

The Advantages and Disadvantages of the Farmer. 96

The politician in every speech he makes tells us that the farmer is the hub of the wheel of progress, and appeals to him, as the originator of wealth, and as one of a sound and practical turn of mind for his support in the ^{election.} conning. The Fourth of July orator spares no pains and no rhetorical figures in speaking of the great rural class. For all of this enthusiastic oratory the farmer has his joys and his sorrows, his fortunes and his misfortunes, his advantages and his disadvantages.

When living several miles from the noisy and busy city, or perhaps even a mile or more of forest, field or prairie is stretched between him and his nearest neighbor the farmer can realize, as no one else the enjoyment to be found ⁱⁿ an hour conversation. The few spare evenings that he may chance to have must be spent in the same old way - the same old routine is to be repeated. There are no good social entertainments within a block of his door, and the lecture room is but rarely seen. The soul thrilling and inspiring religious services that are so characteristic of the city cannot be participated in, and the cold wintry days cannot always be spent in the most profitable manner. Thus he lives in partial seclusion from society and must devise his own

methods of entertainment. The education of his children is often dangerously neglected. School is sometimes so far away that the younger pupils cannot attend in disagreeable weather or occasionally they are kept at home to do some little chore and by this the child who was once greatly interested loses all ambition, gets behind his classes and finally gives up in despair perhaps never again to take hold of that which will add much to his wealth and happiness. Teachers in these schools are often inferior and are not capable of leading and training anyone much less children.

One may stand upon the streets of a city and hear many unpleasant remarks concerning the brawny farmer as he brings his produce to market. His carriage is not of the finest quality if he chance to have one; his horses have not been groomed for some time, and his clothes show the signs characteristic of the farm. In short he is called seedy, and ~~is~~ now instead of being the plain, honest, and upright farmer, he is christened by some as being a careles, slow-to-do, and worthless hayseed. If he has business with a merchant, lawyer, or some other city fellow he is treated like a man, but if he meet these same gentlemen when

out of their business they give him, if any attention at all, one that is freezing.

The farmer can stand these taunts, jeers and cold receptions but combine capital against him as it is at present and you have forged chains that impede his every movement and take from him that which he has earned by toil and drudgery. Trusts combine and monopolies destroy fair competition with him and say what he must pay for his implements, wine, oil, and nearly everything that is essential to the running of a farm. These some masses of wealth assume a right which no earthly power ought to have, and tell him what ^{he} must take for his grain, cattle, hogs and they even go down so low as to regulate the prices of his turnip seed without any regard to the demand and supply - the only fair regulators of the market.

For all of these inconveniences and unfair dealings there is a bright side to the farmer's life and one whose beauty attracts more of our population than any other vocation. The farm: - This word itself brings peace and consolation to the weary person. Speak it and you impart a knowledge of something more than a quarter section with a small dwelling upon it. It brings to mind the large, spacious dwelling with its verandas

and vine covered porches; the half acre lawns dotted at intervals with shrubs and flower beds; the cool, fresh and untainted air that was never made foul by the smoke and dust of the city; the giant shade trees that protect one from the heat of the summer sun, and "The old oaken bucket, the moss covered bucket, The iron bound bucket which hangs ^{from} the well" will never cease to quench the thirst and fill with pride the heart of those who partake of its cool and refreshing elixir.

When travelling from the densely populated city into the country, one is deeply impressed with the purity of the atmosphere and the absence of the quite common stench. Instead of being confined in one small room to breathe the air over many times the farmer inhales his from immeasurable space. The growing vegetation extracts poisonous gases and the frequent rains wash disease germs from it. Thus we can account for the long life of the farmer and the comparatively short life of those who hold clerical and other positions in which pure air and sufficient exercise cannot easily be obtained. It has been shown by statistics that the average life of the latter is but little over forty years while in the same state the farmers reached the age of nearly sixty five years.

The old saying that good health is the sign of pure morals, and vice versa is as true today as it ever was. This applies extremely well to the farmer. They have no saloons in which to spend their evenings. The vice, vile, and corrupt, that carry thousands of persons in their strong current, are thwarted by the wily farmer, and the smothering and loafing dens but rarely have his presence. He is free from these temptations but there is another freedom - another liberty that gives him the right to act for himself, and not as a mere machine. At one o'clock bell warns him that it is time to resume his toil, and at six o'clock signal tells him of the close of his work. He is not lorded over by some surly and overbearing "boss" who criticises with words too profane to be spoken.

We can speak of the farmer's independence, and of the beautiful field and forest; the meadows may receive a few pleasant epithets; the lawns, dwellings and other conveniences can be fairly described, and the calm, and refreshing life that makes life a pleasure to him is sometimes pictured as a Heaven sent blessing but all the word paintings and exquisite descriptions cannot lessen those evils that depress him. He will always, as now, be the homely dressed farmer with his independence

almost wholly imaginary; his forest and fields a veritable jungle of weeds and underbrush; his meadow an unsightly swamp or stony thuff and his Zephyrus a Kansas blizzard or a destructive tornado.

J. M. Hamer