a guide to the paths of his thought. We should not assume, however, that the reading habit is a true test of mental stature or calibre. After all, reading is more or less an acquired accomplishment and must not be accepted as an infallible mirror of the mind. Observation during many years of close association with farmers gave me the impression that the average farmer is not much of a reader. Of books he

knew very little and even his acquaintance with papers and magazines was peculiarly cultivated. An instance is recalled of a very intimate friend and neighbor, who was a prominent farmer in the community. At that time he was probably a trifle past fifty years of age. Both of us were members of the same Farmers Club. Hearing a discussion one day of the well known historical novel, "Ben Hur" by General Lew Wallace, which had just recently been published, he asked for the loan of the book, with the remark "I've a notion to read that book myself." Some three months later another request came in for the book and on my asking for its return my farmer friend remarked, "I'm not through with it yet". "How far along are you?" "Well I've got to the one hundred twenty-sixth page and I'm going to finish it if it kills me." But he never did, although he kept the book for a year, and there were few of his kind who did or could make a better report of their intimacy with books. The following humorous story illustrates the point. Said one old farmer to another during the late Congressional war; "What do you think of the tariff situation?" "What they doin' to it?" was the reply. "Why, haven't you read the papers?" "Well, I used to," said the other, "but 'bout a year ago I stopt 'em off. They got to be too frivolling for me. Since then I've been took up readin' a book."

In recent years there has poured from the press a continuous output of books on Agriculture. Some of this is scientific, having been prepared with a view to its use by students but much of it is in popular form and all supposed to meet a crying need among the agriculturists of the land for literature pertaining to their calling. As a matter of fact it is to be questioned whether the farmers are buying or reading these attractive books at all, or in fact any other sort of bound literature. To speak of the literary habits of the farmer is practically to speak of something that does not exist. In order to bring out information on this point these questions were asked: "What books have you read during the past year?" "What Agricultural books have you in your library?" and "what agricultural papers do you take:-" Follow the summaries. Seventeen replied that they had read a book during the year and as the question was directly asked, some of them gave the name of the book, but others were unable to

remember it. Only four had read an agricultural text, the list including the following; "Campbells Farm Manual" "Campbells "Soil Culture," Plumb's "Types and Breeds of Live Stock," Shaw's "Feeding Farm Animals," "Year Book," United States Department of Agriculture. Two, and these were members of The Church of Latter Day Saints of Jesus Christ (Mormon) had read a new Church History. One man

had read his Bible through but no other book was mentioned. Two reported the reading of Shakespeare, Scott and Eugene Field's Poems. Two others, "The Old Oregon Trail," a book evidently sold through the northwest during the year by book agents, and eight reported a goodly list of popular novels, including "The Right of Way," "The Spoilers," "Courtship of John Stevens," "Ben Hur," (Two) "John Halifax," "Quo Vadis," (Two) "The Eternal City," Ralph Connor's works and The Tale of Two Cities. The most voluminous reader, a lone bachelor by the way, states that he had absorbed the following list during the year. "John Halifax," "Tale of Two Cities," "Quo Vadis," "Ben Hur," "Eternal City," "Law of Psychio Phenomena and Evolution of the Soul," and "Steele's Popular Physics," Not such a bad mixture, by any means. The absence of agricultural books is so significant as almost to be pathetic. Nine were straightforward enough to state directly that they had not read a complete book during the past year, but by far the larger number, thirty six, dodged a direct answer and several others made some sort of excuse for the failure. One had poor eyesight, two say they are always reading, four have no time to read. As a matter of fact, of the sixty-five responses, good intelligent men, all of them, it could hardly be said that they were consistent book worms. The number and

variety of books discovered on the library shelves would hardly stock a second hand book store. The Year Books of the United States Department of Agriculture and bulletins from the same source are most commonly quoted. A score gave the Year Book as the only sort of a bound volume in their possession. One reported six copies, while another had a complete set for the past twenty-five years. A very few modest agricultural libraries were reported; two farmers had six volumes each, another four. One had twenty-four books on Fruit Growing and Landscape Gardening. The most complete contained forty-two books, and is personally known to be an excellent collection. Only three reasonably good general libraries were on the list. As an illustration of the dearth of books that was betrayed a list is given of the books reported by a most prominent farmer and stockman. It includes "Twenty volumes of the Red Polled Cattle Herd Book," "Robinson's Good Old Facts For Farmers," "Encyclopedia Britannica," "Graphic Record," "Wagner's Farmer's Encyclopedia," "Reports of the Bureau of Animal Industry," "Some English Works and Government Publications," and "The Diseases of the Horse,"

--NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES--

While the farmer makes a poor showing in his acquaintance with books we must not assume that he does

31.

no reading. An effort was made to find out what papers, magazines and agricultural journals were of interest with the following results: Only three state that they take no agricultural papers. Many take from one to three or four. One reported twelve. Nearly all allude to local papers, many of which contain more or less agricultural reading in them. Only four take and read a daily paper, which might indicate that the farmer has not yet acquired this habit and hardly considers the daily essential to his happiness. It would be easy to tell the style of farming each man was engaged in by the character of the papers he subscribes for. The western farmer is more of a specialist than the easterner and the agricultural paper which catches his fancy always deals with some particular line. The summary of the papers found on the tables of these correspondents shows a wonderfully long list and variety. Fifty-seven different agricultural papers were reported, printed in all parts of the United States. Thirty of these were taken by only one subscriber. The most popular appeared to be the well known "Farm and Home" which found its way to twelve, while "Farm and Fireside," "Farm Journal" and "The Breeders Gazette" each claimed ten subscribers. Local papers by no means appeared to be popular. Prominent papers like "Hoard's Dairyman," "Better Fruit,"

"Orange Judd Farmer" and "Rural New Yorker" seemed to be taken only by those engaged in the special interests which these papers emphasize. Many of these papers are taken simply because the subscribers became attached to them during the years when they lived "back yonder in the East." It is evident that the average farmer depends for his agricultural information largely on the agricultural press and that books and even Experiment Station bulletins are less highly esteemed. Only a few refer to the bulletins with any show of appreciation and those issued by the United States Department of Agriculture appear much more popular than those emanating from the State Stations. We may conclude that most farmers are somewhat influenced by the reading of the Agricultural papers which find admission to their homes but that for the most part the great mass of literature pertaining to their calling does not affect their mental attitudes very seriously. This is a problem worthy of serious consideration. But while the farmer may be a poor reader of technical literature he likes to read the news and the weekly or semi-weekly newspaper is carefully perused. The man who would balk at a book with covers will eagerly and patiently plod through the pages of the local "Gazette," "Herald," or "Post," skipping nothing and including without

discrimination the local items, advertisements, out of date stereotyped and plate matter of the "patent inside," Court house happenings and Associated Press rehash, and on this sort of mental pabulum he manages to keep himself pretty well posted on what is going on in the world.

--AS HE THINKETH--

What we really want to know, is, how does the farmer go about his thinking. This exercise of the higher intellectual faculties is defined by Lotze as "the reaction of the mind on the material supplied by external influences," and altho the amount and oharacter of the intellectual material supplied by the printed page which the farmer makes use of is limited, yet we must not conclude that he is an intellectual starveling. That the farmer is a constant, consistent and reasonably correct thinker, there is abundant reason to believe: His habit may possibly be more reflective and philosophical than conclusive yet there are probably few matters of vital importance on which he has not thought seriously and arrived at a definite decision. Even on trivial matters he will be found to have opinions altho often loth to express himself. As a rule the farmer is not given much to discussion but he is a good listener and weighs carefully whatever comes

to him in this way. I have attended many a farmer's meeting where matters of interest were to be decided. A few, a very few, would speak at any length, more, perhaps, would intermittently join in the discussion but the large majority would quietly take it all in and perhaps at the end would show a vote indicating a decision scarcely affected by the flow of oratory which had preceded. It is for this reason that the farmer, as a rule, makes the most reliable and consistent juror of any class of citizens.. The average farmer is not apt to express himself or his opinions voluntarily and it is not easy to discover what he really thinks. In the belief that a test of his moral and religious concepts would reveal many interesting facts and at the same time prove to be a mirror to his mind, the following questions were asked. "Do you believe in a Supreme Being, the Future Life or some form of the Christian religion?" "What percentage of your farmers are members of some Church?" Inquiries of such a vital nature should reveal the real moral perceptions which mark every human heart. Of the sixty-five answers, only one positively answered "No" to the threefold question. One replied "Yes and No," another, "Don't know," still another dodged by writing "Please don't" while a fifth expressed an affirmative belief but stated it in terms of

hope and expectation rather than conviction. Of the remainder, sixty in number, all asserted in definite language a belief in a Supreme Being and the Future Life. Many elaborated their replies and several laid down the reason for their faith. The question was not resented or dodged except in one instance. Some of the expressions were beautiful and rather unexpected, coming from practical, hardheaded men who were engrossed with the day's work. Says one: "I certainly believe and have the hope that this temporary happiness may be made permanent." This from an old, self-taught stockman whose life has been spent largely in the saddle:- It is given in his own style of orthography and expression. "In looking about you, you discover the Supreme Controll, Therefore must be controlled by a Supreme Being. We are onely taught by nature of our Inclination to a future life, that desire has been given to us; certainly we have a rite to think it will be fulfilled." Can we doubt that this man, who rarely if ever darkened the doors of a Church, found the "Supreme Being" in the evidences which his open air life on the range and beside the camp fire brought him from day to day? In contrast to this is the following who acknowledges his debt to revelation. "I have always believed in the Bible and all of its teachings." Most of the

convictions given appear to have a logical basis, for instance; "There must be a Master hand that directed its development." "There is evidently a Supreme Being." "I believe in a Supreme Being and a Future Life, If I am prepared to live I am prepared to die." Not all of these writers admitted a belief in the Christian religion altho practically most of them do. Neither must it be assumed that they were all church members.

--HOW MANY ARE CHURCH MEMBERS--

It is my belief that many possess a deep interest and profess a faith in the fundamentals of the Christian faith but do not attach themselves to any organization. It is quite probable that an accurate census of church membership among farmers would show some unexpected facts. Estimates of church affiliations were called for and the replies show a wide range in different communities altho the average estimate is quite creditable. Of forty-nine reporting, the average given is sixty-one per cent. Six others report their estimate as "small" and three state "large." It is probable that the estimate of sixty-one per cent is slightly higher than the average western rural community as there are a number of Mormons and Catholics reporting where the average ran from ninety-five to one hundred per cent. An average church

membership of sixty per cent of the farmers of these communities is certainly an interesting and encouraging evidence of the high moral character which has always been presumed to exist there.

--WHAT SOME FARMERS THINK OF THEIR OWN MORAL
AND RELIGIOUS SENSE--

My replies to a list of questions intended to develop the farmer's estimate of his own character were by far the most interesting of all. On this point so many took occasion to express their views and opinions that it is a difficult task to select the most valuable for our purpose. By far the greater number give the farmer a good name. They speak of his honesty as par excellent, and are honest enough to state that he is not entitled to any extra credit for it. His sobriety is particularly commented on and the belief is prevalent that much of the anti-saloon sentiment sweeping over the country is due to the attitude of the farmer. They all agree that the farmer as a class is more law abiding and careful to keep out of the courts. When it came to a question of the use of profanity the replies are amusing and suggestive. While the opinion prevailed that the farmer was less addicted to the habit, a large number inclined to the opposite view and there were many excuses.

Some of these are worth giving:- "The farmer is more inclined to profanity because he has ten times more to vex him and cause him to feel like swearing." "The man working alone does not swear very much, if any." "As to profanity they have more provocation for the use of "ouss words" than other people." "Profanity; well when he has upset a binder a few times he might feel like saying a "ouss word" or two." "When their horses balks they swear some." "Profanity; a man that has not get up enough in him to swear is a poor farmer." "He, the farmer, is rather profane but he is becoming less each year." These farmers held a somewhat complacent view as to the virtues of their own class. Fifty estimate their morality as above the average, the comparisons running from "good", "above the average," "excells all," to "highest of all." Only two declare him to be lower morally than the average. Throughout it all runs a strain of sincerity and many of the statements are accompanied by explanations which are illuminating. There is a clear recognition of the elevating influence of the farmer's occupation. The reflex effect of an avocation constantly pursued, which in itself is uplifting. In not a single instance can we find a suggestion that the contest with Nature, the dealing with material forces and objects is in the least

degrading. To my mind this is a most hopeful sign and the individual evidence is well worth repeating. A cattle breeder says:- "Human Nature may be much the same the world over but the stockman or general farmer who is worthy of the name is an honest,manly, hospitable,moral man. We learn we cannot safely cheat nature and the soil and naturally learn it is neither a good policy or principle to cheat others." This is the view of a wheat farmer:- "He is more moral. That is, while at his occupation of tilling the soil and his schooling is such that he has to be honest with nature. With an inclination to honesty, when he comes in contact with the commercial jockey, he falls an easy prey,and, I am sorry to say, in order to get even (in his idea) he becomes frequently a disgrace to the name "farmer." This, from an old sheep and horse ranchman:- "Farm life offers better opportunities for moral cultivation than other pursuits. The surroundings better conserve for moral uplift. If religiously inclined the same reasons would apply as the above in moral life. He is more honest because less in contact with the immoral life of the city bred man; is removed from the polluted life of graft and greed." Here is another:- "The farmer is more moral because he is brought in less contact with the immoral. He is not so religious

because he is more isolated from the Church. The farmer about holds his own in honesty, but has more respect for law and sobriety. He is inclined to profanity because he has ten times more to vex him and make him feel like swearing." A strawberry grower writes:- "I believe the farmer is more moral in his instincts than in most occupations for he comes in contact with cleaner things." A "dry farmer" reports; "Would say he excels in morality. He is not subject to so many temptations as many other classes of people. He is, as a rule, sober, has respect for law, and is more nearly honest than his commercial brother." Says another:- "Farmers are more moral but less religious than other people." A tideland Dairyman on Puget Sound gives a similar point of view:- "I think that the nature of the farmers occupation tends to present to his mind a higher moral standard than do other occupations, but whether it makes him more religious or not is a point I am not decided upon." Many other quotations of equal interest and value might be included but these show the drift of sentiment. The influence of nature, the removal from temptation, the absence of artificialities all tend to the maintenance of a sturdier, more straightforward type of character. It is significant that none of these correspondents

spoke in anything but the most serious manner of these inquiries touching the moral and spiritual life. Along these lines there was an apparent firm conviction ready for expression without hesitancy or timidity, that moral impulses and natural religion, with all that these convey, are the reasonable products which are indigenous to the soil no less than the crops and fruits on which his efforts are mainly expended.

--THE FARMER AS A PHILOSOPHER--

There remains one most important subject of inquiry along the line we have been following. It is important because it has to do with the aspect which the phenomena of life reveals to the farmer. We want to know if his vision is clouded in the gloom of despair, or bright with the silver lining of hope which illuminates every cloud. Will we find here faith, undimmed and unspoiled, that the world is a pretty good world after all? Will we find courage and confidence, good cheer and patience, together with those other qualities which mark the altruist and optimist. If we do not find these among the farmers of the land then we may conclude that the world has lost them, perhaps beyond recovery. So frequently we have found that at different periods of history when strain and stress distorted mental vision, men of all

sorts have allowed their perspective to become faulty and, as a consequence, more than once have lost their master hold on the world and its works. One cannot read the plain, simple confessions from which quotations will here be made without an added respect for the men who have made them. With little effort at literary expression, with no desire to make a show, the language and views given are clear, definite and positive. For the most part they ring true and their tone is reassuring.

--IS THE WORLD GROWING BETTER--

The vast majority of farmers are optimists. Ready to cry out at injustice and oppression, quick to recognize evil and strike at it, there is always an abiding faith that good will triumph, is constantly triumphing, over all that would oppose it. Seventy-five per cent of the farmers who were asked the above question answered without hesitation that they believed in the progress of the good and true. Almost without exception these men gave the foundation for their faith. An analysis of these answers reveals an astonishing number of reasons and show how broadly the situation has been surveyed. Just to illustrate this the following long list of evidences of the world's betterment is given. The growth of arbitration; growing

liberality of capital; suppression of the saloon;
 keener sense of civic duty; education in science;
 increase in humanity; decrease of sectarian bitterness;
 more liberal religious sentiment; quickened public
 conscience; better standards of living; improvement in
 the courts; the spread of general education; the
 diffusion of knowledge and information relating to life;
 the conflict with graft; the sentiment for a return to
 the simple life; Philanthropy and its broad
 application; the growing recognition of a certain
 obligation on the part of great wealth as to its use
 for the public good; political and religious toleration;
 better legislation for the people. Additional
 evidences: The service of inventive genius to improve
 conditions of living; the spread of fraternalism; the
 growth of the Roosevelt idea of a "square deal." All
 these and many others. It would appear, further, from
 the language used, that these opinions were largely the
 result of independent thinking and not merely echoes
 of stump speeches or muckraking magazine articles.
 Here are some illustrations. "Better, a thousand times
 better; I can cite my own feelings which are those of
 love and sympathy for the remotest nations of the earth
 and I believe that is the modern heart of man. Ancient
 history shows no such feeling among the nations. Every

day life is devoid of ancient cruelty and its dreads and fears." "I think the world is growing better because the people are becoming broader minded. While there is much crime in the land, I believe that this is due, in a way, to the fact that we are growing so humane, in view of our own weaknesses, that we are slow to punish." "The world is growing better just in the proportion that the people are becoming educated and truly civilized. It would be hard to find a man or woman who would say that they had no confidence in their fellows. All over the world there is a general movement for better conditions morally, socially and politically." "Better, much better. The flash of electricity around the world reveals the bad, and formerly we knew only of the evil in our own communities and believed others were better. We are so much more highly civilized and refined that the same crimes as were common then, now shock us more and more." "Better, more education, less ignorance; less hatred for those who differ in religious views as well as politics. A growing desire for true men instead of creeds and parties. More respect and charity; less controversy and more peace and harmony." "We have better schools, better newspapers, better and cheaper magazines, better transportation facilities, better

mail service from year to year. Better laws and greatest of all a better public conscience." "I think the world is growing better because people are becoming more intelligent and more practical methods mark the efforts of those who labor for the uplift of the human family. Our education is becoming more helpful." "Better. Wife says we can tell by the kindness of heart shown by our neighbors." "Public opinion is more ready to approve honesty and discountenance any form of evil doing than at any other period in the world's history." "Growing better. The Churches are coming closer together; The temperance sentiment is growing; We have a better and more systematic way of caring for the unfortunate and the people are reading and thinking more for themselves." "Better, by all means. My children do not see one tenth of the drunkenness and evil that I did as a child." "Better, the awakening in China, Japan; at home the Y.M.C.A. and Men's Layman movement; The attitude of Courts toward Trusts; The sentiments and policies advocated by Roosevelt and their popular approval all over the country." "The world is growing better; most of us think it is a better place to live in than it ever was."

--IS THE WORLD GROWING WORSE?--

Only seven correspondents boldly affirm this to be

a fact, and it is significant that of these, nearly every one has been consistently pessimistic in his replies to every question. Some make a distinction between moral improvement and intellectual advancement. "The world is brighter and better intellectually but morally worse; There is a tendency to live in the congested districts where immorality grows upon its population until vice becomes so common that it is no longer frowned upon." "As the world grows older people become more enlightened but the greed of commercialism is corrupting the better angels of our natures and we are losing sight of that moral and religious obligation as parents to train the rising generation in the paths of virtue, sobriety, industry and honest endeavor." This man gives a different reason: "I think the world is growing worse because there are so many blackguards wearing the church cloak." This from a man who declares he would not farm if he could help himself; "It appears to be growing worse. There is monopolization of capital, concentration of antagonistic forces for supremacy and capital is against labor." This is the view of an intelligent free thinker: "Worse. Self gratification is too evident on every hand. There is a lack of respect and that kindly feeling for others that was formerly manifest. The doing right for right's sake is lacking. Our laws

prove it." When the Savior was on earth he on one occasion lamented over the unbelief and inconstancy of those to whom he spoke. Almost querulously he inquires, "Nevertheless, When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" Should the Master of Men walk again among his followers I am of the conviction that the faith and hope and earnest love of which he planted the seeds so long ago are today bearing a fuller and riper fruitage than at any other period in the world's history. He would find, moreover, its most perfect manifestation among the plain people whose prototype he loved to mingle during his brief pilgrimage. "This is a good world to live in and a good day to live in," says an every day farmer to me, and he holds no abstract or uncommon view among men of his class. Beneath and above his matter of fact world rests another world of idealism, less perfectly realized by some than others, but never wanting entirely. Some one has said, "Everywhere and always the economic environment limits the range and effect of spiritual forces." Accepting this as true it may be said that the farmer is more dominant over his economic environment than almost any other class, for the range and effect of his spiritual forces appear unlimited and



undiminished and as time goes on are given freer and less restricted play.

--SUMMARY--

The Farmers' philosophy of life is sound. With him egotism is not characteristic. Less than other classes is he controlled by selfish desires. He does not boast, he is not envious nor jealous; If he tells of his achievements, at your request, he does so with modesty. We find him ambitious but largely for his family. He travels far and wide, he tests out many experiences in life, but he has been seeking for the fountains of satisfaction and happiness. He loves his own manner of life and finds therein contentment. His circle of usefulness at no point bisects adversely the circles of others. His class consciousness is an ill defined thing which he would not recognize at all if it could be helped. At no time does it warp his attitude toward others. He is aware that, intellectually, he has not yet attained, but for him the field of knowledge is steadily widening and he bids fair to be the factor to break down the traditions of our ancient educational systems and open new opportunities for the masses. His moral perceptions are clear and distinct, persistently holding to the right, more by

instinct and reason than by outside influences. He is found supporting the moral fabric of our social and political structures. With him the religious instinct is genuine, altho often dormant and unexpressed. His God is the Great Creator, the Supreme Ruler, the Bountiful Benefactor. The Farmers' World is not a world of chance and God is never, to him, afar off.

To the man who would get close to the Farmer, to know him, to help him or to receive aid in return, let me commend this brief study of his character. The outward revelations and expressions are the principal guides we have to follow, but beneath these are deeper springs of action for:- "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

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