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WHAT THE RAILROADS ARE DOING
FOR FARMING IN THE EAST

SIR Horace Plunkett tells us that when we induce the business man, alert, progressive and well trained in modern methods, to turn his attention to farming, the country life problem in America will be solved. His own experience in Ireland has convinced him of this, and the brief account we give in this issue of the experimental demonstration farm established by the Long Island Railroad upon the barren wastes in the interior of the Island furnishes us with an object lesson which we will do well to heed.

The farmer is conservative, because there is nothing in farming as it is carried on here in the East to make him otherwise. The fact that he is so largely dependent upon the caprices of Nature for the success or failure of his crops tends to make him something of a fatalist, and the isolation of farm life shuts him away from the daily opportunities and contests which sharpen the wits of the city man and make him alert to seize every advantage and forestall, if possible, every calamity.

But, deep-rooted as it seems, this conservatism is more a habit than anything else. The grain raisers and fruit growers of the West, who control the whole situation so far as they are concerned because they manage the raising and marketing of their products in the same way that a keen business man manages the manufacture and sale of whatever commodity he has made his own, are nearly all Eastern farmers or the sons of farmers who have gone West. Their alertness and progressiveness is perhaps partly due to the change from Eastern conditions into new surroundings which make more demand upon the qualities of enterprise and initiative. They are not so rooted in traditional customs that they cannot take a hint when they see that another man is making more money by doing business in a different way from their own. Therefore, they have joined themselves into efficient organizations through which they control the disposal of their crops, and they avail themselves to the fullest degree of cooperative methods in bringing their orchards, fields and gardens to the highest state of health and productiveness. A man who will allow scale or blight to get into his orchard without doing anything about it is regarded by his neighbors very much as a cattle thief used to be in the days when cattle were the chief source of income in the West. Also, the grower who attempts to palm off imperfect or badly packed fruit as first-class goods is very likely to be thrown out of his organization, for it is a matter of honor no less than business interest to keep the grading of the fruit absolutely above suspicion.

The reason why these two demonstration farms on Long Island are succeeding beyond the most sanguine expectations of the railroad company that established them, is because the president of the company had the common sense to give the entire control of them to a Western man who is applying the well-tested Western methods. If a laboratory exists on either farm it is kept in the background and, so far as the outsider can see, every suggestion that is made regarding crops or cultivation is founded upon practical experience and plain "horse sense." Because this is so, the demonstration farm is proving genuinely useful not only to the city men who go out there filled with enthusiasm for developing little farms of their own, and keen to take advantage of every suggestion which may help them make a success, but even the old farmers long established in their own ways and hating any innovation. The Department of Agriculture might send out bulletins until the printing press is worn out, and State experiment stations might experiment till the end of time for all the average farmer cares. But show him sturdy healthy fruit trees, bending under the weight of fruit and without a sign of scale or any other pest, and tell him how it was done, and the chances are that he will see the advisability of spraying and pruning in a way that will produce the same results. Again, if he sees that a little more "know how" will produce vegetables and berries that bring fancy prices when they are well packed, he is likely to admit that it pays better to take the extra trouble than it does to drudge along in the same old way. The farmer is not averse to work; he has always worked. All he needs is the inducement to work in the right way, and the incentive to make good in an organization of farmers who are doing the same thing and perhaps doing it a little better.

The work of the Department of Agriculture is immensely valuable, and the State Agricultural Colleges are doing wonders for
the farming of the future. But when it comes down to immediate results the railroads, working entirely on a business basis and for their own interests as well as those of the people living in the territory which they cover, are really “delivering the goods.” Where would the Northwest have been without the development set on foot by James J. Hill? Look what the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fé Road has done for New Mexico and Southern California. Think of the work done for the preservation of trees and the reforestation of denuded tracts by the Forestry Department of the Pennsylvania Railroad. The instances might be multiplied indefinitely, for in the territory of each and every railroad there are some conditions which require changing and developing before the business of the common carrier will be on a paying basis. These big transportation companies make no pretense of a philanthropic intention, but the result is better than philanthropy, for it is simply the application of well-tried and successful business methods to conditions that hitherto have been as remote from business as they well could be. If the work, which up to the present time has been confined to the development of large tracts of new country, gets down to smaller enterprises, like that on Long Island, which directly affect the welfare of the people and the efficiency of the farming population, it will not be long before the relations between the transportation companies and the people living along their lines will cease to be antagonistic, because conditions have been established which make them mutually helpful and friendly. Also, such a state of affairs will do much to eliminate speculation in railroad stock. The natural stockholders are the people living in the territory covered by the railroad, and any sort of real business cooperation between them and the railroad company cannot but result in a better understanding on both sides. When this is established we will see fewer rate wars, and there will be no need for the railroads to control legislation by dishonest means. What if the development of any given stretch of territory is done primarily for selfish reasons? Whatever the origin of the work, it is good in itself, and it will do its own part in helping along the period of the square deal, which after all does not mean philanthropy, but simply that each man may grasp the opportunity to do his best.

**HOW BEST TO HELP THE CAUSE OF CONSERVATION**

We take the greatest pleasure in calling the attention of our readers to a little booklet that is now being sent out from the Washington headquarters of the National Conservation Association to everyone who is interested enough in this overwhelmingly important work to become a member of the Association or to aid its efforts in any way.

It will be remembered that the work of the National Conservation Commission was stopped by Representative Tawney of Minnesota, who refused to recognize it in the Sundry Civil Bill passed by the 61st Congress, and that the whole movement found itself seriously hampered for lack of a national organization. The work of the Commission has been important to a degree, for it had prepared the first inventory of natural resources ever made by any nation, and when it was discontinued the Commission was taking up a task equally vital to the conservation movement in serving as the medium for cooperation among State Conservation Commissions, and Conservation Committees representing the great industries.

The place of the National Conservation Commission was immediately taken by the Joint Committee on Conservation, a body supported by private funds and wholly unconnected with the Government. Had it not been for this Committee, the discontinuance of the National Conservation Commission would have been even more serious in its results, but the urgent national need was for an organization open to every man and woman who stood for conservation, which would give them immediate opportunity for united and effective work. Therefore, a year ago the National Conservation Association was organized by a group of men who had led in the fight for conservation. Dr. Charles W. Eliot, President Emeritus of Harvard University, was made President of the Association, but when Mr. Gifford Pinchot was removed from the Government service by President Taft, Dr. Eliot immediately resigned, nominating Mr. Pinchot as his successor.

Under such effective leadership the work has gone on vigorously and efficiently. The Association cooperates closely with State Conservation Associations so far as they exist, and by organized effort the central