The Improvement of the Social Condition of Country Life.

By

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Analytical Outline.

I. The conditions at present.
   The drift of people from County to City.
   Because.
   1. Theories.
      (a) Lack of employment.
      (b) City has better social condition.
   2. Farmers place themselves.
   3. Location of Farm.
      (a) Distance to town.
      (b) Distance to neighbors.
      (c) Results of this isolation.
      (d) Distance to school.
      (e) Length of school term and when
      (f) The Teacher.
   4. Farmer's wife.
      (a) Her health and etc.
      (b) The change marriage has caused.
      (c) She is almost the slave of her husband.
      (d) How she entertains company.
   5. Farmer's boy.
   7. Lack of dignity or reverence of work
      on part of farmer.
      Makes the boys discontented.
II Methods of improvement.

1. The farmers to demand his place.
   (a) In Congress.
   (b) In public meetings.

2. How to get farmers up to this.

3. Improved roads.
   (a) How it will help.
     (1) Socially.
     (2) Less expensive to maintain.
   (b) How to improve.
     (1) Have a road engineer.
     (2) Have taxes paid in installment.
   (c) Essential for good road making.
     (1) Thorough drainage.
     (2) Proper grading.
     (3) Systematic repair.

4. Get daily papers.

5. Farmer to work only 10 hours a day.
   (a) Work in cool of day.
   (b) Observation on this point.

6. Improve the conditions of farmer's wife.
   (a) To be better educated.
   (b) Help not first to go.
   (c) Have the latest improvements.
   (d) Must have time to educate the children.
7. Farmers Institutes.
   (a) Past and present.
   (b) Program to be interesting and instructive.
   (c) Have traveling libraries.

8. The Christmas vacation work of Y.M.C.A.
   (a) Where in school districts and small towns.
   (b) Results.

   (a) Papers on his line.
   (c) Papers on other lines.

10. District School libraries.
    (a) Get the child to form the habit of reading.
    (b) Why not have Experimental buildings in these?

11. Extension of Y.M.C.A. into County districts.
    (a) The plan is to have a young man in each town and school district, and have a County Secretary to have oversight of whole County.
    (b) Membership limited to men.
    (c) The needs of this work.
    (d) Socials.
    (e) Lectures and entertainments.
    (f) What has been done else where.
    (g) What we hope for Kansas.
Before we take up the improvement of country life, let us take a look at the conditions at present.

The social standing of the farmer is rather low at present, although it is improving somewhat. We all know of the drift of people from the farm to the city, and often those who do not go wish they could because they have such poor society when they live.

Let us see what causes this flow of people to the cities, and the poor social condition of country life.

There are several theories why people are drifting from the country to the city. One is that people are getting out of employ—perhaps on account of machinery that is now used on the farm. Another claim is that the social condition of the city is so much superior to that of the country.
This seems to be the greatest reason for it is the owner of farms that are moving to the city.

The real cause is doubtless that the farmer looks upon his vocation as inferior to many other calling.

The location of the farm is one cause of this idea. It is usually several miles from a town, or even a post office, and often a mile or more from the nearest neighbor. Under these conditions, the farmer begins to think that there is no one in the world but himself and family. When he does come in contact with people, he feels awkward and thinks that he is insignificant and knows nothing. The school house is from one-fourth to two and one-half miles from his home, and seldom, if ever, is there more than six months of school, and that during the winter months. The farmer's children are small, and of course miss
most of the school in the winter; and when they are older they have to stay at home and help with the work. Frequently, the teacher is only a common school graduate, who has succeeded in getting a third grade certificate.

The farmer, his children or his wife go to town about once a week, and many farmers do not go that often. At these times they get a few groceries, some clothing, a weekly newspaper and perhaps a letter from some friend. If they are of the better class of farmers, they may also purchase at low paper for the children.

The wife, not very old, looks tired and weary and almost ready to die. All the bloom has faded from her face. It is work from morning to night, and frequently from night to morning. Very likely she was married when young, and this has caused such
a radical change that it has produced poor health, and perhaps an irritable temper, although very likely at the time of marriage she was one of the sweetest dispositioned women of the neighborhood; but married life brought more duties and harder times than she expected. She has no time to read: she is really the slave of her husband. She is so busy with domestic cares that she does not go to town, even to buy her own clothing, and soon gets so that she is at a loss when she does go to buy.

If company comes to see her, she has to be in the kitchen all the time getting the meal. This meal consists of every thing she has in the house; if she has pie, it goes on the table whether it is breakfast, dinner or supper. Less than a year ago, I was at a table on which there were three or four varieties of fruit, two or three kinds
of cake and pumpkin and mince pie. Of course I was almost forced to take something of everything. I do not believe in such work. I would have the women put less time in feasting their visitor's stomach, and get more benefit from the social and intellectual side. Let the women sit down and have a good common sense talk, and both will be better off.

The farmers boy grows up on the farm almost from other people except his parents. All he associates with are of the same class or have had the same surroundings as he, so there is not very much growth. He lacks that mingling with men that grinds the corn off, and makes the smooth round clever acting boy or young man of the city.

One of the great reasons why farmers do not go to
town often and associate with their fellow men is because of bad roads. It is a fact that it costs the farmer more to get his grain a few miles to market than it does to take it the rest of the way to Chicago or New York.

Another great cause of this lack for the city is the lack of dignity that the farmer puts upon his work. As a result many former boys get it into their heads that it is not honorable to do work. They look with envy upon the lawyer, doctor or professor. They forget that these men do as much work and some of it just as hard and tiresome as any work that the farmer boy does. They never stop to think that the lawyer and doctor see the dark side of life. The doctor sees suffering, while the lawyer sees all kinds of frauds.

Now for the way to improve these conditions and how to keep people on the farm.
It seems to me that there is but one way and that is for the farmers to bring themselves up to their true position, which is the most scientific and social and free that there is.

Instead of letting Congress be composed of seventy-five per cent of lawyers as it is now, let the farmers rise up and be represented by farmers who will look out for the farmers' interest, not just to get his vote but because they know what will be good for the farmer.

Another improvement that can be made is to have some good farmer instead of a lawyer, judge, or a politician to make our Fourth of July speeches. In this way, the farmer will get to hear men that knows what his conditions are and what he needs to make him enjoy himself. While the lawyer or politician will tell him how fine it is to be a farmer and perhaps give some suggestions which are impossible for
the farmer to carry out. I expect I had better tell how we are to get farmers up to this high standard. We can do it in several ways. One will be to educate them. This is something that will take a long time to accomplish much.

We must get hold of the children that are growing into young manhood and young womanhood and educate them up to seeing the great opportunities that there are on the farm.

I believe our system of teaching and method of getting teachers is at fault. I would have a two-year course at the State Normal School or at the State Agricultural college provided for that purpose. I would have these teachers study the Common Branches and some industrial work, and something of agriculture and fruit growing. At the end of two years give them a certificate good for two years to
teach in the schools of the county districts. When this certificate has expired I would have them take two years more and then give them a life certificate. After taking such a course, they would see something of the possibilities in these lines and would teach the children to know the occupation of their parents. These teachers will be able to get the farms to read the farm paper and the Experiment Station bulletin.

It seems foolishness to give a person a life certificate to teach when the graduate knows nothing of the greatest industry that there is—employing one-half of the people of the United States. Therefore, I would have teachers educated along these lines.

One of the things that is keeping the farmer down is the bad roads. It has been said these not only make it cost the farmer more to get his crop to market, but...
it also keeps him from church, society, entertainments, political meetings and etc. Improved roads would better the farmer condition in two ways: 1st, socially, and 2nd, make it less expensive to market crops. It will not be necessary to build stone roads or even to increase the taxes that we now have. But I would have a different method of road supervision. We should have a road engineer who should hold his place by examination. The taxes should be paid instead of worked out as they are now. Experience has long ago done away with the system of working out road taxes. Men who have considered this subject say that several times as much could be done to keep the roads in shape as now. The use of machinery promises to be a great factor in the improvement of our roads. It is said that there are three main points in road building
as follow:
1st. Thorough drainage.
2nd. Proper grading.
3rd. Systematic repair.
All of the requirements can be met by one who understands his business without use of any more stone or anything of the kind than is now used.
Any other thing that will help to keep our roads in good shape is wide tire vehicles. Some states require wide tires to be used.
The improvement of the roads is the same as shortening the distance from the farm to the city, school, church, and to neighbors; so if we have better roads we ought to have an improved society.
7. After the farmer has good roads he or some of his family can go to town every day and get the daily paper that every home ought to have to keep up with the times.
self and family into touch with the rest of the world.
Of course this is taking for granted that every farmer is going to have a horse and buggy free from work for this purpose.
Now that we have the paper, we must have time to read them. The farmer ought to spend ten hours in the field, that is from the time he leaves the farm until he returns should be ten hours. I mean that he should work during this time the same as he would in any other business.
I would work in the cool of the day and rest and sit in the shade and read during the heat of the day. I have watched and as a rule, the farmers that work long hours get along but very little better than those that work fewer hours and are fresher when they do work. Now for the good
and upbuilding of the hired man, and also for farmers in general. Give the hired hand all holidays and let him off early Saturday.

If there is the class of people overworked more than all other, it is the farmer's wives. There can be some improvement here. By the system of education that we are going to have for the country and by sending the girls as well as the boys to college, the wives of the future farmers are to be very intelligent women, and they ought to be, for they will be the mothers of at least one-half of the people of the United States. They will be women that can play the piano as well as cook a dinner and cook a dinner as well as play the piano. They will have time to read and to keep up their music and painting and etc. They can get time for all of these things by putting the system they have learned
As school into practice. The husband must know that the wife's help is not to be the first to go, but rather the last. As the farm gets improved machinery, so the kitchen should be supplied with the latest improvements. When our farmers have time to train their minds and instruct their children, the social condition of the country will be improved, and the farmer will take the place among men that he ought to.

The Farmer's Institutes have done much, and will continue to do much for the betterment of the farmers. At these meetings, the farmers heart men that have given much thought along the different lines. Men that have tried different methods of feeding, dowing, marketing, and etc. Farmers will meet farmers and they will discuss these different things, and will see that there are
better methods of farming than they have been following consequently, they will take up the improved methods. Not only this, but it will also give the farmers another place to go and to mingle. In these ways, in time, farming will become the most scientific occupation that there is. The programme should be so arranged that it will be interesting even if it is not quite as instructive as it would be otherwise, for by having it interesting we can get more to attend. The program ought to be made so entertaining that the young folks of the country will get interested in agriculture.

Altho' with these institutes I would have traveling libraries left in charge of some competent person so that they will be given out to be read and returned and another sent in their place.
I would have the bulletins of the Experiment Station and those of the United State Department of Agriculture placed on file. I believe the United State Department of Agriculture has all of the bulletins indexed so that they can be used as references. In this way there will be books that the people can refer to for help in their farm work.

There is one method of improving the country life which could be made a success in connection with these institutes. There are a number of colleges in the state, and they are somewhat scattered so that they can reach a great many neighborhoods without going far. The plan is to have these colleges send out some of their best members and give an itinerant programme in the small towns and country districts. This will be an education to the students and an advertisement.
ment for the colleges and get the
the country people acquainted
with college life and they all
more and more all to want to go to
college themselves. A very small
fee could be charged to pay
the expenses of the members
of the group.

Now the last three years
the Young Men's Christian Asso-
ciation of the State has been
sending bands of four college
students into the country districts
and small towns to hold meetings
during the Christmas vacation.
These bands improve the
religious condition of the country
and give the people a view of
college men and get the young men
of the county thinking of things
high and noble. Feeding men
of education gives the young a
desire to attend college themselves.
This work has grown from one
band three years to seven the
next vacation. We can tell
the results but by quoting some things the people where these boys went have said.

The boys that were here carry the blessing of the people with them. Their coming to our village was like a ray of sunshine, we only wish they could have stayed longer.

"Those were all fine fellows, the salt of the earth, that you sent here. They did work with all their might. Our church is wonderfully revived especially do we notice more interest among our young men and young people." I could give what others have said but this gives an idea how the people take to this work.

At present there are very few farmers who take a pick from paper. All the reading most farmers do on farming is the "Farm Column" of the weekly new paper and many do not
read that. Every farmer ought to be wide enough awake to be up on his work by reading the leading farm papers. In order to be up with the times, every farmer should take a magazine like "North American Review" or "Review of Reviews." He may not get anything that will be of direct help to him on the farm, but he will get the material that keeps him in touch with the rest of the world and his family will have a higher and better concept of the world than his neighbors who do not have such reading.

The farmer's children ought to have good story papers and plenty of books to read; For, if we can get children to read, they will form a habit that will go with them through life. The farmer should take not
only the paper relating to his line of farming, but also those papers that treat of other lines of farming. Yes, even of other business, for the more the farmer keeps in touch with the rest of the world, the better is going to be his social condition.

Another thing that promises to be for the betterment of the social conditions of the country is the school libraries that are being established in many of our district schools. The child that begins to read when young will form a habit of reading that will go with him through life, to say nothing of the noble ideas that the child will get from that and in these libraries.

I know that there is a tendency to get the books for these libraries either too simple or too
complex for the class of scholars. Never-the-less, they all doing a good work and will continue to be a force in improving the social condition of country life. The Experiment Stetin bulletins could be placed in these libraries. Then the scholars would read some of them, and carry them home and the folks at home would also read them. This would cause the farmers to become more interested in their occupation and there would be great improvement.

The extension of the Young Men's Christian Association into the county districts will do much to improve the social condition of the young men of the county. In several states, the Y.M.C.A. has been organized in county districts. There is usually a County Secretary who
organizes and visits the different lands of a few young men in small towns and school houses wherever there are enough to undertake this work. The plan they follow is to get a band of active Christian young men organized to improve the religious, social and intellectual standard of the people of the county districts, and bring to them the conditions of the city as near as practicable. The membership is limited to men. But be the great question to day is how to induct the boys in country life and in religious matters, there will be no objections to that limitation. We all know that as a rule the young men of the farm when they go to town on a Saturday or a rainy day or Sunday meet in small groups or go to the joints or the
salon and talk of things that they would not wish their mothers or sisters to hear. Now, if the Y.M.C.A. room is open, and there are some papers and a few instructive games, some good books, and some good clean jolly fellows that can talk of current news and that will not tolerate anything that is coarse or vulgar, such a place would improve the morals of many a neighborhood.

The Y.M.C.A. room at these small town or school house, not only have religious meetings and Bible classes but they also frequently have a social.

At these social, the County Secretary tries to be present, and brings some decorations with him so that the social will be up to date and interesting, and hold the young people. These socials are
not limited to men, but the boys get all the help they can from the women of the neighborhood and, as a rule, there are several women very much interested in this work. Often, the Y.M.C.A. has a man to give a lecture. They also get up entertainment and interest the people in that line. The band of college students that I have mentioned in connection with Farmer Institutes would come in here well, although I have not heard of this being tried.

This work, as I have said, is carried on in several states, but to the greatest extent in Minnesota, and the assistance Secretary says the following of the work: ‘It has proved quite successful thus far and I do believe has passed the experimental stage, and will become
a permanent feature of State work. The work that we have spoken of in connection with the Christmas vacation, followed very closely along this line. The Y.M.C.A. of this state hopes to see this work organized and the influence of the Y.M.C.A. which has done so much for the betterment of the city railroad, army and college men and life, reach out and take in the largest class of all—the farmers.