It is an old story, as old as Abraham, that wheat robs the soil, and that cattle drop fatness. Iowa and Kansas have been learning it in the hard school of experience; North Dakota is just now beginning to be taught the lesson. In Wisconsin it has been the life work of one hardy pioneer whose name should be writ large in the annals of American agriculture. It was in the editorial office of *Hoard’s Dairyman* in the little town of Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin, that he gave me his own modest version of the story, his Lincoln-like features lighted by the afterglow of reminiscence.

W. D. Hoard comes honestly by his trade of dairyman. He was born and “raised” in Stockbridge, Madison County, New York, in the country where American dairying had its birth. In his youth he was trained as a butter and cheese maker, and during the last two years of his residence there he managed a large dairy farm. At the age of twenty-one, like many another ambitious Eastern farm boy, he caught the Western fever, and in October, eighteen hundred and fifty-seven, he packed his modest belongings and took the long trail to Wisconsin.

Bitter disappointment met him at the end of his journey. He found scarcely a well-bred dairy cow in the entire State, and no opportunity for him to work at his trade. The farms were much like those to be found today in North Dakota—wheat, wheat, wheat everywhere, planted carelessly on the rich prairie soil, with a small sprinkling of rye, barley and other grains.

He went to work as a farm-hand, and as labor was much in demand on the large farms, he found plenty to do, albeit he longed incessantly for the companionship and the good, honest smell of the generous kine.

In eighteen hundred and sixty he married, and in eighteen hundred and sixty-one he enlisted for the war with the Fourth Wisconsin regiment. He served in the war through two periods, and was discharged in eighteen hundred and sixty-five. He returned to Wisconsin and started a small nursery and hop business, but this ended disastrously, and found him no nearer the goal of his ambitions.
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Having always nurtured a taste for journalism, he started a small country newspaper at Fort Atkinson in eighteen hundred and seventy, which has been published continuously ever since. With its very first number he devoted a portion of the paper to missionary work on the subject of dairying. He had been studying the agricultural conditions of the State and understood fully the significance of the steadily dwindling yield of wheat. Cattle must be the salvation of Wisconsin, and this was the gospel that he preached early and late.

With the prestige that his paper gave him, Mr. Hoard organized the Jefferson County Dairymen’s Association in eighteen hundred and seventy-one, and with it the idea of the organization of Wisconsin dairying first took tangible form. Mr. Hoard issued the first call for the formation of a Wisconsin Dairymen’s Association. In response to that call seven men met at Watertown and organized a State association, electing Mr. Hoard its secretary.

Agriculture was then at a low ebb in Wisconsin. The wheat yield had dropped to an average of eight bushels to the acre, and wheat was the only cash-paying crop. The land was everywhere badly handled and farmers were selling out and moving on to Iowa and Minnesota, to ruin more land. They did not understand the principles of crop rotation and had conceived no constructive plan of farm development. Moving on to new fields was the only recourse that seemed open to them.

BUT the little handful of dairymen took hold, though the total dairy industry of the State did not then amount to a million dollars. But they made the beginning, and by hard work against heavy odds they built what has since proved to be one of the greatest and most successful coöperative organizations for the promotion of agricultural enterprise that this country has seen.

Mr. Hoard constituted himself a committee of one to do active missionary work. He went into the various school districts and held meetings in the interest of his propaganda, his only recompense being the slight increase in prestige and circulation which this gave his paper. By this means he succeeded at length in organizing several cheese factories, as this proved to be the easiest first step along the line of coöperation. In three years this production reached three million pounds annually, and the local market could not take care of it all. At that time it cost two and one-half cents a pound to ship cheese from Wisconsin to New York City, and that in ordinary freight cars, which meant a tremendous loss in hot weather.

Mr. Hoard, therefore, induced the Association to send him to Chicago to see what he could do toward securing better facilities
and a reduction of the freight rates on cheese from Wisconsin to the export markets at New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. Discouraged and sick at heart he made his way at the close of the last day to the office of W. W. Chandler of the Star-Union Refrigerating Transportation Company, the pioneer in the then new enterprise of cold-storage transportation. With slight hope of success, Hoard spoke his piece with some asperity, vexed in advance at the expected rebuff.

"I represent," said he, "three million pounds of cheese seeking a safe, quick, and cheap transportation to New York City. What are you going to do about it?"

Chandler looked up slowly and said, "Who are you?"

"I am W. D. Hoard, Secretary of the Wisconsin Dairymen’s Association," was the reply.

"And what do you want?"

"We have organized a dairy Board of Trade at Watertown," answered Hoard. "Our people are ignorant of your methods and need your help. I want you to send one of your cars to Watertown and come yourself and explain it. Then I want you to make a rate of one dollar per one hundred pounds of cheese in iced cars from Wisconsin to New York, Boston, and Philadelphia."

The audacity of the Wisconsin farmer-journalist caught the business man’s attention.

"Is there anything else?" he asked with a smile.

"Not now," replied Hoard. "But, Mr. Chandler, if you do this it will put millions of dollars into the coffers of your company. It will clear out the clogged channels of communication and enable us to get into touch with the export demand for cheese to Great Britain, of which New York State now holds the monopoly.

He asked a few more pertinent questions, and then said, "I'll be there."

He was as good as his word.

The production of cheese in Wisconsin took a wonderful jump. Within ten years over five hundred cheese factories were added to the list and thousands of farmers bought cattle and turned their attention to dairying. Through the personal efforts of Mr. Hoard the shipping facilities were further improved and trade relations were effected with London, Liverpool, Glasgow, Manchester, and Bristol. The young New York cheese maker's dream was beginning to be realized.

In the early eighties, after the Wisconsin farmers had demonstrated their ability to produce cheese, the first effort was made in the creamery production of butter at Beloit. An enterprising produce
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dealer persuaded a number of farmers to churn butter and sell it to him unsalted, allowing him to salt, work, pack, and ship it uniformly. This business proved successful, and the farmers were quick to grasp its significance. They saw that the cheese factory system might be applied with equal success to butter making, with the additional advantage that the by-product of skim-milk was of much greater value than the whey from cheese, as a food for calves, pigs, poultry, and other young stock. Thus the creamery came into vogue in Wisconsin thirty years ago, and it has grown very steadily and substantially ever since.

Meanwhile, the propagation of dairy knowledge was being steadily carried on by the Association. They held conventions frequently in various parts of the State, where large numbers of farmers gathered and listened for three days to discussions by the best experts available in all branches of dairying. This was the father of the Farmers’ Institute, which has since spread to all parts of the country, and much of the extension work and other features of the Western agricultural colleges had their origin in the methods of the Wisconsin Dairymen’s Association.

This body of men, in fact, had a truly remarkable influence on the industrial and agricultural development of the State. Since eighteen hundred and seventy-two they have held together, active and progressive, actuated by a single purpose, and avoiding all bickering and politics. The present State of Wisconsin stands as the fruit of this blossoming. The annual dairy product of the State now exceeds one hundred millions, and it has become the largest cheese and butter producing State in the Union, not excepting New York, though only one-half of its territory is as yet in the hands of the husbandman. The future is big with possibilities.

Under the domination of this dairying idea, Wisconsin has also developed wonderfully in the breeding of dairy cattle. It has long been the boast of old Holland that it possesses a cow to every inhabitant. In Jefferson County, Wisconsin, a section of country twenty-four miles square, there are thirty-six thousand people and forty thousand cows. The earnings in milk products of this county alone are about two million five hundred thousand dollars per year, while the sales of dairy cattle amount to seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars more. Over four hundred and fifty carloads of cows and heifers were shipped in one year recently from Fort Atkinson to various points in the United States and Canada. Last spring a full ten-car trainload was shipped from Fort Atkinson to Idaho. With the turn of the tide from wheat to cattle has come a natural enrichment of the soil, a broadening of interests through diversification, and a general prosperity.
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MR. HOARD’S connection with this great movement was constant and vital. In eighteen hundred and eighty-five he found it impossible to treat adequately of dairying in his little country paper, so he started Hoard’s Dairyman, at first a modest sheet of four pages. Through the columns of this journal he continued to preach his agricultural doctrines, and with the spread of his ideas came growth and prosperity to his publication. It now has a circulation of seventy thousand, including subscribers in Europe, India, Japan, and South Africa, and is recognized as the world’s leader in dairy thought.

In eighteen hundred and eighty-eight Mr. Hoard, then probably the best known man in Wisconsin, was elected Governor of the State. He was renominated and defeated in eighteen hundred and ninety by George W. Peck, the Democratic candidate, who was swept into office on the Cleveland low-tariff wave. Seven years ago he was appointed a member of the State Board of Regents, and was elected president of the Board. For four years he served in this capacity, devoting much of his time and attention to the development of the Agricultural College at Madison, until his failing health forced him to resign in nineteen hundred and eleven. Ex-Governor Hoard has three splendid sons, not to mention grandchildren and great-grandchildren. The eldest and the youngest son are actively connected with the publishing business, and the other is the proprietor of the Hoard Creameries at Fort Atkinson.

In connection with his publishing business, ex-Governor Hoard conducts a model farm of two hundred and fifty-three acres, devoted to the development of a herd of pure-bred Guernseys, the growing of alfalfa, in which he was a pioneer twenty-odd years ago, and the study of problems of soil fertility. It is conducted as a demonstration and experimental farm as an adjunct to the paper.

But Hoard’s Dairy Farm is more than an adjunct; it is a demonstration of what can be done by intelligent methods on run-down soil, and there is an interesting story in the farm alone.

This farm, like most of southern Wisconsin, was originally rich in natural plant food, and produced wheat in abundance. But its owners abused it. For twenty-five years they planted wheat, and yet more wheat, on the same soil, until they had robbed it of its fertility.

Believing in soil fertility as the bedrock of agricultural prosperity, and with faith in his ability to return that fertility to these worn-out acres, ex-Governor Hoard bought the farm seventeen years ago and started his systems of fertilizing, rotation, and deep plowing, with the result that practically every acre of his farm is able to
produce twice as much today as it could seventeen years ago, proving that it is not impossible to make a farm produce remuneratively and to increase the soil's productive capacity at the same time. His rotation scheme involves a five-year period—three years of alfalfa, one year of corn, one year of barley, reseeding to alfalfa. This scheme keeps the land fertile and the silos full.

Deep plowing has been practiced with tremendous success. With a deep-tilling machine (not a sub-soiler) he plowed in the spring of nineteen hundred and twelve a plot of fifteen acres twelve inches deep, turning up, as he expressed it, a new farm. He sowed barley here—only three pecks to the acre—and secured the finest stand ever seen in that part of the State, almost entirely as a result of the deep plowing.

Besides these crops, he reserves ample pasturage for his herd of seventy beautiful Guernseys, that are as tame as kittens and as productive as gold mines.

Hoard's Dairy Farm is, above all, a remarkable demonstration of the relation between the stock and the soil. The introduction of better stock, and the consequent planting of corn and alfalfa in place of wheat, will save North Dakota and other States where the soil has been deteriorating through over-cropping; and the same truth holds for many an Eastern farm that is now unprofitable.

This, then, is the story of Wisconsin, and its moral is plain. The diversification of farming activities, the rotation of crops, fertilization, the introduction and improvement of stock, and the enlightenment of the man behind the cow and the plow are the lessons ex-Governor W. D. Hoard has given his life to teach, and they are the lessons this country must surely learn if it is to hold its position among the producing nations of the earth.

"It has been a hard tug," said Mr. Hoard, "but it has paid. Such a result could not have been accomplished without effort. The farmer is an intellectually conservative creature; he is slow to learn. Often it has seemed like trying to pull a cat by the tail toward a saucer of milk. She will dig her claws into the carpet and contest every inch of the way, but if you can get her to the cream she will gobble it up, and ten to one she will attribute its acquisition to her own vigorous efforts. Still," and there was something more than a mere twinkle in his eyes, "it doesn't matter much after all, so long as the cat gets the cream."