R. D. Torrey:

Dear Sir.—Your request recently received, asking me to write a paper for your forthcoming Transactions on the subject of the Dairy, is rather reluctantly attempted. Yet, the impetus given to that enterprise during the past year by a fair yield and increased prices, and a ready sale, have awakened an increased interest in the subject in the Northwest.

While many other products of the farm have been sold for less than the cost of production, butter and cheese have been in active demand at good paying prices, which has given increased confidence to dairymen and awakened inquiry among many not heretofore engaged in that enterprise; and the present prospect is that there will be a large increase in dairy products throughout the Northwest.

The question will undoubtedly arise that, in view of this steady increase, is there not danger of an over-production and a consequent breakdown in price. Those best informed on this subject do not anticipate that such a result will affect the Northwest, for a long time at least. It must be very remote, for the reason that the dairymen of the Eastern States, who now furnish the bulk of such products, have to work under the disadvantage of high-priced land. Cows, worth from sixty to eighty dollars, corn, one dollar, and hay thirty dollars per ton. It may be a pertinent question for Eastern dairymen whether they can long compete with just as intelligent a class of farmers and manufacturers with less than two-thirds
as much capital invested or running expenses incurred, producing an article fully equal in quality to their own, with only the slight difference of freight in their favor.

With the many natural advantages possessed by the best dairy districts of the Northwest, it seems the part of wisdom for those living in such localities to give it consideration. The territory represented by your Northern Wisconsin Agricultural and Mechanical Association—say the tier of counties bordering on Lake Michigan as far south as Milwaukee and two or three counties west of there—embrace probably the very best section for dairy purposes in the Northwest. Its cool climate, nutritious grasses, easy access to the grain fields of the West, its superior facilities for transportation, render it well adapted to this enterprise. The character of the inhabitants of this locality, composed mostly of small, industrious farmers, who furnish, in most cases, plenty help for milking without the expense of hiring, and furnishing steady and profitable employment through the year, giving a steady contentment so essential to the success of any enterprise.

A good, practical test to determine which is the best kind of farming, would be for the farmers living on any section of land to get together and figure up their receipts arising from grain raising, sheep husbandry, or stock raising, and then compare with another section of land devoted to the dairy; and the difference will convince any one that Northern Wisconsin, if more devoted to the dairy enterprise, would add largely to her wealth and resources.

The increasing demand for butter and cheese must evidently be supplied from the Northwest, and the people living in the locality above referred to cannot learn any too soon to become skilled in the care and treatment of cows and in the manufacture of butter and cheese.

Yours respectfully,  
Hiram Smith.