

Rural Problems in the United States

JAMES E. BOYLE

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REVUE THÉOLOGIQUE

1882

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RURAL PROBLEMS IN THE UNITED STATES

BY

JAMES E. BOYLE, PH. D.

Extension Professor of Rural Economy, College of Agriculture,
Cornell University. Author of "Speculation and the
Chicago Board of Trade," "The Govern-
ment of North Dakota," Etc.



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To

*Llewellyn Johns of Hettinger, North Dakota —
student, ranchman, soldier, friend, companion.
In memory of the days when together on the trail
we first saw the "Mauvaises Terres" of the Little
Missouri.*

EDITOR'S PREFACE

WHATEVER we may say about the many problems in America the foremost one of them all is the "rural problem." And this is particularly true at this writing because of the rapid fall in agricultural prices and the consequent adjustment of the rural economy to this change. It is vastly important for America to have an efficient, happy, and contented agricultural population. Without it our food supplies are endangered, and the whole national fabric declines. This brief statement makes it unnecessary to say more regarding the reasons for a book on "rural problems" in the National Social Science Series. Dr. Boyle has written an interesting book out of a rich experience. It is a human book and will have value for those who are working in the rural field.

F. L. M.

January, 1921.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THERE has been considerable discussion in the past two thousand years—if not further back—on the very baffling topic whether or not man is master of his own fate. The philosophical ramifications of this debate go too far afield to be considered here. But “freedom of the will,” “heredity,” “environment,” are all terms which would be discussed in such a debate. It was Professor Drummond, was it not, who summed it up by saying, “Man is determined by his environment. But he chooses his environment.”

And now we find ourselves beginning to debate this topic: Can a community shape its own fate? Can a community deliberately and consciously choose certain goals, map out the way and arrive?

This book is written from the point of view that a community can know itself, and can make certain very definite choices which will affect its well-being. The chief aims of this book are two, namely, to plant suggestions and to stimulate thinking. For after all, real constructive thinking is one of the rarest things in this world.

Acknowledgment is made to The Macmillan Company, publishers, for special permission to quote from the *American Commonwealth* by James Bryce.

JAMES ERNEST BOYLE.

Cornell University.

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THE NATIONAL SOCIAL SCIENCE SERIES

The purpose of this series is to furnish for busy men and women a brief but essentially sane and sound discussion of present-day questions. The authors have been chosen with care from men who are in first-hand contact with the materials, and who will bring to the reader the newest phases of the subject.

RURAL PROBLEMS
IN
THE UNITED STATES

Rural Problems In The United States

CHAPTER I

PLAN AND PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

OF THE four kinds of democracy, as was said in the previous discussion, the best is that which comes first in order; it is also the oldest of them all. . . . For the best material of democracy is an agricultural population; there is no difficulty in forming a democracy where the mass of the people live by agriculture.

—ARISTOTLE, *Politics*, Bk. VI, 4.

The ancient Greek thinker looked upon agriculture as furnishing the oldest and best material of democracy. So, therefore, rural problems interest us first of all from the national standpoint, since the quality of the democracy which composes our own great Republic depends so largely on the quality of citizenships found on the land. And in the second place, there are a set of rural problems which vitally and immediately concern that large share of our people who are the dwellers in the open country. Agriculture, in other words, interests the man who is

not carrying it on quite as much as it does the man who is engaged in it. The economic and spiritual welfare of the farmer challenges the thought and wisdom of the age.

“Panem et Circenses”

“Bread and shows” was the cry of the mob in the city of Rome. When the great Roman city was put to the test of furnishing daily bread to the unemployed mob, the test could not be met and was not met. With the shifting of the bulk of our population to cities, with the transfer to these great population centers of wealth, culture, power, the economic problem of furnishing the daily bread again emerges as one of fundamental and inexorable importance. Therefore, this book first considers the question of the food supply of the nation—our basic rural problem—and the processes of getting this food to the consumer.

Rural Conditions and Rural Needs

Passing from the fundamental economic problem of supplying the nation with its food, we are next led to enquire, What are the actual rural conditions? And what are the outstanding rural needs? All is not well with agriculture as an institution, or with the farmers as individuals who help weave the warp and woof of the agricultural fabric. Whither are we drifting?—for in agri-

cultural matters we are drifting rather than pursuing any definite policy. What goals have been proposed? And what routes mapped out by which to reach them? All these things must be impartially, although briefly, considered.

Rural Institutions

Having come thus far on our journey, we should have reached some diagnosis of whatever is pathological in our agricultural structure. Therefore, the next logical step is to view in proper perspective those rural institutions which are now in the field, serving the population of our farms. What are these institutions? Are they meeting the rural needs? And if they are not serving all rural needs adequately, to what degree may they be improved so as better to meet those needs, and to what degree will it be needful to create and energize new institutions?

The six institutions whose roots now strike most deeply into the rural community are: the home, the school, the church, the country store, the country bank, and the country weekly newspaper. A seventh institution, a new one, has already taken firm and permanent root in the soil, and this one is the County Farm and Home Bureau. These institutions, for weal or for woe, affect the daily life of the people of our farms. If they are functioning well and to their highest

and best capacity, a community rich in material and spiritual things is the result. If some one or more of these institutions have failed to help the community—have failed to catch the vision of the potentialities of the social service they may render, then indeed the mirror should be held to such institutions. "Reproach is good," says Lyman Abbott, "but it must be self-reproach." The separate chapters dealing with these seven institutions will attempt to paint the picture true to life.

Local government is not included in this list, because good government is not considered as a rural problem any more than it is an urban problem. Hence its discussion as a distinct institution finds no proper place in a book of this kind. The country store, or the village store serving the rural community, however, derives its very existence from the rural community about it, and, in turn, wields or may wield a tremendous influence over the general life and spirit of the community. And so also it is with the country bank. Very much of the economic destiny of the rural community is left for shaping in the hands of the country banker. The banker's hand may be said to be in every farmer's pocket—to empty it or to fill it. The influence of the country newspaper is cumulative, coming as it does week after week, year after year. The political and economic views

of the farmer and of his children, and their outlook on life itself, are largely, although unconsciously, shaped by the local newspaper.

Soul of the Rural Community

The rural problem is more than merely providing for a permanently prosperous agriculture. Man shall not live by bread alone. In the early days of our Republic it was the custom for the successful man of the city, having gained an economic competence, to retire to his country estate to live. At that time country life afforded opportunity for fullness of self-expression. Recreations and amusements, of the most wholesome and uncommercialized varieties, were found ready at hand. Culture, refinement, those more elegant graces which dignify daily life, were all found in the country.

Today there are in the country individual talents and unused social resources which should be discovered and used. Community spirit must be awakened and fostered. Art, music, literature, recreation—all these are not to be left to the city exclusively to supply. The closing chapter of this book calls attention to the soul of the rural community, and suggests not merely principles but programs for supplying the needs of this soul. For unhappy is that rural community which merely apes the city.

CHAPTER II

THE FOOD-SUPPLY QUESTION

THERE is a part of the Atlantic where the westward-speeding steam-vessel always expects to encounter fogs. On the fourth or fifth day of the voyage, while still in bright sunlight, one sees at a distance a long low dark-gray line across the bow, and is told this is the first of the fog-banks which have to be traversed. Presently the vessel is upon the cloud, and rushes into its chilling embrace, not knowing what perils of icebergs may be shrouded within the encompassing gloom. So America, in her swift onward progress, sees, looming on the horizon and now no longer distant, a line of mists and shadows, wherein dangers may lie concealed whose form and magnitude she can scarcely yet conjecture. As she fills up her western regions with inhabitants, she sees the time approach when all the best land, even that which the extension of irrigation has made available, will have been occupied, and when the land now under cultivation will have been so far exhausted as to yield scantier crops even to more expensive culture. . . . The price of food will rise; farms will be less easily obtained and will need more capital to work them with profit; the struggle for existence will become more severe. And while the outlet which the West now provides for the overflow of the great cities

will have become less available, the cities will have grown immensely more populous; pauperism, now confined to some six or seven of the greatest, may be more widely spread; and even if wages do not sink, work may be less abundant. . . . High economic authorities pronounce that the beginnings of this time lie not more than twenty years ahead. All of the best arable land of the West is already occupied; much even of the second and third best is already under cultivation; and unless agricultural science renders further aid, the exhaustion already complained of in farms which have been under the plough for three or four decades will be increasingly felt. It may be a time of trial for democratic institutions.

— JAMES BRYCE. *The American Commonwealth* (1910 edition). Vol. II, pp. 912, 913.

During the World War, one widely heralded slogan in the United States was to the effect that "Food will win the war." Thus the question of our food supply was lifted above the level of mere sordid and commonplace things where many thoughtless persons had placed it. "Give us this day our daily bread" was one of the first prayers the Master taught His disciples to use. The nation's first call upon agriculture is the economic one for food, for a continuing and permanent flow of food.

And with the population doubling every thirty years, and with the land area remaining constant

in size, and soil fertility being destroyed, the question becomes serious.

Cheap Food Fallacy

The labor unions, the manufacturers, the cities, all want cheap food. Since these interests represent two-thirds of our population, their wishes take on a peculiar force and significance. Cheap food of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the United States was undoubtedly a blessing to all interests. It was the natural accompaniment of the free land which the country offered in abundance to the settlers. It was a benefit to the wage-earner, because it tended to increase both his nominal and his real wage. An abundant supply of cheap food was helpful to the manufacturer, tending to offset the handicap of high-priced labor. And cheap food did not injure the farmer, since he saw his gain largely in the form of steadily growing land value. But with the coming of the twentieth century, with the free lands gone, with the spread of farm tenancy, the "cheap food" problem takes on an entirely new significance. It resolves itself into a question of the standard of living on the farm as compared with the standard of living in the city. Cheap food — cheap, that is, as related to other goods — would mean, if the idea were pushed to its ultimate conclusion, that a degraded peasant class

would have to occupy the country. In other words, we would have the country in the condition, for instance, of France in the seventeenth century, as described by La Bruyère and quoted by Taine in his *Ancient Régime*, a sort of "man-with-the-hoe" type of farmer.¹ Cheap food, produced by a "man-with-the-hoe" type of labor, would prove dear food in the end for the Republic. The German proverb, *Hat der Bauer Geld, so hat es die Welt* (When the farmer has money everybody has), expresses wisdom proved by time. The cities are recruited from the country. The country of today will therefore largely deter-

¹ "L'on voit certains animaux farouches, des mâles et des femelles répandus par la campagne, noirs, livides et tout brûlés du soleil, attachés à la terre qu'ils fouillent et qu'ils remuent avec une opiniâtreté invincible; ils ont comme une voix articulée, et quand ils se lèvent sur leurs pieds, ils montrent une face humaine; et en effet ils sont des hommes. Ils se retirent la nuit dans des tanières, où ils vivent de pain noir, d'eau et de racines; ils épargnent aux autres hommes la peine de semer, de labourer et de recueillir pour vivre, et méritent ainsi de ne pas manquer de ce pain qu'ils ont semé."

De L'Homme, by La Bruyère (giving a terrible picture of the peasantry of France at the height of Louis XIV's glory).

Translation.—"Certain savage-looking beings, male and female, are seen in the country, black, livid, and sunburnt, and belonging to the soil which they dig and grub with invincible stubbornness. They seem capable of articulation, and, when they stand erect, they display human lineaments. They are, in fact men. They retire at night into their dens where they live on black bread, water, and roots. They spare other human beings the trouble of sowing, ploughing, and harvesting, and thus should not be in want of the bread they have planted."

mine the character of the city of tomorrow. A prosperous and permanent agriculture will therefore be for the good of both city and country.

Food Supply and Soil Exhaustion

The abandoned farms of the East and South are a symptom of dangerous farming methods. The steadily increasing use of commercial fertilizers, particularly in the newer states of the Corn Belt, is a danger signal of soil exhaustion. Farming under such conditions of farm management is likely to be in the very immediate future an industry of diminishing returns. However, enough is already known about scientific agriculture—crop rotation systems, seed selection, animal nutrition, plant nutrition, tillage methods, and so on—to make agriculture a business of increasing returns. The problem is how to put existing knowledge into the possession of the average farmer, how to make the ideas and practices of the few best farmers the ideas and practices of the many. More serious yet than soil exhaustion is soil destruction which has already occurred on many millions of acres of deforested lands—a process of destruction which is still going on wherever hills are being deforested. Here Nature's work of building up during a million years is wantonly undone by the hand of man in a few years. Some knowledge of the

simpler truths of geology and forestry would be a good thing for the farm boy to acquire.

Food Marketing and Distribution

While the preservation of the soil and the maintenance of an adequate food supply are basic and primary factors in the agriculture of the nation, yet the handling of the food, after it is once produced, has come to be a question of acute interest. The evils in the marketing system are, as compared with the evils of soil depletion, mere pin-pricks, yet they receive the greater attention. The marketing problem breaks up into four separate problems, namely, (1) production, (2) storage, (3) transportation, and (4) credit.

(1) — The production of a good product is the first problem in marketing. It is never difficult to sell products of the best grade. For instance, as these lines are being written, the market report on hay states that there is a big demand for No. 1 hay and all of this grade coming to market is immediately taken, whereas No. 3 hay, and poorer grades, are glutting the market and are hardly saleable at all. To produce a high-grade product, to inspect, grade, standardize, pack, and label it with some brand or certification (especially through a cooperative association of producers) — these steps are the principal steps in marketing. It is the poor product that is

slowest and hardest to market and shows the most leaks on the road from producer to consumer.

(2) — Storage is a step made necessary, in the case of most farm products, by reason of the fact that they are produced in the summer only but are consumed throughout the twelve months of the year. Hence they must be stored some place by somebody. The so-called "middleman" usually enters at this point to render this storage service. Some highly perishable products, like southern sweet potatoes, which call for dry, warm storage, show an annual loss in storage of about forty-five or fifty million dollars. The white potato of the North calls for warm, dry winter storage and shows also a heavy annual waste. The same is true of apples. Other farm products, such as poultry and eggs, call for cold storage, and show little or much loss, depending very largely on their condition when they entered storage. Other products, such as grain and cotton, call for dry storage. Some storage problems are met by individual farmers providing storage facilities on their farms; again, some of these problems are met by farmers working together in some cooperative enterprise, locating the storage facilities at the railroad shipping station, or at the great terminal markets. Where farmers cannot, or do not, take hold of this problem, or where consumers have not the desire or ability

to store a large supply in their homes, the function falls to the middleman to perform, with all its risks of loss, its chances of profit. It is, in any event, one inevitable link in the chain of marketing. And here, by the way, is a function performed by the retailer which both producer and consumer are prone to forget, for the retailer must actually own and store nearly one hundred per cent of the food products which the ultimate consumer buys. One investigator has estimated that the wastage by decay of perishable products is forty per cent. This leak is passed on as a toll to the consumer, since the service is for him. This big leak is now almost universally charged up to that convenient scapegoat — the middleman, particularly the retailer. But this leak is largely due to two causes — putting on the market a poor product, and faulty storage. The blame for these two faults undoubtedly lies, in part at least, with the producer.

(3) — Transportation has tremendous economic and social significance, since a slight change in railway freight rates, for instance, may build up or destroy an industrial community. Similarly, a car shortage — such as has prevailed in the last ten years and has finally reached a crisis — may work havoc and ruin to the business of many a farmer. Railroad transportation problems are above and beyond the reach of any

individual farmer. The better mobilized businesses employ traffic experts for a protection. Organizations of farmers ought to employ similar safeguards. One leak in railway transportation is due to the producer, namely, the shipping of poorly packaged perishable produce. At the great food focuses of the nation, such as the Erie docks or Pennsylvania docks, New York City, it is appalling to witness the loss and damage in food-stuffs that have been shipped hundreds or even thousands of miles—losses due to shipping in frail containers. Here is food paid for by the consumer as part of “the middleman’s toll,” but which never enters into human consumption; it remains a preventable loss. Whose is the blame? Perhaps the biggest leaks in transportation are due to the first haul costs—namely, over the poor country road. Good roads will greatly reduce this needless waste. Next to retailing, transportation costs represent the biggest “toll” taken out of the consumer’s dollar. Good roads in the country, plus rural motor express lines, promise to reduce to a minimum all short-haul transportation costs, and even hauls up to several hundred miles in length. The Rural Motor Express, indeed, promises to be one of the modern revolutions in transportation. The farmers, if they see fit, may step in and own and control their own motor lines.

(4) — Credit is the fourth step in marketing, and a very important one under our modern customs of doing business with the smallest possible use of money. We build our hotels, our factories, our railroads, our public utilities, our bridges, our public buildings, our churches, our school-houses, and our homes all with the use of credit. We buy our farms with credit. We move our crops by the use of credit. We live in a credit age—and our annual income is spent two years before we get it—thanks to credit. Credit is a promise to pay money. Banks are the institutions which deal in credit. When the farmer's crop moves to market, he likely receives the money for it. But with the great basic crops, like grain and live stock, the man who buys the crop and pays the farmer for it must borrow the money from the bank. Credit must carry this crop till it has been bought and paid for, months later in many cases, by the consumer. It is very commonly some "middleman," or dealer, who thus finances the farmer by securing credit from the larger city banks, since he is better able to borrow from a big bank than the individual farmer is from his local bank.

The farmer has long refused to look on credit as a necessary and entirely proper step in his marketing activities. He has clung to the old-fashioned, "Poor-Richard's-Almanac" notion of

debt as a disgrace, a skeleton in the family closet, and something to be ashamed of. He has not yet fully accepted the newer business conception of credit as a very useful and essential tool to use, and, when rightly used, the mark of prosperity and good judgment.

Long-time credit, based on first mortgages on farm lands, is not primarily a marketing problem. This problem has, moreover, been fairly well solved by the Federal Farm Loan banks, the Joint-Stock Land banks, the insurance companies, and the mortgage loan companies. Short-time credit is an unsolved marketing problem. The country bank, the main source of the loan (not counting the country store that furnishes "book credit") — the country bank, to repeat, is strictly a retailer of money and charges retail rates. It must look to the great wholesale markets, such as Chicago or New York or any of the other ten Federal Reserve cities, for much of its loanable funds in crop-moving seasons. Here again the problem of very short-time credit (one month to six months) is fairly well handled. This is particularly true where the farmers buy and sell, not as individuals, but as cooperative associations, and use trade acceptances. The gap occurs where credit is wanted for more than six months and up to one year or even two years. The machinery for furnishing this credit is clumsy

and costly. Credit unions and other cooperative schemes are slowly being evolved to meet the need. But as yet no leader like Alphonse Desjardins of Canada has appeared to establish the right system of short-time rural credits in the United States.

The Middleman Question

Getting the food from the producer to the consumer — in the right quantity, of the right quality, at the right time, at the right place (usually his kitchen door) is carried on by the middleman in a remarkably efficient manner, when you reflect on the whims and fancies of the consumer, and the more basic fact that consumption is not rational — and never can be. The old saying still holds: "There is no disputing about tastes." We cannot "standardize" the consumers or make them want what we think are the simple, sensible things of life, or even what we think is good for them. It is their right, in their "pursuit of happiness," to consume according to the dictates of their own desires, their own whims, their own caprices. And the middleman is performing the service which these irrational consumers demand of him. The middleman's "toll" is "high" because this service presents certain very obvious physical and psychological difficulties. Can the

home bureaus and women's clubs of the country educate the consumer to buy more wisely and consume a little more rationally? If so, there is a chance for a small reduction in the "toll" of the middleman. More will be said in the chapter on the "Country Store" about principles and programs for dealing with the middleman's "toll" question.

Price Questions

The food-supply problem, from the marketing standpoint, is further complicated by our present unsatisfactory price structure. The farmer's complaint is that he has no voice in price making. He views the competitive system as a process of bargaining between the powerful and the weak — the powerful being the more or less mobilized forces of the big buying interests, the weak being the scattered, individual farmers. Hence the "bargain" becomes, so the farmer feels, a one-sided affair in which his feeble voice is not heard or heeded. Some farmers are turning to socialism as a better way of producing and distributing wealth. More, however, are looking to cooperation as the solution of the problem. Cooperation has led to collective buying and selling on the open market, with the farmer a strong bargainer. Now, however, the farmer desires to come to full

strength and power as a bargainer by means of the so-called "collective bargain."

Collective Bargaining

In collective bargaining in agriculture the organized farmers control the supply of the commodity. The bargain made with the organized distributors or consumers is a frank and open method of price fixing, for the supply of the commodity, for a period of time. At the present time the principal use made of collective bargaining by farmers is in the sale of whole milk in the large cities. Many methods are in use, but those which are most successful have the bargaining done by the three interested parties, namely, producers, consumers, and distributors. When carried out successfully, such bargaining fixes a price which correctly coordinates supply and demand, and which recognizes supply and demand as the ultimate controlling factor. Such bargaining also gives a voice to both farmers and consumers in price fixing, and this is adequate protection against any abuse of monopolistic power which the farmer may seem to have. It is to be hoped that our lawmakers and our courts will soon come to accept frankly this forward step in our progress towards economic democracy. Collective bargaining can never fix a price on the cost of production plus a profit basis, for a

surplus would upset such a structure. Collective bargaining will work if and when it follows the law of supply and demand.

CHAPTER III

RURAL CONDITIONS AND RURAL NEEDS

WE WERE founded as a nation of farmers, and in spite of the great growth of our industrial life it still remains true that our whole system rests upon the farm, and the welfare of the whole community depends upon the welfare of the farmer. The strengthening of country life is the strengthening of the whole nation. . . . The time has come to consider the problems of farm life. We who are interested in this movement desire to take counsel with the farmer, as his fellow-citizens, so as to see whether the nation cannot aid in this matter; for the city dweller in the long run has only less concern than the country dweller in how the country dweller fares.

—THEODORE ROOSEVELT. *Introduction to the Report of the Country Life Commission, 1910.*

The Commission finds that agriculture in the United States, taken altogether, is prosperous commercially, when measured by the conditions that have obtained in previous years, although there are some regions in which this is only partially true. . . . Yet it is true, notwithstanding all this progress as measured by historical standards, that agriculture is not commercially as profitable as it is entitled to be for the labor and energy that the farmer expends and the risks that he assumes, and that the social conditions in the open country are far short of their possibilities.

—LIBERTY H. BAILEY. *Report of the Country Life Commission, 1910.*

The economic question of the farmer's life is put first, because his income so largely determines his standard of living. There are, of course, a few, but only a few, coarse-grained farmers whose tastes remain coarse and low and brutal, no matter how large their incomes. But farmers, like other citizens, usually acquire the outward symbols of culture and prosperity just in proportion as their incomes make such a progress possible.

The Farmer's Income

Compared with labor incomes in the city, the farmer's income is too small. As I write these lines I have in mind two men — one an American farmer of good education, with his family living on a well-kept and prosperous farm; the other man, an immigrant, illiterate, owner and operator of a small shoe-cobbling business in a little city. The farmer has an investment of fifteen thousand dollars near the little city; the cobbler of one thousand dollars. The farmer's gross income for the year 1919 was two thousand dollars; the shoe cobbler's was seven thousand dollars. Yet the farmer worked as long hours as the cobbler, in addition to using his larger investment of capital. After a year like the above on the farm, the farmer's seventeen-year-old son moved into the city where he "got a job" at twelve hundred dollars

a year, the eight-hour day, and pleasant, clean, indoor work. A drastic readjustment of values is due.

Not only should the farmer's income be equal to the city man's income for the same amount and kind of labor, but it should be considerably more. And this for the very obvious reason that the city is providing at a low cost all sorts of conveniences and attractions which the farmer cannot have at all or can only have at a vastly greater expense. Take, for example, the commonplace "modern conveniences." The city man has running water in his home at very low cost. The farmer may also have running water provided he can install a private plant costing several hundred dollars. Hence, bathtubs are common in the city, rare in the country. Over 95 per cent of the Ohio farm homes have no bathtubs. The farmer carries his water by hand from the wells. He has an outdoor toilet, usually quite a distance from the house — a great inconvenience in rain, in snow, or in storm, or at night time. The city dweller has fire protection — and hence lower insurance rates. The city dweller has a good public high school nearby for his children; the farmer must take his children from the parental roof, or do without high-school advantages. The man in the city has a good doctor within a few minutes' ride over paved streets;

the farmer may call in vain for the doctor to come out miles in the country, over muddy roads, in the night. The man in the city has a hospital nearby where his wife may go when their children are born; the country mother commonly has no assistance other than that of some neighbor woman who serves as midwife. The city home has gas and electricity and furnace heat. It has a sidewalk in front; the street is cleaned by the city at low cost; the garbage and ashes are collected and hauled away. Groceries and food are delivered by the stores direct to the kitchen door, and at the same price as the farmer pays who carries his own stuff home with him. The iceman delivers ice in convenient quantities. Cheap transportation is at hand over the street cars. For the amusement, relaxation, or uplift of the city dweller there are theaters, moving-picture shows, libraries, art galleries, concerts, lectures, sermons—all conveniently at hand. The money value of these things must be matched against the money value the farmer derives from his garden and the other "blessings" which go with country life which cannot be expressed commercially. Obviously, to provide the same creature comforts, the farmer is entitled to a larger money income than the city man with the same industry and the same intelligence. Some few farmers have completely modern homes, with

various mechanical and electrical devices for lightening the labor and drudgery of housekeeping, but such homes as this represent an income beyond the reach or hope of most farmers. Hence the farmer is tempted to retire to the city, where he can enjoy these things, upon a smaller income, since these things cost less in the city than in the country.

We are actually hearing less and less about the slums of the city and more and more about the slums of the country. The numerous country-life surveys have located many rural slums, one, at least, being lower than any city slum now known to exist in America.

Drift to the City

Of outstanding significance is the tremendous drift of population from the country to the city — not only in our own land, but in all civilized lands. To illustrate concretely, take one of the newest farming states of our Union, Oklahoma — a state where abundant free land existed as recently as 1901 — and note the population shifts there in one decade. In the period 1900 to 1910 eight rural counties showed losses in population ranging from 3 per cent to 23 per cent. Four of these counties lost over 10 per cent each. Seven rural counties gained less than 5 per cent. Yet

all the cities of the state, save one, increased over 200 per cent in population. Stated in tabular form, the statistics are impressive.

Increase in population — Oklahoma — 1900-1910:

	Per cent
Cities of over 25,000 population..	526.1
Cities under 25,000.....	208.2
Rural territory	41.4

In the decade 1900-1910 forty-two states showed losses in rural population in one or more counties, but all showed gains in city population. New Hampshire, Vermont, Ohio, Indiana, Iowa, and Missouri all showed an absolute decrease in their total rural population. Iowa, in the heart of the Corn Belt, center of high-priced farm land, showed a falling off in population for the whole state of 0.3 per cent; of the rural districts of 7.2 per cent. At the same time the Iowa cities gained 19.9 per cent. From these figures, and others, it is easy to deduce that the Iowa farmers left their farms in part to go to Iowa cities, in part to go to farms and cities in other states. Truly it may be said that our cities are recruited from our farms. Many of the captains of industry, the leaders in the learned professions, the merchant princes, the railway magnates, were once farm boys. Thus leadership

was subtracted from the country and added to the city.

Land Tenure

Land values showed a gain of over 100 per cent in the decade 1900-1910. This has meant over-capitalized land in many sections, particularly in the Corn Belt. It has meant an increase in land speculation, the worst form of speculation. It has meant an increase in tenancy, for dear land means more tenants. The high-priced farm lands are now very largely farmed by tenants. In some counties tenancy has already reached over 90 per cent of the farms. If the present movement keeps up for two or three decades, we will be as much a country of absentee landlords as Ireland was before the Land Acts were passed. And thus far we have evolved no land policy. American tenancy is the short-term kind (the worst-known kind), where the tenant remains one, two, or three years, but rarely longer. An increase in our form of tenancy means soil depletion, poorer rural institutions, and finally civil discord. No relief is yet in sight. The correct principle seems to be to improve our tenancy rather than attempt to eliminate it.

The Federal Farm Loan Act was designed in part to help tenants become land owners. In practice it is working like this: The prosperous

and shrewd farmer, seeing the advantage of cheap money on long-time, easy payments, borrows under this Act and buys out his less prosperous neighbor. Then he repeats this step, putting tenants on his holdings. Thus the Act tends to make the prosperous more prosperous.

Agricultural Labor

The best type of farm labor is the farmer's own son or the son of a neighbor. This type of labor has now largely gone to work in the nearby village or city. The shifting-tenant class also militates against a reliable labor supply. Wandering bands of I. W. W. (Industrial Workers of the World) now drift into the harvest fields of the Middle West. But these are largely lawless fellows who are out of joint with society, and who terrorize the farmers. These laborers are the product of maladjustment in our great industrial fabric and are symptoms of economic unrest, and ought to be so treated. Instead, however, sternly repressive measures alone are usually applied to them, as, for instance, the Kansas law on the subject passed in 1920. The labor problem of the farm is being relieved, but not solved, by the introduction of labor-saving machinery; by diversifying crops so as to employ less labor, but more continuously throughout the year; and by

working longer hours during harvest seasons. The final solution must lie in some labor-distribution scheme which will draw labor from the city to the farm and from the farm back to the city to meet the seasonal demands of each.

Good Roads

Road building was once considered one of the three or four sacred functions of our purely local government. In those good old days the farmers themselves "worked the roads." Hence the backwardness of road building yet in many sections. With county aid and county supervision, then with state aid and supervision of state-highway engineers, and finally with the increment of federal aid, road building has finally begun in earnest. Many trunk-line roads are now serving as models. Some states, like New York and California, have systems of surfaced country roads, costing millions of dollars, but saving the farmers and city dwellers more than they cost. The "bad roads" tax always greatly exceeds the "good roads" tax. The problem is now to reach the large per cent of farms lying off the main highways with better roads. The coming of the automobile and the motor truck is hastening the day when almost every farm will have immediate access to a graded and surfaced road. This will prove a big factor in

solving one important phase of the marketing problem, namely, transportation. Indeed, the automobile may so dominate road construction, particularly as regards hard, smooth surfacing, that drastic steps will be needed to save some roads for horse-drawn traffic.

Rural Police

A picturesque institution in western Canada for many years has been the Northwest Mounted Police. This body of picked men built up a reputation for almost uncanny efficiency in protecting outlying and isolated settlements against crime. In contrast with this system, most American states have no form of rural police at all. That is one reason why, in the annals of American crime, so many shocking and revolting crimes have been committed in connection with remote farm houses.

It is even now the common practice of village and small city authorities, when dealing with hobos and lesser criminals, to give them their choice of the lockup or moving on into the country. Needless to say, the choice is always to "move on."

A *bona fide* rural police is needed. Distrust of such a system comes largely from the labor unions who fear the use of such a force to intimidate

labor in industrial disputes. A system should be devised which would escape this criticism.

Health and Sanitation

Tremendous progress has been made in matters of sanitation and public health. But as yet the cities are almost the sole beneficiaries of this progress. Hospitals with their modern equipment are all in cities. Skilled surgeons are only in cities. Food inspection, milk inspection, and other similar inspections are confined to the cities. Medical examination of school children is mostly in the cities. School nurses are found in few places outside of cities. This progress in the cities means that the health advantages of the open country are largely offset by the public health work of the cities. Indeed, the recent studies and surveys show that country people and especially country children are suffering from more preventable defects than are the city people. Defects of eye, ear, nose, and throat illustrate this. It is very common to find country homes containing three or four children who never have known the visit of a doctor. One reaction to this situation is the great dependence placed on "patent medicines." The country weekly of a few years ago — and even such a respectable paper as Bryan's *Commoner* — filled much of its advertising space with descriptions of nostrums and

fake remedies which promised to cure everything from cancer to consumption, including heart disease and appendicitis. Many editors now have grown ashamed to promote such brazen humbugs. The country is lax in preventive measures, such as quarantine, vaccination, and so on. A better day has come in some rural communities, as evidenced by the rural-school nurse, the community hospital, and in an awakened interest in practical sanitary problems.

Idealistic Reforms

Many social reforms have been proposed having for their aim the reciprocal improvement of city and country life. Only five of these can be listed and briefly described here.

I. BACK TO THE LAND

This movement would take the landless man from the crowded haunts of the city and put him on the manless land. The usual proposal is to colonize such workers in settlements. The Salvation Army made such an attempt, starting colonies in California and Colorado. These were only partially successful, chiefly due to lack of capital. The state of California, under the leadership of Elwood Mead, is now experimenting with a colony at Durham under the latest and most ap-

proved ideas of state help. As long as these movements are on a small scale, the present farmers view them with unconcern. Should the movement be made large enough to threaten substantial competition, the farmers would strenuously oppose it.

2. BACK TO THE VILLAGE

Industrial concentration has reached the danger point in the large urban centers. To house the workers, to furnish them with fresh air, milk, food and water, and transportation is too costly a process. This situation has led G. F. Warren and other writers to advocate a geographic decentralization of industries, a "back-to-the-village" movement. This would enable the workers to cultivate small plots, and produce their own milk and vegetables. The American farmers would welcome any movement of this kind.

3. ROADVILLE

The movement just described carried to its extreme limit, takes on the name of "Roadville." That is, there would be no great cities left. All inhabitants of both country and city would dwell along the two sides of the road, thus making sorts of continuous streets at intervals across the country, with farm lands back of the houses. Or,

stated in another way, all people would live in single-street country villages.

4. HENRY FORD'S SCHEME

This captain of industry says our all-year factory life is a mistake, a physical and economic mistake. Factory and farm should have been organized as industrial adjuncts of each other. The farm has its slack times. The factory has its slack times. So Mr. Ford would have the factory population move out to the land every spring and summer, and back into the factory every fall and winter. This program, says its author, would make for a better-balanced life and, what is equally important, a more balanced view of life. The country dweller who now sees all the glamour of the city and none of the facts, would, in such a case, see all the facts without the glamour. And in some manner this lesson must be learned.

5. SOCIALISTS AND LABOR UNION LAND SCHEME

A proposal has been seriously made by powerful labor leaders that the union establish a "democratization of industry" which will include not merely the ownership of the industrial agencies of production, but also the land itself by the workers; the farmers to be taken into the unions as workers, on the eight-hour-day basis

and the union wage schedule. This proposal fails to note the fundamental difference between factory (large scale) organization and farm (small scale) organization. It also fails to note the American farmer's inborn love of independence of action. It is, after all, some compensation for one to be one's own boss.

APPENDIX

RURAL SANITATION

Extract from a *Report on Special Studies* made in fifteen counties in 1914, 1915, and 1916, by the United States Public Health Service. *Bulletin No. 94*. October, 1918.

Findings. Pages 39, 40.

The findings at the homes surveyed in 15 fairly representative rural counties of the United States furnish a large collection of definite data which should be of value to all American citizens who are interested in the subject of rural sanitation; and, because of its vital and far-reaching importance, all of our people with fair intelligence should be interested in this subject. The detailed findings in the different counties are presented in the sections of this report describing separately the surveys of the counties, and a condensed statement of findings is presented in the general summary.

With these facts now before us we no longer have to estimate what the sanitary conditions in our vast rural territory are, but we can state them

definitely. Briefly stated, the sanitary conditions in the rural districts generally of the United States are grossly faulty and susceptible to and seriously in need of correction.

Some of the more salient conditions found.—Of 51,544 farm homes surveyed, only 1.22 per cent were equipped for the sanitary disposal of human excreta—and at some which were properly equipped, the equipment was not used by all members of the household in a sanitary manner; at 68 per cent, the water supply used for drinking and culinary purposes was obviously exposed to potentially dangerous contamination from privy contents or from promiscuous deposits of human excreta, and at the majority of these the water supply was exposed also to unwholesome pollution from stable-yards and pigsties. At only 32.88 per cent of the farm homes were the dwellings during the summer season effectively screened to prevent flies—having free access to nearby deposits of human and other filth—from entering the dining-rooms and kitchens and contaminating the foods for human consumption exposed therein. No stretch of the imagination is required for a realization, on common-sense grounds, of the significance of such conditions. They are bad—bad for the human body and bad for the human mind.

Knowledge of sanitation.—In the vast majority of the families visited the responsible members of the household were uninformed or misinformed about the most salient features of home sanitation. In many instances at the homes of the most prosperous and the most progressive farmers in a neighborhood, with dwelling houses handsomely constructed and elaborately adorned with lightning rods, the worst sanitary conditions were found.

Even among families in which cases of typhoid fever had occurred within the last twelve months, it was very exceptional to find that sanitary measures approaching effectiveness had been carried out to protect the family against a recurrence of the disease.

CHAPTER IV

RURAL INSTITUTIONS — THE HOME

A SOCIAL instinct is implanted in all men by nature, and yet he who first founded the state was the greatest of benefactors. For man, when perfected, is the best of animals, but, when separated from law and justice, he is the worst of all; since armed injustice is the more dangerous, and he is equipped at birth with the arms of intelligence and with moral qualities which he may use for the worst ends. Wherefore, if he have not virtue, he is the most unholy and the most savage of animals, and the most full of lust and gluttony. But justice is the bond of men in states, and the administration of justice, which is the determination of what is just, is the principle of order in political society. Seeing then that the state is made up of households, before speaking of the state we must speak of the management of the household.

— ARISTOTLE. *Politics*. Bk. I, pt. 2.

The family is the most fundamental and the most indestructible unit of society. Life under city conditions, especially in apartment houses, flats, and hotels, has, however, gone far towards altering American home life, and not for the better. The farm home is now the most stable and most conservative unit in the state. For instance, the liquor saloon evil, with its usual train

of misery and crime, was voted out of the rural districts long before the cities were ready to squelch it. The disgusting habit of smoking cigarettes by women, now seen in our cities, is not tolerated in the country. It is a matter of common observation that a great many of the leaders in the industrial and intellectual life of our cities came originally from farm homes. While it cannot be determined statistically, yet it seems fair to assert that the farm home is functioning better than the city home in its primary purpose of producing real men and women. Is it not significant that of our three greatest presidents, Washington, Lincoln, and Roosevelt, two were from farm homes? It is indeed difficult to exaggerate the importance of the country home in the life of the nation.

Pathology of Country Home

Not every home is living up to its full possibilities. Due to the isolation of country life, particularly in newer sections of the country, some country housewives are apparently overcome by the routine and monotony of their lives, are overwhelmed by the sheer inertia of their environment. For instance, I recently stopped to get a drink at a country home—a prairie home—on the bank of the Cedar River. It was June, and the prairie was lovely in its freshness of green grass and its bright-colored flowers. But

the house, the yard, the back door, the four children, the housewife herself, were all a negation of all beauty and all harmony. Children were dirty almost beyond description; rubbish cluttered the yard; on the housewife's face was settled a look of sullen, sodden despair. The only "decoration" in the back yard was the skin of a coyote, nailed bloody side out, near the door. Aside from bearing and rearing children, there was apparently nothing to dignify life to this woman. There was no bit of lace or ribbon or color to beautify her appearance. Her spirit had gone out. This gloomy picture, while a true one, holds true for only a small per cent of the farm homes in any one community. Indeed, not far from this home was another, where both the man and wife had preserved their faith and their courage, and had kept hold of all those things which dignify and sweeten life. They too had children, but they showed some grooming; they had flowers in bloom in the yard; they had shrubbery and vines; they even had flowers in the window; they had pictures, books, magazines; they had neatness, order, system about the place. They had met the same environment, and their spirits were equal to the task.

The Farmhouse

In laying out the farmstead the first shortcoming noticeable in many cases is the lack of any

defining line between houseyard and barnyard. Where some attention has been paid to landscape gardening some well-defined border is established to the houseyard, either in the form of a fence, a hedge, a row of shrubbery or trees, a garden, or a driveway, separating it from the barnyard. Perhaps fewer than half the farmhouses make any use of flowers and shrubbery in beautifying the grounds. This is increasingly true of rented houses, which now comprise about half the farm homes. Where grounds and surroundings should be beautiful they are ugly. This is due to lack of cultivated taste and appreciation, more than anything else, for the opportunity is at hand to have beauty and harmony in the grounds about the farmhouse. There is also, unhappily, too much copying of the showy types of city and suburban homes which do not fit the country landscape.

The interior of the farmhouse, from the utilitarian standpoint, suffers in comparison with the city house by reason of the lack of modern conveniences. Furnace heat, electric light, gas, and running water are almost unattainable in the ordinary farm home. The kitchen sink, the bathtub, and the indoor toilet must likewise be absent from the typical farm home. Vacuum cleaners, electric irons, and electric washers will be found very rarely indeed in the farm home. Few country

homes have refrigerators, although in the northern half of the United States ice could be put up on the farm. Many of the above-named conveniences are now being supplied by commercial companies at a price within the reach of the more prosperous farmers. However, many such farmers put their surplus earnings into building new barns or buying more land rather than into conveniences for the housewife. It is, of course, only the very thoughtless or greedy farmer who seems to care more for his live stock than for his wife. Usually when such questions as home improvement are clearly sensed by both the farmer and his wife—and particularly by the wife—such improvements are forthcoming in due time.

The Family Life

The most wholesome family life in America today is to be found in those farm homes where the husband and wife, both persons with some education and with good breeding are rearing a family of healthy, happy children. It is desirable, but not absolutely essential, that they be prosperous in this world's goods. It is more essential that their lives be lived in accordance with the old-fashioned and enduring virtues of industry, integrity, honor, and true courtesy.

The child in such a home has more opportunity than the city child to learn useful things first hand,

and to learn by doing. He has more opportunity to begin different tasks and see them through to the end. He is in closer contact with the fundamental processes of nature, the coming of seed-time and harvest, the processes of life and growth and death in the animal and vegetable kingdom about him, the element of human labor in producing the materials of commerce. All these fundamental facts are matters of intimate knowledge to the child in such a home, while these same things are known but dimly or not at all by the city child. Such knowledge tends, in the end, to make the country-born child a better and sounder thinker than the average city child, although not so superficially clever and dexterous in dealing with purely social phenomena.

The child in such a home is given opportunity for culture and refinement, if he comes of gentle breeding. It is true that some of the ancient stigma still lingers which the Latin words for city and country implied (*urbs*—city, *rus*—country), and which has been carried over in our English derivatives, “urbane” (from the Latin *urbs*), meaning courteous in manner, polite, refined, elegant; and “rustic” (from the Latin *rus*), meaning rude, awkward, rough, unpolished. Country life, as now lived, affords ample opportunity for contact with diverse characters so that the child in the country home can gain thereby

all the "polish" he is capable of taking on. The country home, furthermore, of the type under discussion affords opportunity for acquaintance with a few of the world's greatest authors, and some of the great poets. At least one magazine of the more "solid" type is to be found in such a home, rather than the light and frothy, not to say, trashy type of "cheap" magazine. In such a home there is also to be found at least one good picture on the wall, selected with good taste. Amusements in such a home are likely to be family affairs and more wholesome than the commercialized amusement of the city, particularly the "movie show," which offers to the tired nerves of the boys and girls some bathos like "Tillie's Blighted Romance."

The child in such a home is in a fair way to develop a strong, Christian character, for he has both heredity and environment on his side.

To summarize then, in such an ideal country home, the child has opportunity to develop ability and knowledge, to realize a degree of culture and refinement, and to work out for himself a strong clean character. What more could any home do for him?

CHAPTER V

RURAL INSTITUTIONS — THE SCHOOL

EVERYWHERE there is a demand that education have relation to living, that the schools should express the daily life, and that in the rural districts they should educate by means of agricultural and country-life subjects. It is recognized that all difficulties resolve themselves in the end into a question of education. . . . The school must express the best cooperation of all social and economic forces that make for the welfare of the community. Merely to add new studies will not meet the need, although it may break the ground for new ideas. The school must be fundamentally redirected, until it becomes a new kind of institution. This will require that the teacher himself be a part of the community and not a migratory factor.

The feeling that agriculture must color the work of the rural public schools is beginning to express itself in the interest in nature study, in the introduction of classes in agriculture in high schools and elsewhere, and in the establishment of separate or special schools to teach farm and home subjects. These agencies will help to bring about the complete reconstruction of which we have been speaking. It is especially important that we make the most of the existing public-school system for it is this very system that should serve the real needs of the people. The real needs of the people are not alone the arts by which they make a living, but the whole range of

their customary activities. As the home is the center of our civilization, so the home subjects should be the center of every school.

—LIBERTY H. BAILEY. *Report of the Country Life Commission, 1910.*

The country offers continual interest to the mind which has been trained to be thoughtful and observant; the town offers continual distraction to the vacant eye and brain. Yet the education given to country children has been invented for them in the town, and it not only bears no relation to the life they are to lead, but actually attracts them towards a town center.

—SIR HORACE PLUNKETT. *The Country Life Problem in the United States.*

At a meeting of representatives of all the higher institutions of learning in Kansas, at Emporia, in 1920, to consider rural school problems, the following typical conditions were found to exist in the state:

In eighty-five Kansas counties there are eight thousand one-room schools. Three thousand of these one-room schools have fewer than ten pupils each. In these same counties thirty-one schools are closed for lack of teachers; 576 districts have teachers below the standard requirements. The average tenure of Kansas teachers is less than two years. The average age is nineteen and a half years. The salary in half the one-room schools is fifty dollars a month for seven months.

All that the average country boy has access to is an ungraded school, usually taught in one room by a girl with less training than a high-school graduate, receiving forty or fifty dollars a month for seven or

eight months in the year, teaching in all thirty or more classes a day.

— SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE.

The country school is in process of transition. In changing from the *old* to the *new* to keep pace with modern conditions, some impatient critics are condemning the rural school—even muck-raking it—for not changing faster. But the transformation is going on about as fast as conditions warrant. It was Emerson who said to the reformer: "Why so hot, my little sir?"

The Old and the New

It is not necessary to take widely separated areas to find concrete examples of the old and the new type of rural school. One county, chosen at random in northern Wisconsin, Marinette, illustrates the two types. During the two years, 1914 and 1915, fourteen new modern schools, several of them consolidated schools, were built in this one county. The old type is still represented by the Kube school. It is a log schoolhouse—although painted white on the outside—and the girl teaching the three pupils composing the school receives forty-five dollars a month. The district has shrunk to three families, but they proudly maintain their district school. Since this school has an organ, good pictures on the wall, a modern heating plant, an approved lighting system and is

in excellent repair throughout it is typical of the best rather than the poorest of the one-room rural schools. Marking a few steps of progress ahead of this Kube school is the one-room rural school at Athelstone, which has substantial achievement to its credit. This school has a Babcock milk tester and farmers actually send in samples of milk for testing. When we recall that it was Babcock of the Wisconsin University who gave to the world the Babcock tester, and that now Wisconsin ranks as America's greatest butter and cheese state, we see the appropriateness of having the rural school of Wisconsin pay attention to the economic side of the dairy industry. This school also has developed work in sewing and cooking (serving hot lunches at noon). A literary society and a reading circle are maintained. Reaching the next step in progress, we find the more-than-one-room rural schools at Dunbar, Cirvitz, Niagara, and elsewhere. These are all purely rural schools or are in settlements so small that a large proportion of the pupils come from the country. A large part of the improvements and equipment in use by these schools comes from the manual work of the boys. This includes poultry-houses, incubators, brooder coops, colony houses, window screens, stepladders, workbenches, sawhorses, corn testers, birdhouses, and playground equipment. Ten wagons or autos are used in the county

for transporting boys and girls to schools. Ten Babcock testers are owned by country schools. Seed germination and purity tests are carried on regularly in many schools. Soil testing, field crops suited to soil types, silo building, hatching and care of poultry, judging and care of live stock, keeping milk records, are among the agricultural studies. On the recreation side, lively school teams in basketball, baseball, tennis, and hockey are maintained. The McAllister School has an indoor playroom. The Goodman School has a moving-picture machine. Thus, by this simple Wisconsin example, we see that the rural schools are grasping their opportunity and are giving their pupils in many cases the kind of training that fits them best for living and for life.

The Wisconsin example could be multiplied hundreds of times in Wisconsin and elsewhere. One illustration from Minnesota will carry the story of the transition of the rural school one step further.

Minnesota Experiment

The St. Francis School (Anoka County) may be considered as a rural school since this group of fewer than one hundred inhabitants is too small to be an incorporated village; of its 240 pupils, 224 are residents of the country. Nine covered busses transport the country children to and from

school. Here is a three-story brick building costing forty thousand dollars, equal in size to many small city high schools. It contains besides classrooms, a gymnasium, a library, and an auditorium with moving-picture machine. The building is modern as to light, heat, and toilet facilities. Its equipment includes appliances for manual training and domestic science. And, what is more significant, the school grounds comprise ten acres. This area affords athletic fields for football and baseball, separate playgrounds for smaller children, and garden plots for experiments in soils, plant breeding, vegetable gardening, flower gardening, and the like.

Among the high-school agricultural studies available for those electing them (for the diploma of this school admits to the state university) are animal husbandry, domestic science, agronomy, soils, agricultural engineering, and farm management.

This school functions as a community institution, serving not simply the children but the whole population. The school library of twelve hundred volumes is open to the public. About one hundred books a week are circulated. Music is the outstanding community activity; there is a boys' high-school quartet; a girls' high-school quartet; a glee club; a grade chorus; a high-school chorus; a brass band of twenty-four instruments; an or-

chestra of six pieces. Both band and orchestra are open to any member of the community possessing the necessary talent.

The assembly serves as a community meeting place. It has a piano as well as a moving-picture machine. There is a movie entertainment every Saturday night. Debates are held here, and likewise meetings of literary societies, farmers' clubs, midwinter institutes, and the Parent-Teachers' Association.

The Parent-Teachers' Association is proving a vital link in connecting school and home work. For instance, just before the school opened, a letter (printed on the school mimeograph) was sent out to each home in the district, of which the following quotation forms a part:

We will have the best consolidated school in the state if we pull together—teachers, parents, and children. Just as soon as the school building is completed we will organize a Parent-Teachers' Circle so that we can discuss together our mutual problems. Here are some of the things that we as parents and teachers must try to carry out so as to give the best service to every family in the community and bring school and home together. (1) Give credit for home work and thus encourage helpfulness at home and prove to the child that home is the best place and parents its best friends. (2) Give an annual short course from November 1 to April 1 for such boys and girls over sixteen years of age and others who the Board of Education find cannot attend school regu-

larly nine months. (3) Make the vacations serve the people. For example, begin school one week earlier than customary and give only one week vacation at Christmas, but give two weeks "potato vacation" in October. (4) Make the school library public by issuing borrowers' cards to every patron and child in the district. (5) Organize and support such farmers' clubs, musical, literary, and social organizations as local conditions and time permit. (6) Give theoretical and practical instruction in agriculture and the manual arts. (7) Adopt as our education plan, the 4H brand of education—education of the Head, the Heart, the Hand, and the Health.

The School Nurse

To bring the country school up to the level of the city school, it will be necessary to add a school nurse. To do without a school nurse in rural counties, as is done in so many counties, is a very cruel economy indeed. No county is doing simple justice to its children which does not provide this first important step in rural sanitation and public health.

These illustrations show the substantial progress made in overcoming the weakness and inadequacy of the one-room rural school. The financial problem of building consolidated schools is not a difficult one to solve, when once the patrons see the need. Neither is the transportation of the pupils a problem of any serious weight. The unsolved problems may be said to resolve them-

selves, in the last analysis, to two, namely, the teacher and the curriculum.

The Teacher

The "migratory" teacher must go. Likewise the "sweet girl graduate" of the city high school who teaches out her "first term" in the country, so that she may qualify as an "experienced teacher" when applying for a place in the town schools. Likewise the very nice young lady who teaches around, casually, in various country districts, till some male chooses her for his mate and promotes her to the head of his own household. Such teachers make good wives, but it is not the function of the rural school to furnish wives to the deserving young bachelors of the district. It will be necessary to develop the profession of country school-teaching. This means that there must be in this occupation not merely more economic rewards, but some permanency of tenure, some dignity, some future outlook.

How bring about this condition of affairs? A system somewhat like that used by the churches would seem to be a step in the right direction (provided a fairer compensation were paid). There should be at every rural school a plot of ten acres or more of ground. There should be a teacher's cottage, equal in appearance to the very best homes of the community. The teacher and

his wife would, of course, be furnished this cottage rent free. They would be employed by the year with the understanding that their work lasted twelve months, instead of the customary nine months. If the school were large enough to employ more teachers than the man and his wife, more cottages should be provided, or a single cottage large enough to house the teaching force.

The man and wife, moving into a cottage of this kind and taking charge of the school, would do it with the understanding that they were to remain "on the job" as long as their work was successful. They would be encouraged, by proper recognitions, to remain many years, or even a lifetime, at their post. They would become as much a part of the community as the village doctor or the village banker. The economic cost of such a system would be far less than the economic gains. Teachers of this type would have weight and standing in the community, would indeed be community assets of the first importance. Such a program would elevate and dignify the work of teaching the rural school, and put it on the plane where it must ultimately be put.

The Curriculum

What shall the country boy and girl be taught? Perhaps all thinkers agree that education in the country schools should at least take on a more

agricultural color. Indeed, this is now being quite generally done, thanks to courses in nature study, Rural School Leaflets, and so on issued by those directing the education work in the various states. But before this problem is finally thought out, there are some radically conflicting views in pedagogy to be reconciled. Does our education "educate away from the farm?" This merely states one phase of the controversy. Other phases are represented by such statements as these: "Rural education should be vocational;" "Rural education should not be merely a trade—the trade of agriculture." Obviously the Americans have a deep-seated prejudice against the apprenticeship or trade idea. The American idea of "opportunity"—that "This is the land of opportunity"—is dominant. The American parent does not want his boy taught any "trade" for he wants this boy to have opportunity to rise to greater heights. How can the American belief in the "land-of-opportunity" dogma be reconciled with the economic facts of life? Ought the rural child to be taught agriculture as a trade? Ought the child be taught any trade at all? Or ought the child be turned loose with only "culture?"

Truly here is a pedagogical jungle through which few paths have been blazed. The fact remains, however, that many boys and girls, by reason of ability and tastes, do leave the farm

for other occupations; they always have done this; and they always will do this. Our American type of social structure is a very fluid one, and this social flux has doubtless been best for us. This condition has contributed its share towards making America the land of opportunity, the land free from caste.

The solution of this problem of the subject matter to be taught in the rural school seems to be along two lines: first, the natural and obvious thing is to continue to teach a certain amount of both the so-called "vocational" and the "cultural" subjects; the second and more important step is to furnish courses of training to those who are older than high-school age, to those who comprise the actual farming population of the district. It may be assumed that the actual farmers have finally chosen their "trade," and are in a position to receive the benefits of technical training. For this group, the rural school of the future, under its competent teacher—a real "doctor of agriculture" in the community—will offer opportunities. These opportunities will take the form of short courses, of demonstrations, lectures, and exhibits. Experts will be called in to help carry out definite projects. Important developments in the science and practice of agriculture in any part of the United States or the world would thus find a channel through which to flow

to the remote rural community clustered about the school center.

Denmark seems to have traveled farthest towards the goal of the ideal rural school. The province of Alberta in Canada is making progress which most American states might study with profit. This progress is towards teaching more technical agriculture to grown-up pupils.

The rural school is now and should ever remain our most democratic local institution; it is supported by the taxpayers; it is owned and directed by the taxpayers. One possible danger for the future should be pointed out, namely, the increase in the direction and control of the local school affairs by some central state or federal bureau. A little more central control is doubtless wise and necessary, particularly since an increasing amount of financial support is coming from state and federal sources. And since a little central control is a good thing, the natural tendency will be to surrender more and more power into the hands of the distant but powerful bureau or bureaus. This will lead to "standardization"—that bane of all bureaucracies. When that stage is reached—if it ever is reached—it will tend to check further experimentation, change, and progress in the rural schools. While this danger is a real one, it can be successfully met if the local school authorities truly sense the situation and keep

alive an alert and vigilant interest in home rule for the major activities of their own school. They ought to welcome advice and suggestion from outside authorities, but refuse to receive very many direct commands.

CHAPTER VI

RURAL INSTITUTIONS — THE COUNTRY CHURCH

IT IS the right, as well as the duty of all men in society, publicly and at stated seasons, to worship the Supreme Being, the Great Creator and Preserver of the Universe. As the happiness of the people, and the good order and preservation of civil government, essentially depend upon piety, religion, and morality; and as these cannot be generally diffused through a community but by the institution of the public worship of God, and of public instruction in piety, religion, and morality: Therefore, to promote their happiness, and to secure the good order and preservation of their government, the people of this Commonwealth have a right to invest their Legislature with power to authorize and require, and the Legislature shall from time to time authorize and require the several towns, parishes, precincts, and other bodies politic, or religious societies, to make suitable provision, at their own expense, for the institution of the public worship of God.

— *Massachusetts Constitution of 1780. Pt. 1.*

Even men who are not professedly religious must, if they are frank, admit that no community permanently prospers, either morally or materially, unless the church is a real and vital element in the community life.

— THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

Our forefathers were careful to establish churches in all the colonies many years before public schools were even thought of. This is one key to the type of civilization they were trying to establish — and did establish.

There is no philosopher's scale that can weigh the influence of the rural church of the past. Neither is it possible to calculate what would have been the total social effect of subtracting this influence entirely from the life of the rural community. In the country, as well as in the city, there are persons —

To whom the Infinite and Eternal
is but the guess of a worm in the
dark, and the shadow of its desire.

The rural church has furnished a satisfying and ennobling philosophy of life to many a man and many a woman who would otherwise have grown weary or despondent on the long journey. To the man and to the woman on the farm the performed duty and sacrifice in building and supporting a church, in regularly attending the church despite the inconveniences of weather or season, are uplifting influences, tending to elevate the plane of their lives above the daily petty routine. To the man on the farm, but more particularly to the woman, the simple sermon on the Sabbath day, linking up the humble daily life of the obscure dwellers on the farm with the great thought

and plan of the Infinite and Eternal, this experience, I say, gave life added meaning, dignity, direction. Exalting the eternal verities on the Sabbath day exalted life for the rest of the week. The sermon, the spiritual songs, the spirit of devotion, reverence, and worship, the whole atmosphere of the rural church, taken at its best, were unmeasured influences for good.

The country church of the past did not have to meet the competitions of modern life, and hence its great influence went unchallenged.

Transition

The country church, like the country school, is in a transition stage. It must do more for the people — and live — or do less and perish. With the coming of good roads and automobiles, it is easy to go to the larger town church. With the coming of the big Sunday newspapers, distributed over the country on Saturday, it is easy and comfortable to stay at home and read on Sunday. More reading, more travel, more contact with people, make it more of a sacrifice to listen to a poor sermon in a small church, by a poorly paid preacher who belongs to one of two classes — a young man who is a “yet-to-be,” or to an old man who is a “has-been” in the ranks of recognized preachers. The situation now is one of flux for the rural church. The *old* is passing

away; the *new* is arriving. The passing of any social institution is not bad if thereby the ground is cleared for a new and better institution in its place. I will therefore state frankly the evidences I see of the passing of the old country church and the coming of the new. Concrete illustrations will be liberally used.

*The Old — Passing*¹

Some years ago I was traveling in southern Nebraska and had occasion one day to inquire the road of a farmer whom I had met just outside of a little village.

“Whoa! Praise God!” he said, as he brought his horses to a standstill. I was somewhat surprised at this novel and pious form of speech, but I found the man very courteous and very explicit as to the directions I asked. This man, I learned, was one of a rural religious sect who believe in taking the Bible literally, especially those parts neglected by their neighbors, such as the injunctions to “rejoice evermore,” “pray without ceasing,” etc. Hence these fervent ejaculations which I had heard. Dissatisfied with what they consider the easy-going, worldly spirit of the churches, they have “come out” and formed a little society

¹ Quoted and condensed from the article, “The Passing of the Country Church,” by James E. Boyle, in *The Outlook*, May 28, 1904, pp. 230-234 (Vol. 77, No. 4). New York.

of their own. Some of their neighbors call them simply "Comeouters," and smile at them; others call them "Saints," with a sarcastic cadence to the word. Their religion is of the ultra-dogmatic type, and to them all other churches are hurrying down the primrose path.

This peculiar religious excrescence is not an isolated or unique phenomenon, for in that case it would not be worth recording. But it is typical of abnormal religious conditions marking the steady decay of many rural churches that have lost step with the times.

The remote hill villages of New England are no more exempt from this church decadence than are the isolated rural communities of the great Middle West. Take the case, for instance, of a certain village in the Green Hills of Vermont, a village of some three hundred souls, and capable of supporting one church and one pastor in a manner befitting the dignity of the Gospel he ought to preach and live. But here are found three little church buildings, with dingy white paint and grass-grown steps, standing along the straggling village street. Ask for the ministers and you learn that they live farther back in the hills, where contact with the soil furnishes them their principal means of subsistence. The Sunday-school workers, what few there are, are likewise scattered over the hills, for here the vil-

lage is the unit of decay. Population is too sparse in the country and villages too numerous to warrant the erection of purely country churches. In comparison with the New England city these villages are rural communities. In many villages some of these churches have gone entirely out of use. Others are taken temporarily by some sporadic sect following a wave of religious fervor. Almost invariably these sects are some sort of "holiness people," and claim to enjoy a life of perfection, holiness, sanctification — of complete sinlessness. This they claim, not by reason of the irreproachableness of their conduct, but because of the orthodoxy of their belief. To them the "plan of salvation" is short and simple — atonement and justification by Christ, salvation and sanctification by belief in His name. They not only believe, but also proclaim, that they are living perfect lives. Pinning their faith to a few passages of Scripture which harmonize with this doctrine, they make rapturous prayers that they may enter into a "fuller blessing." Religion thus becomes an exalted state of feeling with them, affording them a peculiar nervous joy. But never have I found a case where these "saints" and self-proclaimed sanctified people have convinced their neighbors of their sanctification. Indeed, what is the pathetic side, most often the wives and children of these "saints" find them unat-

tractive, disagreeable, and unlovely in their own households. But this to the "saint" is actually a brutal joy, for, feeling this dislike of kin and neighbor, and citing some verse of Scripture, he thinks he is persecuted for righteousness' sake, and thus he has the joys of martyrdom without its serious inconveniences.

An attempt to reason together over the Scripture with these brethren is futile. The Spirit, they say, puts the words into their mouths and gives them the heavenly vision. If a scholar gives them the Greek root for some disputed word, to help clarify the situation, they look at him with a look of amused pity. Learning they consider the source of accursed pride, for doesn't God promise to reveal these things to babes and sucklings?

The tension of this form of religion is too great to stand actual contact with the hard, stubborn facts of life. A few soon "go back into the world," not to be stirred again with religious emotion. Others wane a little, but form good material for those peripatetic religious zealots who correspond to quacks and charlatans in the domain of medicine. Thus they pass from one religious zone to another, trying each new cult that comes along. At one time they are "Divine Healers;" at another "Soul Sleepers;" then they are spiritualists. And so it goes on; each reac-

tion leaving a paler and more dilute precipitate of religion in their hearts.

Scattered over the great prairies of Iowa, Kansas, and Nebraska, and other states, off the main routes of travel, are found many curious examples of abnormal and decaying churches. A few concrete cases will serve to illustrate.

In one community in Nebraska we find a small band of "Firebrands," as they are called, deriving their name doubtless from their teachings about the torrid regions of the next world. I found the elder of this little band cordially hated by his neighbors because he had let his two little girls die of diphtheria without calling a doctor. He gave them "prayer treatment." On a visit to this house I was entertained several minutes in the parlor by a bright ten-year-old boy, while waiting for his father to appear. The walls were decorated with pictures, home-talent work, and representing theological ideas worthy of the Middle Ages. The boy explained them to me with all the seriousness and gravity of a man of years. The principal picture on the front wall showed the "fashionable church" upside down in the pit of Hades, with lambent tongues of flame licking around its doors and windows. For lurid coloring another picture was conspicuous. This, too, represented hell. The little boy walked up to it with reverential awe and pointed out (as

his elders had done to him) how Satan, fork in hand, was busy on the brink of the lake of fire, giving a twist to a Methodist here, jabbing a Baptist there. For each denizen of hell was labeled with the name of some orthodox church. The starting eyes and contorted bodies most realistically suggested the fiery tortures of the damned. In the background was seen a narrow path leading upwards to the pearly gates. Up this path walked the chosen few, bearing the name of "Firebrands!"

In Kansas we find an interesting settlement of the "River Brethren." This is a large community and represents a far higher type of religious life and health than the ordinary isolated church. The most striking custom here is the painting of Scripture texts on fences, gates, and barns along the public highway. It is a common thing to see, in awkward, wobbly letters, such exhortations as "Prepare to meet thy God," "Repent and be baptized." One brother, more pious-minded than the rest, painted the whole side of his barn with the one big word, "Hell." The young people of this community are rapidly drifting without the pale of the church, as might be expected.

Indiana furnishes an interesting example where our boasted American stock has not been greatly touched by foreign immigration. Here are found some of the most hopeless and forlorn condi-

tions in the rural churches. In earlier days the sturdy settlers hewed out homes in the oak and beech forests, and erected Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian churches. Quakers and United Brethren also had their settlements. But how is it today? With the advent of the new generations came the desire for new kinds of churches. The spirit of toleration and cooperation weakened as the feeling of self-sufficiency came over each community. An expression of this is found in the great multiplication of rural churches, till in many places they are as numerous as country schoolhouses. This is not healthful. For with each subdivision comes a new name and a new sect and a diminution in power. Rarely are found the pristine Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Quaker, or United Brethren. Now the names are Progressive Brethren, Radical Dunkards, Liberal Dunkards, Progressive Dunkards, New Lights, Wesleyan Methodists, Protestant Methodists, Saints, Crusaders, First Day Adventists, Seventh Day Adventists, Mennonites, Dowieites, etc.

This division and redivision means that there are a brood of struggling, poorly paid, poorly prepared preachers. Should there chance to arise one able preacher he is called to a better position—a larger church. This means, so to speak, the survival of the unfittest. Many are old men,

unschooled, eking out a living by farming or even by day labor. The spirit of division in so many rural communities is inimical to the cause of Christianity. Trivial personalities of the neighborhood are often determining factors in the life or death of one of these churches. One church was broken up because the preacher married a second wife not acceptable to the congregation. Another pastor scattered his flock by joining a lodge when his sheep were opposed to all secret orders. These disrupted societies are embittered not merely against the church but against all religion, in many cases. The preachers themselves often shift from one denomination to another as interest or necessity dictates. "We turned our preacher off," said a farmer in one place, "and he's joined the Dowieites now."

Do the preachers in these feeble churches fulminate against the powers and principalities of darkness? or preach that the wages of sin is death? or exalt justice and virtue? or preach Christ and Him crucified? Unhappily they do not all do this. They wrangle over some minor points of dogma, or attack one another's theology. "Baptism" furnishes a rich theme for many a sermon, the method of baptism being the point of the discussion. That the calling of any minister *reverend* is contrary to the Bible is another much-used subject. Much discussion of this kind seems

frankly aimed at tearing down a competing church, rather than building up any church. One minister prayed "for the unconverted preachers" of the neighborhood, when opening a meeting at which these gentlemen were present by his invitation.

It is the custom for one preacher to have from two to five appointments, and to preach at each place once in two weeks. Sometimes remote points are reached only once a month. But the people refuse to go elsewhere to hear a sermon, for it would not be by a preacher of their denomination. In fact many families still hitch up their horses Sunday morning and drive five miles across the country to their own church, passing on the way several just as good, or better, but which do not happen to be of their particular belief. And these subtleties of belief look like an exaggeration of hair-splitting to a layman. For example, one is told that the progressive Dunkards wear ordinary hats and coats, but the radical Dunkards wear the old-time bonnets and band-collar coats. Hence these two must have separate church buildings and keep their children in separate Sunday schools.

In rural districts these little schisms propagate themselves with tenacity. Each doctrine has a few stubborn followers. They lack opportunity of squaring their ideas with those of big majori-

ties, and hence, no matter how divorced from common sense some perverted tenet is, it finds its following. There is thus a process of division in many rural churches, outstripping the processes of growth in numbers and strength. The old type of country church is passing. Each time it changes its name—now “Baptist,” now “New Light,” now “Saint”—it loses in membership and vitality. Its fire may be relumed from time to time. But soon it stands by the wayside, forsaken, doorstep choked with tall weeds, windows broken. Then it becomes a granary or corncrib for some thrifty farmer, or is torn down and carted away.

The New—Arriving

Conditions have just been pictured of the country church at its worst, of the church failing to meet its opportunity, of the church doomed to extinction. This is a gloomy picture, and is typical of the minority, rather than the majority of rural churches, it is to be hoped. There is arriving a new type of rural church to meet the new conditions of our civilization.

The first function which is being performed now by the successful rural church is that of delivering a spiritual message to its community. Whatever other functions the church may perform as a community center or as a social insti-

tution, yet its major purpose is and must ever remain to carry the religious message to the hearts of its people, to the individual who sits in its pews. No beautiful literature or ethical philosophy or cultural code or sociological hocus-pocus can take the place of that. Under the fashion of the moment to preach a "more social religion" some young preachers are carried aside in endeavoring to preach a "social" gospel. They forget the simple truth that the religion of the New Testament is an individual religion, not a social religion. A social religion means reforming your neighbor; an individual religion means reforming yourself. Evidently the country preacher who can get an individual religion into the heart of every member of his community need not spend any time worrying about a social religion for his community, for he will have the fruits of it already.

The successful rural church then, is, first of all, bringing the vital message to its people. And in the second place it is functioning as a community center. It is serving each group according to the needs of that group, club and social life for some, athletics and games for others, library and reading for still others. It is open seven days in the week. Something is "going on" there, so that the young people, in particular are drawn to it, gladly, in numbers.

The church of the new type contains its kitchen and dining-room, where the people may break bread together and thus become better neighbors. It contains a gymnasium — that delight of every boy and many girls — where the commoner athletic sports and games of physical skill and prowess are played. The neighborhood without one gymnasium and without one library is not a complete neighborhood at all. To these facilities the new rural church is adding such features as reading-rooms, clubrooms, glee clubs, orchestras, and any other wholesome activity which fits the local needs.

The Preacher and His Compensation

Of all classes of professional men, the rural preacher is the most poorly paid. It seems to be another case of the "vicious circle" — low pay causes poor preachers and poor preachers in turn cause poor pay. As in all institutions, the question of leadership is of primary and vital importance in the rural church. To develop and keep a high character of leadership the average country church is far too small and too weak. The solution to this vexing problem is, of course, a larger, stronger church and stronger, better preachers. The movement towards the institutional church is a movement towards both these goals. But in any event, it will doubtless become necessary for

most farmers to acquire the habit of more liberal financial support of this rural institution. This point of view the farmer seems very slow indeed in acquiring.

Church Federation

A larger, stronger country church suggests the idea of consolidating a few weak, competing churches into one vigorous church. The psychological conservatism which clings to a religious creed makes the movement towards church federation extremely slow. There is also the more shallow motive of denominational pride to be reckoned with. However, in a country like the United States, with its tremendous fluidity of population, its heterogeneity of race, religion, and language, less and less significance is given to religious creeds and more and more importance to religious conduct. We have just seen, in a preceding part of this chapter, one tendency at work multiplying and differentiating creeds. There is also plainly in evidence a tendency at work liberalizing creeds and federating churches. It seems to me that at the present moment one tendency is exactly as strong as the other. However, considering the last fifty years and forecasting the next fifty, it seems plain to me that the federation movement will soon entirely outstrip the divisional movement. We have had "consolida-

tion" in schools, in business, and why not in churches? The laws of progress and healthy growth make for consolidation, for federation, and hence this movement towards church federation (along slow, conservative lines) seems inevitable. This makes the future outlook of every country church which survives the transition period bright indeed.

If the country church passes away, the city church must eventually do likewise. For as the rills and brooks feed the rivers, so the country churches furnish the material out of which come the leaders of the city church.

CHAPTER VII

RURAL INSTITUTIONS — THE COUNTRY STORE

THE "Enclosure Acts" of England were designed in part to prevent the "decay of villages." The following three acts are typical of that very significant epoch in the evolution of British agricultural and industrial society.

1515. 7 Henry VIII. ch. 1. "If any person shall decay a town," etc.

1597-8. 39 Elizabeth. ch. 1. "Against the decaying of towns," etc.

1601. 43 Elizabeth. ch. 9. The statute 39 Elizabeth, ch. 1, against decaying of towns, continued.

A large per cent of the farmers live near a country store. The unincorporated village is serving a large share of our population, and will continue to do so. The incorporated village is, in many cases, so small, as to be practically rural territory. It is the "decay" of such village which formed a problem in English history five hundred years ago and which is an unsolved problem now in all the older settled parts of the United States. This is because the country store is more than a merely economic institution. Doubtless there are cheaper mediums through which to merchandise goods. But it is more than that. It is a social institution performing for many farmers services which they crave. The strongest argument ever

used for the liquor saloon (when it once flourished among us) was that it was the "poor man's club." It may just as truly be said of the country store that it is the farmer's club. To the person uninitiated into the lure of the country-store "crowd" it is difficult to understand the congregating of people at this focus on any and all occasions. This is true of the young people of both sexes who meet by chance or tryst there. But it is especially true of the aged men, who are no longer in the active current of their own farm activities, and who would feel themselves shelved and lonely, were it not for this "club." Every real country store can boast of one or more — perhaps several — of these devotees, who spend the daylight hours of the six working days of every week in their own corner of the store. Here they see the stream of life go by. And what is better, they participate, with the mellow wisdom of their years, in the political campaign discussions which periodically align their community. Indeed, all the merited encomiums which have been bestowed upon the New England town meeting as the primordial germ of our constitutional government may with equal merit be bestowed on the political discussions about the coal stove in the back end of the country store.

The country store is more than a place to buy merchandise. It is more than a social club for

the farmer. It is one of the three or four permanent rural institutions whose progress and prosperity are an integral part of the progress and prosperity of the community. It is one of the local community institutions which functions, for better or for worse, in the lives of the people of the neighborhood. In one sense, it forms a fair index to the material and moral status of the community.

If there is a clean and prosperous country store in the district, all real-estate values increase. It is a center of inspiration for better schools, better politics, and general community improvement.

When one compares the part in country life played by the best country store with the part played by the poorest country store, one is impressed not merely by the need but also by the opportunity which exists for improving the poor country store. For the problem of the country store resolves itself into the very frank questions — Shall the country store be eliminated? or shall it be kept and improved? On the basis that the "decay of villages" is a bad thing for the community, the answer becomes: The country store must be kept and improved.

Best Type of Country Store

The best type of country store is now represented in all parts of the United States. The

evolution of one such store in the Middle West is typical of other sections. "This store," said a native, "was started away back, about fifty years ago, when the railroad came through. But it didn't do well, not till Charley McNeal got hold of it. First a man named I. W. Arnett had it. He had several children, and couldn't make a living at it. Next Charley Bates tried it a year or two, but he got tired of it and gave it up. Then Bill McClure had it. He had a big family, and he couldn't make a good living at it, so he moved on. Then Old Man Scholtz came along in a covered wagon and decided to try it awhile. Two years finished him. Then Sam Huey took it, mostly because the folks here wanted the post office kept open. They couldn't get along without their newspapers. But Sam quit in a year or two; then his brother, Newt Huey, tried it. He held on for a few years, but it was too slow for him. Then Frank Carr took a turn at it. Two or three years was enough for him, and he quit the job, about as well off as when he started it. Next Mr. McCreery came along, enlarged the store, built a fine home here, and took a young man, Charley McNeal, in partnership with him. Charley was a farm boy, and lived a half mile from here. He had been off to college and studied bookkeeping and had a good education. Like his father, he was known by everybody as honest and square as

the day is long. McCreery died in a few years, and so Charley took over the store himself. He married a farmer's daughter, member of the little church that stands near the store, and these two kept the store. The store has now been in Charley's hands about twenty-five years. He is a man with considerable family. He and his wife and all his children are active in the little church. He now employs three or four clerks to help handle his trade. He has had to enlarge his plant from time to time. First he built a cream station, to receive, test, and ship cream. Then he built a large warehouse for his machinery and implement trade, this warehouse having an assembly hall overhead for community use, free of charge. A second storehouse was utilized for flour and feed-stuffs. Flour is bought in this way. Charley goes in with Clark at Winch Falls, five miles east of here, and they order a carload at a time from the mill at Concordia. It comes here at carlot freight rates, and half is unloaded. The other half car is then loaded to Clark, and several dollars are saved on freight, not to mention the amount saved on the flour. The same thing is done with feeds. The store is now, in fact, a big department store, using four buildings, not counting the coal business. Everything the farmer has to sell — butter, eggs, cream, etc., is bought, and paid for in cash or merchandise. Anything the

farmer wants to buy is furnished, from the stock on hand or is ordered. Although the rural free delivery mail route goes past the door, the post office is still kept open here, and is patronized by a large number of farmers."

"Is this store a farmer's club?"

"Yes. Take, for instance, Brooks Griffin—an old Maine sailor who lives about a mile down the road. His boys run the farm. So Uncle Brooks comes to the store every morning. He walks home for dinner, then he comes back and spends the afternoon here. He has been doing this daily for several years. Sometimes he plays checkers. But generally he just visits and talks with the people that come in, for he knows them all."

This particular country store is in the best sense a community center. It reflects the strong, clean leadership of the man and his wife who conduct it. A strong feature of it is the recreation features which it now offers. The Saturday afternoon and evening country holiday is celebrated here in the summertime by young couples who come in by auto or in top-buggies and gather about the ice cream tables which are provided for them, or play croquet on the lawn. Gasoline torches are rigged up, so that the games may continue beyond the twilight.

The men who drifted through this community

casually, and tried to run a country store failed. The man who was born in the community, who was a man of sterling integrity and of high ability, made a success of it. He is a leading citizen, a leader in all constructive enterprises. His store is a vital community institution. Never a "hang-out" for loafers, it is yet the rendezvous for young and old in their leisure, and furnishes them recreation which recreates. Conducted with the most rigid and unswerving adherence to business principles, yet there is enough human spirit in the institution to make it receive the kindly regard and appreciation of the neighborhood.

The volume of business is sufficiently large and the use of cash discounts in buying so uniformly practiced, that goods are retailed at prices as low as any competitor can meet, whether in nearby towns or in the distant mail-order city. Therefore, whether measured by the economic test of low cost retailing, or by the larger test of social utility, this country store is performing a genuine service to its community.

The Poor Country Store

"Poor men have poor ways." Many country stores are poor and shabby institutions, and serve as bad advertisements of their community. Yet, in most cases — since the margin between success and failure is always narrow — only a few

changes are necessary to put the poor store on the upward road to success. It is most a question of getting the storekeeper out of a rut, of causing him to open his eyes and see for himself what he is doing and what he might just as well be doing.

The Problem of Retailing

Of all steps in marketing, retailing is the most expensive. The oft-discussed "consumer's shrinking dollar" must pay its largest "middleman's toll" to the retailer. Yet most retailers live and die poor men. Indeed, a high per cent of them fail and quit the business. The high cost of retailing is due to one cause, namely, the small volume of business done by each individual retailer. Improvements in retailing must take two general directions, namely, (1) better methods of retailing, and (2) larger volume of trade. These problems will be considered in turn, for they vitally concern the country store.

I. BETTER METHODS OF RETAILING

A country storekeeper, who was also local postmaster, was asked to outline the difficulties which he confronted in conducting his business. Since he had spent a little time at his state university studying economics he had a certain perspective and detached viewpoint lacking in most country

merchants. This store (which he soon afterwards quit) was a type of the poor and unprosperous kind, hence his letter is worth quoting at length.

The following letter, written with no thought of publication, throws considerable light on the whole problem.

Letter of Mr. Roy, a village storekeeper and postmaster:

July 22, 1917.

Dear Friend:

In regard to the mail-order situation as it exists in this vicinity I will proceed to give the fullest detailed discussion that I have at my command.

I find that in looking over the money-order book from the first of July, nineteen sixteen, to July the first, nineteen seventeen, that over half, yes nearly three-fourths of the orders are sent to the mail-order houses in Minneapolis, Chicago, and New York. This would comprise about eighteen hundred, as we issued over two thousand orders during the closing fiscal period.

Now taking up the reasons why the people around here in the country and town patronize the mail-order houses. They tell me that by eliminating the retail store, traveling men, and other sundry expenses they can buy cheaper. The parcel post delivers the purchased goods to their doors, thereby making it unnecessary for them to leave their work and go to town after the goods. They can also return the goods free of cost if it is not as represented. The catalogues sent out appear to be very successful salesmen. By means of vivid illustrations, expository descriptions, and catchy prices, they arouse an intensive desire to

make purchases. Most retail stores in the small towns do not make any effort to induce their customers to purchase any more goods than what they have made up their minds to secure. They do not induce them to buy any additional goods. The fact is most retail men and their clerks in the small towns are poor salesmen. They furthermore do not fix their stores up in an attractive manner. They have very few sales that give the people bargains. Their turnovers are slow and a large percentage of their goods are old and shoddy.

I think that the mail-order business could be largely decreased if the country retail stores would use better salesmanship, make their stores more attractive, have bargain displays to serve as a drawing card and make credit arrangements that would be favorable and convenient to the patrons. They should also have more sales so as to dispose of shelf-worn goods and keep up with the styles. Now when the farmers have autos they come more in contact with city and town people, so through the power of imitation like to dress like their city friends. If the retail stores do not handle the latest styles the people will send off after them.

Another thing as I understand it, is that the mail-order houses have higher selling expenses than the retail stores. I think that the retail stores in the country ought to inform their patrons of this fact and show them that they can sell cheaper. Another thing that the retail stores should do is to compare their goods with the mail-order goods so as to show the patrons the difference in quality, prices, etc. Some stores resort to this practice and meet with a high degree of success. The retail stores should also buy butter, eggs, and other miscellaneous farm prod-

ucts. I know of some stores that will buy anything that the farmer has for sale in the line of farm products and by doing so it has increased the store's trade. It establishes a firmer goodwill spirit and gives the farmer the impression that the merchant is taking an interest in his welfare, besides it makes it possible for the merchant to increase his output as several of the farmers will take their sales out in the form of purchases.

I believe that it would be a good idea if a few men would give lectures to the small town retailers on the psychology of salesmanship, store decoration, advertising, extending credit, etc. It would be very educational and profitable. So many of the retailers in these towns throughout the state have been farmers and have never had an opportunity to learn the secret of selling goods.

Assuming that the agricultural problem of retailing is primarily how to improve the country store, not how to further weaken or eliminate it, certain definite steps in a program are necessary. The varied problems of handling a better quality of goods, of better display of goods, of window dressing, of advertising, of merchandising, of salesmanship, of up-to-date sales devices, of accounting methods, of credit, these and similar problems are best handled through conventions of retailers themselves, in which aid is sought from all available outside sources, such as the bankers, the wholesalers, women's club leaders, the extension department of the universities.

For instance, the problem arises of supplying the housewives with modern home conveniences, for use in connection with kitchen, laundry, or general housekeeping. As at present handled most of these "new ideas" are introduced by mail-order catalogues or by itinerant agents who canvass from house to house. In a convention consisting of retailers and housewives from the home bureaus or from women's clubs of various kinds, the question of the number, kind, quality, make, and price of such household conveniences could be threshed out and some definite conclusions reached. One outcome should be the selection of some two or three standard makes, handled by the stores, with repair parts kept in stock, rather than the supplying of the neighborhood with a large number of different makes, not handled by the local merchants, and with no repair parts in stock.

Similarly, conventions, meetings, or institutes could be held with the wholesalers and bankers, in which problems of mutual interest could be discussed and progress made towards fundamental solutions. Bankers ought to contribute their share to such a conference, since credit (the use and cost of credit) forms such a persistent and important problem.

Meetings of this kind might well be considered as "schools in merchandising and salesmanship."

They would serve as clearing-houses, so that the thought and practice of the best merchant could be brought to the notice of the poorest merchant. Sound and wholesome growth would inevitably result.

2. VOLUME OF BUSINESS

As was stated above, the fundamental problem in retailing is the volume of business. With an increase in the volume of trade comes a decrease in the cost for each unit handled. If it costs the merchant two thousand dollars a year to live and manage his business, and his volume is only ten thousand dollars a year, manifestly, it is costing 20 per cent to handle goods before any profit is taken at all. But if his volume is five hundred thousand dollars a year (and a good country store should equal that) and his costs are ten thousand dollars a year, manifestly he is doing business on a 2 per cent margin. If he can conduct his business on a 5 per cent margin—and he can if given volume enough—he is performing a service with very reasonable cheapness.

Larger volume of business means both buying in larger volume and selling in larger volume. To buy in larger volume (and hence to buy at better prices) means a certain degree of cooperation among retail stores. For instance, bulky commodities, such as flour, would be ordered jointly

by two or more stores, in car lots, thus getting advantage of both prices and freight rates. When two stores go together in this manner they effect a saving, in the manner of the fast-spreading chain stores. Obviously if a line of stores along a certain railroad would cooperate in buying in this manner, they would effect great savings which they could, in turn, pass on to their customers.

To sell in larger volume is largely a problem of acquainting the customers with the advantages. Thus, some country stores in regions where apples are not grown, discover what they consider bargains in apples in the fruit regions. By letter, telephone, or personal word, the store's customers are notified that a car of apples (in bulk, in boxes, or in barrels, as the case may be) will be on hand at a certain date, and will be purchasable at a certain "bargain price." In this way one or more cars of fruit are promptly moved from the car door to the farmer's cellar, without the delay or expense of transferring the car's contents to local storage. Since the time required to unload the car in such a case as the above usually comes easily within the forty-eight-hour limit, there is no complaint from the standpoint of the transportation company and no demurrage charges. This method of moving goods in large volume and at a low margin is now being applied by coun-

try stores to various commodities, such as feeds, fertilizers, farm machinery, fencing, pure seeds, etc. The advisability of using a light motor truck for deliveries and for a country pick-up service might well be considered.

The initiative for such dealing should come in part from the farmers. In their local meetings they are in a position to pool their orders and then place them with their local merchant. This is the ideal arrangement. It is simple; it is economical. But this form of cooperation is not carried on very extensively, due in part to the personal equation of merchant or farmer, and in part to the pressure on the farmer "from above" to go in for bigger, more grandiose, and more chimerical schemes of cooperation. With the coming of the farm bureaus and the home bureaus, supported in part by the merchant's taxes, there will evidently develop more of the spirit and practice of cooperation between farmers and country store merchants. This will solve the basic problem of reducing retailing costs—namely, increase the volume of business handled by the local retailer.

CHAPTER VIII

RURAL INSTITUTIONS—THE COUNTRY BANK

IN CONSIDERING the "economic functions" of a bank we shall not be bound by any narrow interpretation of the term. Economics is primarily the "science of wealth," but wealth cannot be considered independently of the human element, and in the final analysis whatever affects the temporal well-being of mankind properly comes within the field of economics. While many country bankers still confine themselves to purely financial transactions, yet the most far-sighted and successful among them have caught the vision of the great field of usefulness open to small town banks along the lines of business, agricultural, and community development.

There are two reasons for this broad interpretation of economic functions. First is the selfish reason—it is good business. The success of a bank is bound up with the success of the community it serves and the people who patronize it. Business cannot be good for a bank unless it is reasonably good for the entire community. Many banks have built up a wonderfully flourishing business for themselves by aiding the merchants and farmers to become more prosperous. On the other hand, some banks—to borrow an old but expressive proverb—have "killed the goose that laid the golden egg" by conducting their business with the single aim of furthering their own immediate selfish interests, re-

ardless of how their action might ultimately impoverish the community.

The second reason is a more altruistic one. There are today many business and farming, as well as social, problems in rural communities that need solution. Life in the country does not seem to possess either the opportunity or the happiness offered by the large cities, and this is amply demonstrated by the trend of population away from the country districts during the past few decades.

The country bank is in a better position to help solve most of these local problems than any other existing institution. It is the business center of the community. It handles the financial resources of the people and decides largely how they shall be employed. The banker is close to his customers. He is their financial confidant and he understands their needs and through them the needs of the community better than anyone else in town. His opinions are respected because he is supposed to be in touch with the movement of prices, the general trend of business, and the current happenings in the world of affairs.

— S. EUGENE WHITESIDE. *The Economic Functions of a Country Bank*. Published by the First National Bank, Greencastle, Indiana.

There are, in round numbers, thirty thousand banks in the United States, and three-fourths of these are country banks. Very clearly, then, the country bank is one of the permanent and omnipresent rural institutions which must be reckoned with. One country banker was not far wrong when he remarked, "Our hands are in every

farmer's pockets, to empty them or to fill them." And as the banker quoted above states the case, there are two classes of bankers, those with the narrow, selfish view, and those with the broad altruistic vision. Each type may well be briefly described.

The "Anti-Social" Country Bank

Among our many thousands of country banks there are quite naturally a few that represent the coarser and baser views of banking. I have in mind a bank of this type. It is conducted by a very young man, set up in business by his father. But the father himself is also a grasping man, with the acquisitive sense grown too large, the altruistic sense atrophied. The son was sent into a new village, in a frontier community, where the settlers were pioneering under the usual hard conditions. Sharp bargains were made with borrowers. Rigorous terms were imposed for mortgage loans. In a very few years, with a very small capital, this young man had acquired the ownership of twelve farms, by the simple process of mortgage foreclosure. His activities were largely parasitic. For the actual service rendered in furnishing credit he exacted an unconscionably heavy toll. Yet this man is a "good citizen," measured by conventional standards; he is correct in his personal habits, faithful to his family,

and even to his church. But he has never yet caught the vision of his community, and of owing a social service. He may and likely will go through his entire life, unawakened socially, just as he has begun it.

The "Social" Country Bank

As typical of a very large class of country banks that perform a social service in their communities I may turn to a concrete example. This bank, like the one described above, was a pioneer institution in a frontier community. The bank building—a two-roomed affair—was among the first houses erected in the settlement. The bank, like the general store, was open from seven in the morning till dark, in order to suit the hours of the farmers. The banker and his wife managed the bank. In very domestic fashion, as the banker loved to tell in later years, he and his wife and the baby would come to work in the morning early; the baby would be put in the baby carriage and be wheeled into the back room to sleep. From this beginning the bank grew and prospered, as the community grew and prospered. It became a national bank, and its founder became a director in the Federal Reserve Bank of his district, and chairman of the committee on agriculture of his State Bankers' Association.

This bank was, from its inception, an integral

part of the community. And since this community was an agricultural one, the bank made stimulation of agriculture its chief aim. A state-wide "better-farming" movement was started by the joint action of farmers, railroads, and banks. In this movement this bank was vigorously active from the start. Next came the movement for county agricultural agents, and this bank was a leader. Better accounting methods on farms was promoted. The growing menace of farm tenancy received the bank's most thoughtful consideration. The breaking up of large farms was encouraged; worthy tenants were educated in better types of farming that they might become landowners. In the wider community activities, such as "good roads" and "better rural schools," this bank was among the promoters, both by word and deed.

In short, this bank illustrates the big power for good which any country bank may exert in its community and which a growing number of country banks are actually exerting. It is largely a question of awakening the more backward banks to their opportunity.

Work of Bankers' Association for Agriculture

One very hopeful sign in the evolution of American business institutions, both "small business" and "big business," is the "reform from within"

which marks their growth. While much reproach is cast upon them gratuitously by outside critics for their real and supposed shortcomings, yet it is the principle of self-reproach, of self-improvement, which accomplishes the bulk of their real progress. In accordance with this principle, we find much progress is being made in improving the form and spirit of country banking by means of the State Bankers' Associations and the American Bankers' Association.

In forty of our forty-eight states the State Bankers' Association has, in each case, established a committee on agriculture and education. (The eight omitted states are Connecticut, Maine, Nevada, New Hampshire, Ohio, Rhode Island, Utah, and West Virginia.) The American Bankers' Association, representing the various state associations, has an Agricultural Commission of seven members. This powerful combination of brains and money has now launched a movement for better agriculture and rural life that is bound to be felt for good in the most remote hamlet of the land.

The Agricultural Commission of the American Bankers' Association publishes an official monthly organ at Champaign, Illinois, *The Banker-Farmer*, not as a matter of news, but with the single purpose of encouraging, quickening, and inspiring to action. The comprehensive platform adopted

by The *Banker-Farmer* is as follows: "Citizenship; Cooperation; Better Schools; Better Roads; Farm Demonstrations; Soil Fertility; Better Tenancy Methods; Community Building; Farm, Home, and Town; Marketing and Distribution; Rural Credits."

It must be remembered that the city and country bank, by granting or withholding credits, largely determines the type of farming in a section. Shall more live stock be grown? The banker determines this by his treatment of "cattle paper." Shall more or fewer tractors be used on farms? The banker determines this. So also with other matters involving types of farming. This gives the banker a tremendous power, a tremendous responsibility. And more and more the organized bankers are working with the organized farmers, to the end that this big financial power be used to the mutual advantage of banker and farmer. Every agency which promotes this cooperation between farmer and banker should be speeded on its way; every agency which poisons the relationships of banker and farmer should be throttled. One trouble with many "farmers' movements" in recent years is that they were not organized or managed by farmers, but by self-seekers calling themselves "friends of the farmers." And these leaders have sought and found their following by creating between the farmer

and his banker not a feeling of mutual trust and understanding, but rather a feeling of suspicion, misunderstanding and ill will. Such leaders are not friends of the farmer, whatever they may call themselves. And in the end their work is destructive, not constructive.

CHAPTER IX

RURAL INSTITUTIONS — THE COUNTRY NEWSPAPER

JUST what is a farm paper? Judging from the letters received at the editor's desk, it ranges all the way from a class sheet that praises everybody connected directly with farming and damns everybody else, to a paper that gathers its ideas and ideals with the scissors and assembles them with the paste pot. Now our idea of a farm paper has been in process of growth some thirty odd years and is still growing. It cannot all be expressed in a paragraph, but here is one point to consider. The farm paper that is of real service to the farmer is one that seeks at all times to find the facts and tell the truth. In order to serve its farmer readers well it must have more than a class vision. It must deal directly and fairly with those problems that relate to the well-being of farming, and not of farming alone, but of State and national life as well. We cannot get away from our neighbors and our neighbors constitute all the rest of the folks in the country. We cannot do without them any more than they can do without us. Tolerance and charity and good will are essential elements of a growing, successful farm management because good will and charity and tolerance make for neighborhood and national life and happiness.

—HUGH J. HUGHES.

The country weekly newspaper enjoys a certain wide influence in its community, whatever this

influence may be. Like some privileged characters, it is a guest in nearly every home in the community. And week after week, month after month, it makes its weekly visit. So the influence it has — whether for good or bad — is cumulative. The man, the wife, the boy, the girl — all make its intimate acquaintance. And as the constant dropping of water will wear away the stone, so the weekly visit of the paper modifies the views on life of its readers. It gives a narrower or a wider outlook on life, depending on its tone. It is very easy to detect the difference in tone of country papers, by comparing one with another, but this the average farm family does not do. Some papers, for instance, cultivate a flippant tone, the editor believing this to be a sign of "smartness." One such paper, for instance, in reporting the desperate struggle of a girl to save her mother from the drunken father, in which struggle the father was shot by the daughter, reported the news under the flippant caption, "Plugged Pa." The same paper reported the death and burial of a lady school-teacher at sea with this caption, "Fed the Fishes." Such papers refer to the farmer in joking and belittling terms.

This tone, carried far enough and long enough, creates a non-serious attitude towards the serious and even sacred things of life. It

helps breed that unlovely type of youth known as a smart-alec.

And so with other matters giving an outlook on life. The attitude of the paper towards community institutions—the church, the school, the family, and so on—helps many a youth to formulate his amorphous philosophy on these subjects. It is true, of course, that the paper is but one of a large number of influences focusing on the family, but its regular and sustained method of appearing gives it a place of prominence in the whole complex of influences. It is impossible to describe any one newspaper as typical or representative. Instead, it is better to describe briefly the worst type and the best type, and to suggest ways of bringing the poorer papers up to a little higher level.

The Worst Type

The poorest type of country newspaper is indeed frankly inane, vapid, void, fatuous. If it has an editor at all, he does not speak his voice on the editorial page. Such a paper has no editorial opinions. It is edited largely with the scissors and paste pot. In politics it merely reflects the issues of the larger cities or of the state. Its economic color, so far as it has any, comes from the city, not the country. It has no agricultural color. A large part of such a paper is the “boiler

plate" or patent inside sheets bought from the city purveyor of such stuff. Its advertising is on the lowest level — patent medicines and "financial investments" of the gold-brick variety, including in particular real-estate frauds. The influence of such a paper is certainly of no benefit to the community. There is no good in such a paper, and some harm. It is a sort of parasitic industry which the community tolerates and supports, while it waits for something to happen to change the situation for the better — the editor to die, quit, reform, or a new paper to start. In this way some country communities are afflicted many years with a very poor type of newspaper.

The Best Type

The country newspapers are doubtless showing an evolution into bigger and better community institutions. And this evolution is moving quite as rapidly in the case of the country paper as in the case of the country school or other rural institutions. But even as it is, there are many sources of growth and strength unappropriated by these papers. The bulk of the papers are still too far behind the best papers. Since the country newspaper, like the country bank and country store, draws its living from the agriculture of the region, it should take its color from agriculture. The

best type of country paper now does this. Here it sees and meets its first opportunity for service. The latest and best developments in agricultural thought and practice are collected from all available sources and presented in simple, understandable terms to the readers. Government bulletins, new agricultural books, new theories, are all digested and presented in brief, readable form. Notable achievements in technical agriculture, in the neighborhood or elsewhere, are described in an interesting way. The various agricultural projects of boys' and girls' clubs are set forth in glowing terms. In fact the science and art of agriculture are dignified and exalted.

Such a paper has an editor with some personality. In turn his paper takes on color and personality. It has an editorial policy, and live editorials. It makes itself a definite force in the community. It soon finds that it has no space for the ready-made "boiler plate" material, but fills its columns with live matter of real concern to its community. It sees its opportunity as a builder of community interests. The average state now has about a thousand country weekly papers. Here is a field of tremendous opportunity in community improvement, since these papers go right back "to the grass roots." How shall the poor papers be brought to see, to understand, and to desire to use this opportunity? A program of

improvement is suggested, based largely on the fundamental principle of self-help.

Program of Improvement

In the states where the most improvement of the country newspaper has taken place this change has been in large part due to the annual school or conference held at the state university. This educational step is a joint affair, guided partly by the leaders of the country press, partly by the university itself. In some instances it takes the form of a summer school in which all aspects of successful newspaper making are considered. In other cases, it is a conference in which certain definite and more concrete problems are singled out for consideration. In either case, the men who actually make the papers are brought together in one group for the interchange of helpful experiences, ideas, and suggestions. The university, in turn, of course holds out certain ideals of country journalism and endeavors to exalt and magnify this calling in the eyes of the country editors.

Cornell Newspaper Conference

As a sample of the work being done at our higher institutions of learning, mention may be made of the newspaper conference held during

Farmers' Week at Cornell University, in the year 1920.

At this conference there was an exhibit of 198 country newspapers. They were exhibited in a competition for first place in two types of newspaper service, namely, the best front-page make-up, and the paper best covering the local news of its community. This exhibit formed a very interesting part of the program. The conference also considered the importance and service of the newspaper as a builder of community interests. An editor of a successful country paper spoke at a round-table discussion on the relation between the paper and its community. The conference was held largely as an experiment, and its success was considered sufficiently great to warrant a continuation of the conference in following years. Other universities are developing similar conferences. Here evidently is room for a big work to be done. The importance of the work justifies the holding of a school of two weeks or more each year, either in connection with the university or at some other suitable geographic center. Such a school should be planned and conducted jointly by the educational institutions of the state and the progressive newspaper editors. Such a school as this would in time develop into an institution of very great service to the newspaper brotherhood of the state. It would be the

quickest and soundest way of elevating the tone of the weaker papers and of setting a higher standard in general for country journalism.

CHAPTER X

RURAL INSTITUTIONS — FARM AND HOME BUREAUS

IF COUNTRY life is to become all that it should be, if the career of the farmer is to rank with any other career in the country as a dignified and desirable way of earning a living, the farmer must take advantage of all that agricultural knowledge has to offer, and also of all that has raised the standard of living and of intelligence in other callings. . . . I am well aware that the working farmers themselves will in the last resort have to solve this problem for themselves; but as it also affects in only less degree all the rest of us, it is not merely our duty, but in our interest, to see if we can render any help towards making the solution satisfactory.

—THEODORE ROOSEVELT. *Introduction to the Report of the Country Life Commission, 1910.*

It is a true principle, as Roosevelt remarked, that the working farmers will in the last resort have to solve their problems for themselves. The best that can be said of government aid or any other aid is that it helps the farmer help himself. Anything that finally weakens self-help or seeks to be a substitute for self-help is in the final outcome a curse to the farmer himself.

When ambidextrous demagogues and self-seekers enter Congress and state legislatures (as

many of them do) they will bestir themselves to spread the illusion that legislation can cure all the economic and social ills of the farmer. Yet very little can be accomplished by mere legislation. Note, for instance, the illustration of this fundamental principle by the "Rural Credit Union" movement in the United States and Canada. The great leader of this movement is Alphonse Desjardins of Levis, province of Quebec. When his plan was fully matured, and endorsed by his neighbors, his priest, and his bishop, he began the organization of his now famous *Caisses Populaires* (people's banks). This work he began in 1900, and it was not till six years later — 1906 — that the province of Quebec passed a law for the creation of institutions of this kind. In short, the movement began with the people who needed it most; then the legislators passed the laws to give it proper legal sanction.

But note the course of the Rural Credit Union in the United States. In Wisconsin, noted as the state of the so-called "Wisconsin idea" (government by commissions of experts, of professors, of so-called high-brows) some rural "leaders" decided to hand down to the farmers the blessings of the Canadian idea. Accordingly, proper legislation was enacted, the Wisconsin Rural Credit Law being passed in 1913. The result was nil. No unions were organized. As so often happens,

the legislation, passed by best-intentioned people, was barren. Texas passed a similar law, and has no unions; likewise Utah, South Carolina, and Oregon. The "Rural Credit Union" institution, in short, could not be given ready-made, from above, to the farmer. He preferred other devices, worked out by himself. In short, Touchstone's philosophy still holds true—"An ill-favored thing, sir, but mine own." All of which is good argument for self-help.¹

The County-Agent Movement

The greatest development in American agriculture in this present generation is the "county-agricultural-agent" movement. While the movement involves at the outset, some federal and some state aid, it is primarily a movement to

¹ "We were wrong in many of our commercial policies in the past. It has been the firm belief of a very large majority of our people in the past that combinations of various kinds should be controlled or prevented, so interlocking directorates and ownership of stock of one corporation by another has been forbidden, but now we are beginning to learn that the only way the little fellow can compete with the big fellow is through combination with other little fellows, which makes necessary interlocking directorates and stockholdings, to which we have objected so positively. We have been opposed to the use of large funds in political campaigns, but now the farmers of Canada find that a bill in the Canadian Parliament which would control such contributions would prevent the farmers themselves from doing what they want to do, although the bill was origi-

the self-help variety. If its growth is healthful, it will be increasingly a movement controlled and financed by the farmer. It is earnestly to be hoped that each of the three thousand counties of the United States will soon have a county agricultural agent.

Definition

It is easier to describe than to define the county agricultural agent. He is an agricultural expert, serving the farmers of his county, individually and collectively, in every way which makes for a better and more permanent agriculture. He serves the individual farmer, when time permits, by giving specific and concrete help on the farmer's problems. His larger service, however, comes in his community service. Since the county agent lives in the county, among the farmers he naturally sponsored by them. We have opposed understandings between individuals or corporations for the division of business or territory, but now we find that the fruit growers of the Northwest have learned that it is not the best of business to enter territories and markets without knowing what competitors are doing there, so it is proposed that these interests 'confer' in regard to shipping their product.

"Here are three instances of legislation producing exactly the opposite of the desired result, and the proof that it did. How easy it is for man-made laws to do this, and how futile are those laws when relating to business if they do not harmonize with necessity and efficiency."

— J. RALPH PICKELL, *Rosenbaum Review*, April 24,
1920.

serves, his work is responsive to local needs and conditions. His work is such as to discover and develop agricultural leadership and be in turn directed by that leadership. The county agent, as the office is developed where the work is most successful, functions through a so-called "farm bureau." This is the form of development most likely to endure and attain to permanent success.

The Farm Bureau

As defined by the Office of Extension Work, North and West (of the States Relation Service, Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.), a "County Farm Bureau is an association of people interested in rural affairs, which has for its objects the development in a county of the most profitable and permanent system of agriculture, the establishment of community ideals, and the furtherance of the well-being, prosperity, and happiness of the rural people, through cooperation with local, state, and national agencies in the development and execution of a program of extension work in agriculture and home economics."

In New York State, where the "farm-bureau" movement has doubtless had the sanest leadership to be found in the country, the State Director of farm bureaus stated the functions of a farm

bureau to be, in the order of their importance, the following:

1. The federation of all the existing agricultural forces and organizations in the county to a common purpose (*i. e.*, schools, local granges, clubs, societies, etc.).

2. Agricultural leadership in the broad sense.

3. Organization of associations for better methods of production (*e. g.*, cow testing, seed improvements, etc.).

4. Organization of marketing associations for both buying and selling.

5. The study of local economic needs of the county, that correct farm management practices may be demonstrated and introduced.

6. The giving of personal advice to farmers. This is the least important function.

7. General — "All these functions should be exercised with the point of view of increasing the financial profitableness of farming within the county by increasing the net income of the farmers, and of making country life and work increasingly worth while in the larger sense."

Evidently, to "give advice" to the farmer is but a small part of the duty of the county agent. However, he does serve as the medium through which is made available to the farmers themselves the accumulated experience and wisdom of the Federal Department of Agriculture, the State

Departments of Agriculture, the State Colleges of Agriculture, the great private experimental farms, and finally, the practices of the best farmers themselves. The main thing is to carry out a wide program of community effort.

A farm bureau of the best type is composed of the representative farmers of the county, who join it, as a laboring man joins his union, and who contribute to its support annual dues. Membership dues in the farm bureaus range from one dollar a year to fifteen dollars a year, depending on the particular State in question. States in the Corn Belt have the highest dues—as they have the highest-priced farm lands.

Finances

The farm-bureau work is financed generally through three sources—federal, state, and local. Local support generally comes from two sources—dues of members and taxation, that is, a tax on the property of the county. To the extent that taxation supports the farm bureau, to that extent are villages and cities contributing to this agricultural work. In other words, the ordinary business man—the so-called “middleman”—is being taxed to support the movement which may, in turn, fight him or cooperate with him. State funds are derived from taxation, usually in the form of the general property tax which prevails

quite generally in this country. Federal funds are appropriated by Congress and come in turn from the usual sources of federal revenues — the tariff, the internal revenue duties, the income tax, and from miscellaneous sources. The Smith-Lever Act, under which federal aid to this form of extension work was begun, provided a small sum of money (\$10,000) for each state beginning with the year 1915, the sum increasing annually up to the year 1923, providing the state would duplicate the increase from year to year. The size of the federal appropriation under this Act is based on the ratio which the rural population of the state in question bears to the rural population of the whole United States. Thus Pennsylvania, with our largest rural population, is entitled to 6.15 per cent of the appropriation; and Rhode Island, with .04 per cent, is the smallest.

Support to the farm bureau from state and federal sources entitle these divisions of the government to exercise a certain amount of oversight and guidance, or even control, over the local farm bureau. Viewed in one light, this centralized, expert, efficient leadership is very helpful to the bureau. It has done and is doing very necessary work in promoting this new movement and stimulating it into activity. Without some outside aid and inspiration most local institutions show a tendency to go to seed. Viewed in another light,

however, there is always a lurking danger that the central bureau may gradually fall into the habit of all bureaucratic institutions, namely, try to "standardize" the local farm bureau to such an extent as to chill its individuality and initiative. The prevention of this unhappy state lies largely in the hands of the farmers themselves—and particularly so if they are financing their bureau largely with their own funds.

Good and Bad Types of Farm Bureaus

The farm bureau is a new institution. Its future is one of immense possibilities; it has the potentialities of a magnificent fruition. Its responsibilities are of course commensurate with its powers and possibilities. And since it is a young institution it is certain to make many mistakes. May these mistakes not prove fatal. Rather may they prove the stepping-stones to success in the future.

The first line of cleavage in farm-bureau activities is already appearing, namely between production and marketing. The production of better crops is and always must remain the fundamental and overshadowing economic function of the farmer. Yet some farm bureaus, under mistaken leadership, are turning to marketing as the farmer's chief concern. This is a negation of all

the economies of the division of labor principle of political economy. There is no more justification for the farmer taking over the marketing function than there is the manufacturing function, or the banking function, or the transportation function. Each exists by virtue of the division of labor in our economic society, and each is the survival of the fittest in our economic evolution. Else why not have the farmer teach the country school, preach in the country church, and so on, along with his farm work.

Mistaken leadership in such matters, in turn, goes back to the misinformation derived from two chief sources, namely, the sophomoric articles on marketing problems appearing in our press, and to the insincere utterances of demagogues seeking the political support of farmers.

From leadership like this comes gross popular misconceptions of the "leaks" and "tolls" in marketing. Hence the farm-bureau leaders, in certain cases, feel that they can rush into the competitive commercial field and in some naive and simple manner save some of the egregious "robberies" and "gouges." These well-meaning leaders are grossly misinformed about our modern business structure. Business men, like farmers, are honest in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred. To enter into commercial competition with them, and perform the service either better or cheaper,

is not a simple matter. If a farm bureau enters upon an economic and commercial career, basing its decisions on fallacies at the outset, what chances of success has it? The temptation to enter upon a big program of economic activities is a rock upon which certain farm bureaus are certain to go to pieces.

Commercial activities lie without the field of a farm bureau. This does not mean that the bureau should have nothing to do with marketing questions—with buying supplies, with cooperative marketing, or with the collective bargaining problem. It simply means that the proper attitude toward these activities must be understood and adhered to. The bureau should encourage cooperative activities in every field where needed, where the volume of business is sufficient and where the cooperative spirit exists, but the cooperative association, when organized, should be a separate and independent institution from the bureau. Cooperative selling organizations are very successful when based on some specialized crop, and which enter a field where some real abuses need overcoming. As worked out in practice, these avoidable leaks in marketing have very largely taken the form of putting on the market a better product, with some standardized system of grading and packing. In other words, most of the big leaks in marketing, in these cases, were

not found to exist in "robberies and gouges" by the "middleman." In fact, the big cooperative associations of farmers more and more use exactly the business methods and practices of so-called "Big Business." As an officer of the largest cooperative farmers' company in America (United Grain Growers, Winnipeg) said, "We do not fight Big Business. We *are* Big Business." This company now operates terminal elevators, hospital elevators, line elevators, a private wire, and is a member of the Winnipeg Grain Exchange. In short, it duplicates the methods of successful "Big Business."

The farm bureau of the best type is coordinating all the rural and city institutions of the county which can help promote better farming and a better life on the farms. It is securing the cooperation of all the many interests—agricultural, financial, transportation, mercantile, educational, and others. It is the joint work of all these interests that brings a harmonious development of the schools, the churches, and the other permanent and fundamental institutions of the community. In the place of breeding discord, the farm bureau of this type brings harmony; instead of poisoning the relations of the various classes, it builds up mutual understanding and mutual good will. Such a farm bureau is more than an economic asset to the whole county: it is

a social institution of the first order of importance.

The Home Bureau

The home bureau as now organized mobilizes the women of the county for the purpose of improving the home as the fundamental institution of our civilization. In its form of organization and administration it is very much like the farm bureau, and may indeed be considered as the "better half" of that institution. To list its functions with any completeness is not easily done. It aims, on the economic side, to make the consumption of wealth more rational—if that be possible. This applies not only to the purchase and preparation of foods, but to clothing, to furniture, to household conveniences, decorations, and household equipment of every kind. The home bureau also considers questions of sanitation and public health; of the social and civic duties and opportunities of women; questions of leisure and recreation, and questions of the refinements and graces of life. By mobilizing the leading women of each community and putting their talents to work in real social service, the home bureau promises to be an even greater force for good than the farm bureau itself. Each farm community, however small, contains one or more farm women of true culture and refinement

who find an opportunity for self-expression through the home bureau. Since good example is as contagious as bad example, the little community meetings, held by the home bureau, in these better homes of the neighborhood do an amount of good that is beyond measure. Here is an organization, on the ground, with a direct personal contact, that is able to carry to the remote farm home the message which can be carried there very inadequately or not at all by any other means.

Since it is the home that must spend the family income for the most part, and since it is the home which must produce the men and women of the country, it is indeed high time that the home bureau was arriving. May it speedily take root in each of our counties.

State Federation of Farm Bureaus

When once the counties of a state are largely organized into county farm bureaus, the next step is the federation of these county units into one state federation. This is now an accomplished fact in many states. Perhaps the state of Illinois may serve as a concrete example—this state now has over fifty thousand farmers in the county farm bureaus, and these individuals contribute five dollars each to the support of the central office of the state federation of county farm bureaus, known as the Illinois Agricultural

Association. This association, however, is entering directly into commercial activities, such as live stock and grain. The success of this venture is very dubious. The correct principle is for such state federations to enter into commercial activities as a very last resort, after other means of securing economic reforms have proved inadequate. Careful investigations should be made into the present "middleman system" and into the strength and weakness of our present competitive price structure. It is very doubtful whether any state federation of farm bureaus can, on short notice, organize, establish, and set into operation a commercial system of its own, in the strictly competitive fields of business, and perform the service any better or any cheaper than the present middlemen are doing it. More could be accomplished by cooperating with the middleman than by beginning a fight with him. If these ventures into the economic field do attain to great success, they will do as the large cooperative concerns now do which are eminently successful, namely, imitate in every essential detail the methods and practices of large private business concerns. And if these ventures fail, as their haste and rawness makes likely, it will be a serious setback to a very important farmer movement. Power is always a test of both ability and character. Now that vast power is vested in the lead-

ers of the state federations of farm bureaus, the real test of their ability and character will come. They will be called on for deeds, not words, for performance, not promise. If they have promised too much (in the way of economic reforms) they must fail. If they have led only as fast and as far as they had solid facts to stand on, they will be safe. But if they have indulged in economic claptrap, they have some disillusionments to face.

American Federation of Farm Bureaus

The various state federations of farm bureaus have now federated into a nation-wide union known as the American Federation of Farm Bureaus. For the first time the individual, dues-paying farmers of America have a "union" which may be compared with labor's American Federation of Labor or with capital's Chamber of Commerce of the United States. The farmer has a voice. He is mobilized. He has power. It would be a work of supererogation to point out the opportunity before the new federation, or the dangers confronting it from misuse or abuse of this power. If leaders of pretensions rather than proved ability are put in control, then the mistakes of the federation will be both costly and disheartening.

This new federation is now standing on the threshold of its activities. Will its work be largely

educational? Or will it be economic? Pressure from the "radical element" will call for "economic reforms," for eliminating the "robberies" and "gouges" of the middleman. If saner counsel prevails, the federation will carefully collect and digest its facts before entering into commercial activities — that most competitive of all fields where even the victors bear the scars of battle.

Labor unions learned by experience that two fields must be untouched by them — politics and religion — if the unions were to endure. It might also be truthfully said that the three largest labor union organizations today (American Federation of Labor, The Railway Brotherhoods, and The Western Federation of Miners) have almost uniformly steered clear of commercial activities. And it may also be added that these same unions have quite generally steered clear of starting any large-scale farming operations in order to avoid the "wasteful, bunglesome, and inefficient system of farming" now in vogue (to borrow a familiar phrase).

Indeed, as the venerable Mr. T. C. Atkeson, Washington representative of the *National Grange*, says, in writing about the farmer, in *The Nation's Business* for October, 1919:

His life habits are directed to production and sale in bulk. . . . And if a group of farmers unite

and hire a salesman and provide facilities for distribution, it is an open question if they can—or will—market and distribute their products at any economy over the present competitive distribution system.

CHAPTER XI

THE SOUL OF THE RURAL COMMUNITY

WHAT shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?

After an absence, I am now again in New York City and Brooklyn, on a few weeks' vacation. The splendor, picturesqueness, and oceanic amplitude and rush of these great cities, the unsurpassed situation, rivers and bay, sparkling sea tides, costly and lofty new buildings, façades of marble and iron, of original grandeur and elegance of design, with the masses of gay color, the preponderance of white and blue, the flags flying, the endless ships, the tumultuous streets, Broadway, the heavy, low, musical roar, hardly ever intermitted even at night, the jobbers' houses, the rich shops, the wharves, the great Central Park, and the Brooklyn Park of hills, the assemblages of citizens in their groups, conversations, trades, evening amusements, or along the by-quarters — these, I say, and the like of these, completely satisfy my senses of power, fullness, motion, etc., and give me, through such senses and appetites, and through my æsthetic conscience, a continued exaltation and absolute fulfillment. . . .

But, sternly discarding, shutting our eyes to the glow and grandeur of the general superficial effect, coming down to what is of the only real importance, personalities, and examining minutely, we question, we ask, are there indeed, men here worthy the name? Are there athletes? Are there perfect women to

match the generous material luxuriance? Is there a prevailing atmosphere of beautiful manners? Are there crops of fine youths and majestic old persons? Are there acts worthy freedom and a rich people? Is there a great moral and religious civilization—the only justification of a great material one? Confess that to severe eyes, using the moral microscope upon humanity, a sort of dry and flat Sahara appears, these cities crowded with petty grotesques, malformations, phantoms, playing meaningless antics. Confess that everywhere, in shop, street, church, theater, barroom, official chair, are prevailing flippancy and vulgarity, low cunning, infidelity—everywhere the youth puny, impudent, foppish, prematurely ripe—everywhere an abnormal libidinousness, unhealthy forms, male, female, painted, padded, dyed, chignoned, muddy complexions, bad blood, the capacity for good motherhood deceasing or deceased, shallow notions of beauty, with a range of manners, (considering the advantages enjoyed) probably the meanest to be seen in the world.

—WALT WHITMAN. *Prose Works*, p. 211.

The rugged American poet wondered whether the great material growth of our cities was matched by an equally great growth of real men in those cities. In his own Manhattan he failed to find “fine youths and majestic old persons” and “perfect women to match the generous material luxuriance.”

His question went to the root of the matter. While the economic problem of country life is the underlying problem, the problem of the actual

foundation on which to build the superstructure, yet the quality of the country life itself is the superstructure which is to be built on that foundation. A solid and substantial foundation is obviously necessary, but a very ignoble and decaying superstructure may stand on a very solid foundation. The kind of human personalities produced in a community reflect the actual soul of the community.

What are those non-material things which go to make up the soul of the rural community? If we search through the writings of philosophers, prophets, and poets — our best guides — we find different answers given. The ancient Hebrew prophets tell us that their people worshiped the “beauty of holiness.” It is said epigrammatically, that the ancient Greeks, on the other hand, worshiped the “holiness of beauty.” Some sects have set up for their trinity the worship of “the true, the beautiful, the good.” In any event, it is obvious that knowledge, beauty, goodness are, in their very essence, those enduring realities of life which constitute in great part the soul of the community.

Certain institutions now in the field contribute to the life and growth of the soul of the rural community. The rural school has already been described as one source of knowledge and truth. The country church has likewise been mentioned, whose function is to exalt goodness, and thus act

as a leaven in sweetening the life about it. No organized institution makes a formal teaching of beauty in the rural community. Like love of country, honesty, integrity, this subject must be made part of the very atmosphere which the people breathe. There are, however, many concrete ways in which a community may develop its own life and spirit, in addition to those named in the foregoing pages. Let us endeavor to suggest some of those ways in the concluding pages of this book. Let us assume that the things worth while we wish to appreciate and appropriate, in increasing measure, are art, music, literature. Let us assume that the great problem of leisure shall be nobly solved. And finally, let us hope to achieve for our community that incommensurable reality popularly known as "community spirit."

Art

An American skeptic once said that had he created the world he would have made health contagious rather than sickness. Be that as it may, beauty is more "contagious" than ugliness. The taste for beautiful things — flowers, pictures, landscapes — is a most easily developed taste. What child, for instance, "exposed" to beautiful pictures, will come to like the "cheap and nasty" pictures? Public art galleries are so rare in the United States as to be practically inaccessible to

a large share of the population. Only a few years ago, for instance, Julian Street wrote in *Collier's Weekly* about his American travels, and said the whole state of Kansas did not have a public art gallery. Private art galleries are even more rare. That practically limits the number of good pictures to be seen to those in art stores, in public schools, and in private homes. How many country homes contain good pictures? How many country homes know a good picture when they see it? Not knowing what a good picture is, they do not desire to purchase one. Hence, before any progress can be made in ridding a community of poor pictures and supplying it with good pictures, preliminary campaigns of art education must be carried on. Who shall take the lead in this campaign? The country school teacher? The minister's wife? The president of the woman's club? Evidently there is some woman of culture and refinement in each community who is qualified for leadership in this high form of social service. By opening her home to meetings, by lending pictures to the school, by bringing in outside speakers and outside art exhibits, and in many other ways, she will find opportunity to deliver the message of art. Since so much of the world's best is now embodied in statue and painting and other works of art, it is surely a crime not to unlock this door to the children (and the grown-ups who care) in

the rural community. Who can contemplate the marble figure of Mourning Victory, in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, without having his soul stirred to nobler, purer purpose? Who can look understandingly at any great statue or painting without receiving both enjoyment and benefit from it?

Art, when brought home to the rural community, will, in turn, express itself in more beautiful lawns, flower gardens, and in more beautiful houses. Nature has done so much to beautify the country already. But, alas, many a roadside and many a farmstead is merely uglified by the work of man. He would choose the better way—if he knew it.

Music

Music, like art, is one of those realities of life which gives expression to the civilization of the people themselves. Here again the country community is handicapped as compared with the city, in its opportunity to have the best. The taste for bad music seems to be as easy to acquire as the taste for good music. It seems to be largely a question of which taste first finds lodgment in the soul of the individual. Many persons of mature years have testified to the service of the church here in teaching them as children to know and love, both from the standpoint of music and

Christian philosophy, those fine old hymns, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," "In the Cross of Christ I Glory," "Lead, Kindly Light," "O Love that Will Not Let Me Go." When these dignified spiritual songs are compared with some of our later-day catchy and frivolous "religious" music, such as "Oh, to Be Nothing, Nothing," one is tempted to wonder whether our tastes are improving or retrograding.

But there is more to this question than a mere taste for good music, though that is vastly important. A taste for good music, it must be reiterated, like the taste for art, is a key opening up another of life's great storehouses of ennobling enjoyments. In a very practical way each community needs music. It is doubtful whether any other influence does more to create and foster community spirit. Community music should be on the program of every live community; and the more hidebound the community, the more it needs community music. Brass bands, glee clubs, quartets, orchestras, etc., are now becoming common in rural districts. Community singing is the next step. The state of Kansas is making notable progress in stimulating local rural communities in this activity. Leadership in this case comes from the Agricultural College, and a man is sent into the rural community who proved his ability in this line of endeavor by his work in the army

during the World War. The Kansas farmers respond to the suggestion in a very gratifying manner. The psychological basis of this community activity is sound, for singing with your neighbor, like breaking bread with him, has a mellowing influence over both you and your neighbor. Much is accomplished in this way in "socializing" the community, removing the friction of petty personal grievances. How many neighborhoods are rent with feuds, quarrels, grudges, misunderstandings, personal dislikes, and even mutual hatreds. To keep a whole community in smooth and harmonious working order, for common community ends, is a work of a very high order of importance. While community music alone will not accomplish results of such magnitude, yet it will go far towards this end. For music is a great solvent of hard feelings, a prime restorer of good-natured social intercourse between captious human beings.

A community that is not doing all within its power to discover and develop its latent musical talent is not living up to its full possibilities. It needs to be awakened. There are already too many unused social resources, of which music is chief.

Literature

Among the abiding and satisfying things of life is literature. It may be true that the ancient

Greeks worshiped the "holiness of beauty," but at any rate they cultivated music and also established standards for their own day and for all time in both art and literature. In the field of literature the city child has a slight advantage over the country child by reason of his proximity to a large free public library. For whereas we have fallen greatly behind Europe in art galleries, we have far outstripped them in the matter of public libraries. Poor indeed is the village that does not have some kind of a public library. But the cheapness of good books and good magazines has brought them within reach of the country child almost as fully as within the reach of the city child. But here again the fundamental problem is one of taste. What kind of literature does the country home offer the child? What does the country father, the country mother, the country child want? That depends upon taste, and taste is easily cultivated—too easily, perhaps. In my experience in country communities—and this experience is, doubtless, borne out by others who have taught school and been a part of rural communities—in my experience, I say, I have been impressed with two things: (1) the lack of taste for good literature, and (2) the ease with which this taste could be aroused and developed. The merits of a good poem, a good book, or a good magazine, once pointed out to an interested child

or youth or groups of persons, make an impression which is lasting. A visit of a good reader, a lecture by an inspirational speaker, even a few well-winged words by a good teacher, and, presto, the suggestion for good literature is planted in the child's mind. The power of suggestion needs no elaboration here. Some channel should be discovered, either within or without the community, whereby this suggestion for good literature could be brought to the young folks. How crowded the mails are and the news stands with popular magazines of "snappy stories," "spicy stories," "racy stories," and so on, *ad infinitum*, *ad nauseam*. And how worse than worthless such rubbish is! A child who has once been "exposed" to the *Youth's Companion* or *St. Nicholas* has his taste for wholesome literature cultivated to that degree where his mind will not be contaminated or polluted by the foul and muddy stream now issuing from too great a number of our printing presses. May some rural leader—the country school-teacher, the preacher, the home-bureau agent, the wife of some farmer, or some other leader (local or imported) plant the good seed of suggestion for good literature.

The most immediate and concrete program for bringing good magazines and good books within reach of each home is a library, be it school library, public library, or a traveling library from

the state department in charge of such things. Or perhaps even a simpler form of expression of the idea than that is a magazine club, through which the members secure a number of the best magazines. The good magazine is much rarer than the good book in the country home. Some means should be devised whereby each family could at least see and examine copies of our very best magazines. Advice as to magazine lists and reading lists can easily be obtained from the county superintendents of schools (in most states), and from librarians of city, college, and university libraries.

What the community shall read and whether it shall have its own library is, after all, but the question of leadership once more. Who shall furnish this leadership?

Leisure

“Man shall not live by bread alone.” While the economic problem of living is most urgent and assertive, it is not more important than the question of living a fruitful and well-rounded life. What shall be done with leisure? This is a problem the world never has solved. Colonel Henry Watterson, of Kentucky, ranks highest those people who know how to spend their leisure, who, in his words, “live at home without scandal and travel without adventure.” Aristotle, writing

three hundred years before Christ, made leisure and the use of leisure one of the main considerations in his *Politics*. No man was then considered fit to vote or be a citizen who had not leisure. Of course, Aristotle was right thus far in his thinking. But he concluded from this premise that the population should be divided into two classes—citizens, with all the leisure and no work, and non-citizens, with all the work and no leisure. Here his philosophy broke down, for we know that the “slave,” white or black, is more than a mere “animated tool.” According to our thinking, a good citizen needs both work and leisure.

Writers on our city government, and particularly on it as “this one conspicuous failure,” as James Bryce calls it, view leisure as peculiarly a city problem, giving rise as it does to those joint problems of gambling, the brothel, and the saloon. But with the coming of national prohibition the saloon evil received its deathblow. And this mitigated greatly the other two evils which drew much of their inspiration from the saloon atmosphere. The problem of leisure in the city, aside from its wholly pathological character, is almost entirely a problem of commercialized recreation. The city man, woman, girl, or boy who can now amuse himself is rare, indeed. For a few cents, more or less, he can go to the

“movies” and be thrilled, excited, amused, or can otherwise kill time, without any effort on his own part, and without the “intolerable toil of thought.” In other words, the city has hired someone to amuse it. Amusement and relaxation through some form of self-expression is dead or fast disappearing. Even play is largely vicarious. The situation is certainly a melancholy one, but faith in the underlying good sense of the people makes us think that the matter will finally work itself out into something socially sound and commendable.

The country problem of leisure is less acute than the city problem. In the first place, there is plenty of room. This means that every boy and youth and young man can and does play that best and greatest of all American games, baseball. But the country needs to go ahead and develop a full program of recreation in order that *leisure* mean not merely amusement, but recreation in the real sense of the word—to create anew, to refresh. Sports and games have the social value of being easily made community activities. The community, under enthusiastic and qualified leadership, could develop one or more forms of the commoner sports, such as baseball, basketball, handball, tennis, and bowling. Other forms, suited to local conditions, will readily occur to the reader.

The Greek world at its best was bound together by its Olympic Games. At that "golden age" each village boasted its gymnasium. Then it was that the world's superbest athletes were produced, both male and female. Physical prowess is a goal worthy to be held before any young person, male or female. Rejections for physical defects during the World War brought home to many a young American the bitterness and heartburning of disappointment. A little exercise and physical training in a community gymnasium would have prevented many cases of this kind. Lacking universal military training, each community can furnish the best part of military training, namely, physical training. Medical examination plus physical training can doubtless accomplish more than many lectures to youth on social purity. At any rate, such training would reenforce such teaching. A "sound mind in a sound body" is, after all, the best endowment any parent, rich or poor, high or low, can leave to his offspring. Surely the leadership will be forthcoming to provide each community with its gymnasium, where proper steps can be taken to develop the sound body.

Community Spirit

The expression "community spirit" is used here in the same sense in which the college boy

proudly speaks of the "college spirit" at his *Alma Mater*. It means a feeling of unity and loyalty plus a feeling of pride in the institution. Community spirit must imply, therefore, a certain feeling of loyalty to "my community," a certain pride in it, and a feeling of being a part of it. This spirit is gendered and developed by working together, playing together, breaking bread together, singing together, fighting together (whatever social ills or other common enemy there is to be fought), together going into contest with rivals in athletics, debates, oratory, good farming, riding, driving, plowing, or any other form of contest.

The community spirit thrives best in the community which has at least one definite community center, be it country store, school, church, or some building designed and built as a purely community center. Our Federal Government has recently reported on 256 buildings used as rural community buildings, located in forty different states.¹ The funds for the construction and operation of these buildings come from taxation in some cases, and in others from private individuals or the community members themselves. Some communities sell stock in the enterprise. Others depend on contributions, as they do when building

¹ *Bulletin No. 825*, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., January 30, 1920. *Rural Community Buildings in the United States*.

a church. The activities in connection with the building reflect, of course, the wishes and tastes of the people of the neighborhood. Thus the activities of a large community center on Long Island include the following:

Lectures, concerts, entertainments, and amateur dramatic performances. It serves as a "little country theater."

Weekly dancing classes for members.

Bowling alleys for men and women, and bowling tournaments.

Billiard and gamerooms; card parties.

Tennis tournaments.

Women's department; sales of embroidery and other forms of needlework.

Library and reading-rooms.

Motion pictures every Wednesday and Saturday nights. Effort is made to exhibit only the best pictures.

And, generally speaking, the house is in constant demand for farmers' meetings, school entertainments, private parties, dances, suppers, and for use by church clubs.

The building is the property of the Neighborhood Association, which is, in turn, the outgrowth of a young men's athletic club, the Boy Scouts, and a brass band. The building contains a kitchen with full equipment; a library, committee rooms, auditorium with seats for five hundred, room for

basketball, four bowling alleys, five baths, toilets, etc.

Most of the larger community centers now provide for athletics, public meetings, music, art, library, and theater. The boys' thirst for club work is satisfied. The social instinct of all classes is gratified.

The very rapid increase in the number of community-center buildings and the growing tendency to employ schoolhouses and churches as community centers are both good signs. The "isolation" of country life is quite generally given as one of the prime causes of the present "drift to the city." But when all the young people can find their own club at the nearby community center, they will have their gregarious instinct largely satisfied. When each boy can find his own gang there, each girl her own set there, when every other normal person of the community can find there something of interest or import, and in addition to finding these things, also feel that comfortable and independent sense of ownership of a share in it all — then indeed is that community richer in its social assets. The feeling that "it is mine own" will do much to tie the individual to his community center and to the community itself.

The community center is taking on diverse forms. This is as it should be, for it should reflect the needs and desires of its community,

made up of individuals who have not been "standardized" by any administrative bureau over them. However, since the public school is the most democratic institution in America, it is to be hoped that in most country districts the country school may evolve into a true community center. This would enable the county farm bureaus and county home bureaus to function most effectively in carrying their message and help directly to the people. And it is to these three institutions — the school, the farm bureau, and the home bureau — that we must look for the biggest results in promoting a permanent agriculture. And these three institutions, functioning with and through a community center, promise a rich growth in the material wealth of the community, and also a growth in the human resources to match this material progress. In short, the community will save its own soul.

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