The Advance of the Farmer

The farmer of a thousand years ago and the farmer of to day differ widely. The farmer of that time was considered as belonging to the low and ignorant classes, who could not boast of their genealogy as the noblemen were so fond of doing. The noblemen spent their energy in making the farmer subordinate for in this lay their success. An old series of pictures which was reprinted a few years ago well shows the condition of those times. In the first picture was shown the king in hieratical robe, the crown upon his head, and the scepter in his hand saying "Rule for all." Next came the soldier in his military coat, bearing his arms with the words "I fight for all." Next came the lawyer, "I plead for all." Then came the bishop, "I pray for all." Then there came a long line of half-starved farmers taking from his jacket an old wallet with the words "I pray for all." Yes, praying for all. The king in his robes, the soldier in his glistening armor, the bishop in his beau-
Tinily decorated church, the lawyer with his stern face, and the farmer paying for all. The farmer was looked upon as ignorant and inferior, one from whom money could be drawn to satisfy the desires of others. When the crops were grown the King's share was one tenth, the share of the church was another tenth, and for rent the landlord took from one third to one half and the farmer the produce was left with from three to four tenth of the results of his labor. But this was not all, when the landlord's daughter was to be married, the farmer must bear the expense, and when there was a prospect for war a special tax was issued.

You probably ask why did the farmer allow himself to be so overburdened why did he not break the iron chain that bound him. But what means had he, there he stood ragged and ignorant, no doubt he saw how the nobles revelled in luxury, but what could he do? He must live, one way or another, even under such adverse circumstances the farmer sought for the betterment of his condition. Reform
work slowly and so with the farmers improvement. But we find that that he has slowly bettered his conditions and is today among the most advancing class.

The Irishman who expressed himself as ‘The rich may ride in chariots but the poor must walk,’ no doubt well expressed the distinguishing difference between the farmer and the nobleman of his time. The old word rural with its original meaning as ignorant, the city being the place of the learned also shows us the condition of those times. But now, the fact that we see the farmer striding swiftly by with his carriage or spring wagon and the word rural no longer meaning ignorant, but country, surely shows an advance.

The farmer of even fifty or one hundred years ago was very simple. The old eat-mow would board was considered a luxury. He gathered his grain by the handfuls and threshed it with flails, and the gentle winds blew away the chaff. The wife was ever busy spinning and weaving to clothe the family. The boys
who intended not to follow their father's occupation were the only ones sent to school. Today as the farmer cuts his grain with a machine that binds the bundles with the nicety of human hands, or as he sits on his mower cutting the grass with neatness and ease, or as an engine comes puffing along to thresh his grain, he sees that he must understand their work and use it, that he may not be as the Brazilian who triumphantly walked off with the wheelbarrow on his head. As the farmer thus sits and pondered, he sees that if he wishes to be fair and true to his calling he should give as thorough an education to the boy who wishes to stay on the farm as to the one who wishes to follow some other profession. And in order to have schools befitting to his calling, there should be a country high school as well as a city high school; and in state institutions he cannot afford to be misrepresented. His talent has become a necessity on the farm as well as in the work shop. It takes muscle to clear the forest. To break the prairies, but it takes brains to renovate the soil to under-
stand the intricate machinery or plan a years campaign. As a matter of business the farmers education should not be neglected. Who will say that the farmer should not understand the finances of his country? He should understand the evolutions of traders as well as the manufacturers does. For are not his products as liable to the incapacity of kings and corporations as those of any one else, and who will protect him but himself?

The saying that each man will seek for his own interests applies as well in politics as in any vocation, and the farmer is beginning to realize these facts. The political Demagogue who once drew the votes of farmers by spread eagle speeches is beginning to fear the farmers votes. He finds his power gradually waning, and he sees that the man of facts and figures the man of sound argument is being called for. The farmer sees that he must take the stage and expound his views, and that his views are as worthy of consideration as those of any one else.

But this is not enough. If his interests
are to be looked after, no one will do it but himself, thus he should be repre-
sented in legislature as well as the banker as well as the lawyer as well as the mer-
chant these may be hope to realize that dream of the freeman "No taxation with-
out representation." Though the movement may have contained blinders, it must
not be judged by its initial va-
garies for have not all political move-
ments had their errors? Rather let us judge the movement by its secondary results,
after archness has abated and truth
have survived and errors have fallen.
And can we not look upon the farmer
with more favor in a condition of revolt
than we have looked on him in a condi-
tion of political stagnation? Those who
tumble over the movement of the indus-
trial classes which numbers over half
the voters of the nation are surely
mistriuful of the whole American sys-
tem of government.

Farmers for a long time seem to have
forgotten their social relation to each
other, but in the last few years rapid
strides have been made in this direction. The farmer of the past looked with a jealous eye upon his fellows; he considered him as an opponent, one who was merely in the way of progress, one working for his own selfish interest, but he has learned that much advantage may be gained by organization where he can consult not only with his neighbor, but with the farmers of the county of the state. Here he can discuss the true merits of grains, stock, and machinery. He will not then be so easily overawed by the flannel of agents and brilliant advertisements. Here the experience of one is combined with the experience of others; here can he discuss politics freely without the interference of the political demagogue, and here only will he see his social relations. Many simple truths will thus be learned, much drudgery lightened by spending interesting hours with his fellow-workman thus giving him entertainment, and instead of jealousy greatest harmony will exist, and thus check the drift of the farmer to the town.
As we thus note the advance of the farmer and the rapid strides, from the ignorant of a few hundred years ago, and to day, find him filling offices of trust in the government, building up institutions of learning for his own benefit, his handling machinery of intricate workmanship, how he is beginning to work in unison with his fellows, we may hope to see the time when the country shall no longer be the place of the ignorant but the place of the learned. When farming shall be one of the noblest occupations one can follow.

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