

## WHAT ADVANTAGES DOES AGRICULTURE OFFER A YOUNG MAN ABOUT TO CHOOSE AN OCCUPATION?

By GABRIEL HIESTER, *Member from Dauphin.*

One of the most important steps that a young man has to take is the choice of a profession. On this choice, in a great measure, depend his future success and happiness.

Nature has wisely endowed men with different tastes, different capabilities, different impulses, widely different capacity for business and enjoyment, and has furnished widely different occupations, so that every one may have work and pleasure suited to his peculiar tastes and capabilities.

In the choice of a profession, a young man is generally influenced by his tastes. His tastes are, to a certain extent, acquired by association. He naturally thinks first about that business or profession which he has seen carried on during his boyhood. If his father is prosperous, his thoughts naturally turn to his occupation as the one best suited to him. If his father has a hard struggle for a livelihood, he just as naturally determines to seek his fortune in another direction. Every one would like to look forward to a middle age of ease and comfort, and just here how many make the great mistake of their lives, under the impression that the surest way to secure this is to amass a large fortune.

Our daily papers abound in instances of men who have, after a season of apparent prosperity, during which they enjoyed the confidence and respect of their fellows, become reckless in their mad desire for wealth, forgotten the duty they owed to themselves and their fellows, proved false to their trust, have been discovered, and, broken in fortune, they spend their remaining days disgraced, dishonored, and shunned by their fellows, if they are so fortunate as to keep out of a felon's cell.

It is true that money honestly earned and judiciously expended brings with it comfort and enjoyment, while without it life is, at best, one of hardship and privation. But to properly appreciate and enjoy the possession of anything, we must at times feel the want of it.

If we look carefully into the lives of men in all classes, we will find that those who enjoy life most, who give most enjoyment to others, who do the most good in proportion to their means, who leave behind them the cleanest record and are most regretted when they die, are the well-to-do and moderately wealthy farmers, mechanics, merchants, and professional men, while those who have been most successful in accumulating money, whose names and business transactions are lauded in our daily papers, who are honored as our money kings, and who are too often held up by parents as an example for their sons, are, as a rule, the most unhappy and discontented of men. Their lives are the most barren of everything that pertains to true happiness and true comfort. Looking at the question from this stand-point, let us see

what inducements agriculture has to offer any one about to choose a profession.

If a farmer manages properly, he will have a peaceful, quiet occupation, free from heavy risks and great excitement; and while he has his busy seasons, during which, for days at a time, he is obliged to work early and late, and make use of every available moment of time, he has, in the course of the year, as many leisure hours and days as a man in any other business; and when these leisure hours come, he always has the means right at hand for enjoying himself, and giving innocent enjoyment to his family and friends. When his day's work is done, he can go to bed and sleep soundly till morning, when he awakes refreshed and invigorated, feeling indeed like a new man. He can always have plenty of pure, cold water to drink. When he is at his work or in his home, by night and by day, he can breathe pure air, untainted by coal-gas, sewer-gas, or the effluvia from the wharves or the fish-market; can see his children grow up rugged as pine-knots under the genial influence of pure country air, and good, wholesome food. He will have one of God's greatest blessings, a good appetite, and his table can always be supplied with an abundance of just the right kind of food, home-grown and fresh, such as sweet butter, rich cream and milk, fat, juicy poultry, fresh eggs, fresh vegetables taken right from the garden the same day they are eaten; luscious fruit from the day the first strawberry makes its appearance in early summer till the last pippin and russet apple disappears late in the spring, while his larder can always be stored with the finest canned and dried fruit, preserves, and jellies, free from glucose or any other adulteration. These are luxuries which are always expensive and generally unattainable at any price in the large cities.

He can have a good horse and a comfortable carriage at his disposal when he has occasion to drive out either for business or pleasure. He has the satisfaction of seeing that whenever he makes a well-directed effort in any direction, nature comes bountifully to his aid and carries on the good work even while he sleeps, and while his bank account may not compare with that of some professional men and merchants, he can always keep the balance on the right side, and see his farm increasing in value, his home becoming more beautiful, and all his surroundings improving with each successive year, and when a money panic sweeps over the country, causing the supposed fortunes of thousands of business men to melt suddenly away, he stands secure, because he has only to depend upon a bounteous nature for support, whose gifts are not dependent upon the rise and fall of any market, and who never puts more water in her stocks than she is able to carry.

"But," some may say, "if this be so, why do we see so many farmers of middle age, broken in health and spirits, with hardly money enough to buy a wheel-barrow, much less a family carriage, who live the year round on salt meat and potatoes, work hard from daylight till dark every day in the year, and yet are always behindhand in their work and their payments?" I answer, these are men out of place; as a rule, they have no advantages of education; as boys they were taught that the chief end of man was to work, that time spent on book-learning or devoted to recreation was so much time wasted; they grew up laborers, with no idea above the actual labor of their hands, and no knowledge of business or business methods, and now they must be satisfied with laborer's wages and laborer's fare.

They have not the capacity to manage for themselves, and would

be a great deal more comfortable if they would work for some one else. What I have said does not apply to this class, but is intended for men of intelligence and energy, who have the capacity to rise in other walks of life, who would not be content to remain at the bottom of any profession. To these, I say, agriculture holds out the inducements above enumerated.

To this, as in other occupations, overcrowded as they all are, there is plenty of room at the top, and for those who, by careful, determined effort, will reach the top, there awaits the sure reward of comfort, honor, and a middle life and old age of comparative ease, lived amid the most pleasant surroundings.

It is true that many farmers fail even after a few years of success; but in every instance the cause can be traced directly to outside influences. Either he has been induced by friends to run for a political office, or he has gambled in stocks, or has indorsed for a dear friend who was as sound as the State itself and only wanted his name for form's sake, or has invested all his surplus capital in a manufacturing concern, or engaged in some other enterprise of which he was entirely ignorant, and to this he can trace his failure. I cannot recall a single farmer of my acquaintance who stuck closely to his business, and devoted all his energies to that one thing, who has not bettered his condition with each successive year. And if farmers or others will engage in enterprises, the management of which they do not understand, they must abide by the consequences, which in nine cases out of ten are disastrous.

In order to secure the greatest profit from our farms, we must become specialists; the time has gone by when farms can be managed in the good old-fashioned easy way; the country is becoming too much crowded for that, and competition too brisk. No one man can hope to excel in all the various departments of agriculture, but each one must adopt one particular product, for which his farm, by reason of its location, as regards the different markets, and the quality of its soil is especially adapted, and throw all his energy and all his mind into that one channel, so that the product of whatever kind shall have an individuality about it that may be recognized at once.

Thus, if he select fruit, he should go further than that, and whilst he may furnish a general assortment of fruit throughout the season, he should make a specialty of one particular variety, and, by constant care and close study, not rest satisfied until he grows that one crop in greater perfection and abundance than any one else in the market, and by the excellence of the article, and the care with which it is put up, and the uniform good condition in which it reaches market, create a demand for that particular brand which will insure its sale at good prices, even though the market be overstocked with inferior goods.

The same with milk or butter, if either of them should be selected. Let others dilute or adulterate as they will, the man who, by careful selection of his cattle, judicious feeding, absolute cleanliness about his stables and milk-room, accurate and intelligent handling of the milk and butter in all its forms, will always furnish a strictly pure and uniform article, will not only always find ready sale for his produce at fair prices, but his brand upon an article will carry with it a guarantee as to purity and quality that at once satisfies the buyer without further test.

If he choose stock, he should not only try to raise good stock, but should settle upon some special breed of horse, cow, sheep, or hog,

and try to bring it as near perfection as possible, so that this particular strain shall be specially desirable and command an extra price. And so I might go on enumerating indefinitely, but I have given enough to illustrate my point, that our success depends upon our knowledge of the business and the care and accuracy with which we do our work; and I am sure I know of no occupation that presents a wider or more inviting field to the young man whose tastes run in that direction.

In looking around over the families of prosperous farmers, we find, when the sons arrive at the age of manhood, the bright ones generally leave home and either study a profession or go into business in the city, while the dull ones are left to keep the farm.

In every city we find a few successful merchants and professional men, who, by their own energy and superior business ability, have worked their way up from very lowly stations until they have become the most wealthy and influential men in a great city. These are very properly held up as an example to the boys on the farm and elsewhere. But, while we are all familiar with the names of the few successful ones, we never hear of the hundreds and thousands who fail. Bright boys who have left home full of life, and hope, and high ambitions, carrying with them the blessings and fondest hopes of loving parents, who have, by some unforeseen circumstance, or perhaps misstep, lost their hold upon fortune, and have never been able to regain it, but struggle along constantly oppressed by adverse fate, live their few brief years of toil and hardships amid the heat and dust and turmoil of the city, always hoping for something better, always disappointed, until at last, worn out by the effort and utterly discouraged, they drop out of the race and are never missed, their places having been filled in advance by other bright boys from the farm.

Those who fail by far outnumber the men who succeed. Many have gone to the city to engage in business, and, after a few years, have died discouraged and broken-hearted, who would have lived a life full of comfort and enjoyment had they remained on the farm.

The impression used to prevail that the farmer did not need education; that it would rather prove a hindrance to his success, and until very lately what was called book-farming was ridiculed, and farmers who read books relating to their profession were regarded with distrust. Even at this late day, after the advantages of education have been so clearly demonstrated, we find some good farmers, men apparently of sound sense and good judgment in other respects, who hold the opinion that the best kind of education for a boy who intends becoming a farmer is that which trains his hands to the use of tools, and which treats entirely of the mechanical details of his business, leaving out entirely the great principles that underlie the science of agriculture, and all branches of learning that have not a direct bearing upon the work of the farm.

I hold that the farmer cannot be too well educated. He needs literary training to enable him to draw the greatest benefit and fullest enjoyment from a quiet home during the comparatively idle days and long evenings of winter—for what is leisure without books? and just in proportion to the breadth of his knowledge will be his success. It stands to reason that, since he has to make daily use of the forces of nature to carry on his business, since he does not arrive at a single result in all his operations without the aid of nature, which always works according to fixed and unalterable laws, the best preparation

he can have for the successful prosecution of his work is a thorough knowledge of the natural sciences, a knowledge of the principles that underlie all changes that are constantly taking place around him—in the air, in the earth, in the plants that grow upon the earth, and the animals that feed upon these plants.

I do not mean to convey the impression by anything I have said that the farmer does not need to work; that his life is one long holiday, spent under wide-spreading trees in shady lanes and on the banks of cool and pleasant streams. Far from it. I do not think such a life would be desirable. The man who does not have to work does not have the capacity to enjoy his leisure to the full, and gets only one fourth the pleasure out of life that he is entitled to. It is this consciousness of duty faithfully performed that enables a man to enjoy properly his hours of rest, and it is only by close attention to business, and by the most unceasing vigilance, that the farmer is enabled to succeed and hold his position among other business men.

But if you will go with me through any of our best agricultural districts, and observe the farmers at their work and in their homes, you cannot help but notice the sturdy, robust bodies, fully able to do the work with ease that they are called upon to perform, and the jovial, contented look upon their faces, even in the busiest season.

Now, go stand on a street corner in the business portion of one of our large cities and watch the crowd as they pass; see how they hurry as if their lives depended upon getting to their destination immediately; how anxious they look, how many careworn faces bearing the stamp of overwork and disease plainly upon them! Or, go further, to the stock exchange, grain exchange, or gold room, and look at that crowd; see how they push and jostle each other; how their eyes protrude; how they yell their orders to the auctioneer; how their entire frames are shaken and swayed with excitement; what a perfect Babel they live in! Mark the utter despair of the man who has just lost his all by an unforeseen change in the market. Compare the expression of those men with that of the farmer you have just been looking at, and then tell me how long should a young man of quiet taste and domestic habits hesitate before choosing an occupation?

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## EXPECTATIONS AND EXPERIENCE.

By H. H. COLVIN, *Member from Lackawanna county.*

The beginner in stock-breeding, especially if he be inexperienced, has a delightful prospect of an easy success. In the commencement of his career, as in the morning of life to most men who have any attraction in their composition, any energy or fitness for their calling, all is bright and clear. Knowing that like begets like, they have only to secure the right kind of stock and go ahead. They imagine that they have nothing to do but to acquire the requisite amount of land and buildings, and then add the stock. If the offspring of their stock the very first season does not make them breeders, what can?

With very different thoughts the breeder of sixty years' standing looks back upon his work, however successful. The more successful, indeed the greater the strife has been, and the more difficult the