Cheese Industry and the Farm.

By Col. G. W. Stevenson.

What I shall say on this occasion will be from the standpoint of a farmer who has been engaged in general farming for some thirty years and knows the ups and downs as they occur to the man who has raised grain and stock for the general market.

For many years after the Civil war the masses emigrated to the western states and territories and opened the fertile western lands and become competitors to all who were engaged in the same industry nearer to the markets.

The results were such that for a long period of time farming was up-hill work and unprofitable. This depression caused the farmer to look for some avenue of escape from this western competition and over production; some change by which he could make his farm more profitable.

Creameries came into existence and were located in various localities of our state and the farmer looked favorably upon the scheme and stocked his farm with cows and patronized the creameries; the result was a move in the right direction, still the Mecca was not found. He had by this move taken himself out of the close competition of the western cheap lands, where corn could so easily be raised as to become cheaper for fuel than wood or coal, and a steer could be placed on the market for one-half the cost of production here. This competition put us out of the steer trade and for a time long held us down to the scratch line and our lands remained at a low value, but the farmer who kept cows and sold to the creameries, although receiving an unfair dividend for his capital and labor, was doing better, even handicapped as he was in the one-sided deal, than he could have done in the old way. He could feed the by-product to his pigs and make pork quicker and cheaper than by the old method. He could carry more stock on his farm, have more to return to his land and of better quality, So he was building up his farm in fertility instead of shipping it to Chicago.
The value of land has not disturbed his Rip Van Winkle sleep; he was only dreaming how he could make the old farm pay, that he might some day drive his bay colts to town in a rig as fine as the man in the city who had loaned him money for the past ten years.

In changes and evolutions of farming came the cheese factory. It heralded its coming in a way that there could be no mistake. If it was not visible to the eye, its malodorous odor proclaimed its presence. The farmer looked askance at the new order of things with fear and doubt, as to the feasibility of tackling an institution that appealed so strong and forcibly to his olfactories. The buyer of milk was on hand with his speech not unlike the book peddler or apple tree friend, and soon struck up a deal with the reluctant farmer at a range of price of about 50 to 60 cents per hundred pounds for his milk. "It was a trial trade only." The buyer of milk of all the first factories started had full control of the entire business and made most of the money in the enterprise.

A little schooling however, in the dairy business put the farmer in a position to see the importance of managing his own affairs, and now the business is rapidly falling into the hands of the patrons interested, where it justly belongs. In this section the industry found a footing in the eastern part of Lafayette county. It has grown rapidly and is now the chief and most important branch of farming. It has spread slowly westward until the county is well represented in the western half. It has and is now, a boom to the poor man, it has given employment to the laborer, has increased the railroad traffic, has added business to the city and has furnished ready money to pay the way of all who are engaged in the cheese industry.

Our section of the country is well adapted to the manufacture of Swiss cheese; it is the home of the blue grass and white clover, it is watered by the two Pecatonica rivers and clear cold springs of lime water abound and streams of living water are found meandering over pebbly beds and through green pastures making it the ideal dairy section of the west.

From evidence and experience before us at the present time we can form no other opinion as to the cause of the
great advance in land values, unless it is the dairy business. Merchants no longer carry the farmer a year on his books. The dairy industry furnishes the farmer with ready cash. The farms by reason of this cheese industry have become more fertile thereby giving the farmer more to sell, whereby he can improve his surroundings. The long wished for carriage is in his possession and he drives to town and is the peer of the best. This and more the dairy business has done for Lafayette county.

Although I have been a patron of a cheese factory for some years I shall not attempt to discuss its management here farther than to say, that the first and most important factor to success is the cheesemaker. If he fails to be skilled in the art of making and curing his product he can do you a great damage. Your season's profit may be swept away by his imperfect knowledge or his neglect in curing and caring for the cheese on the shelves.

Maintaining a proper temperature of the cellar is important and requires diligent supervision. A want of interest in the welfare of the patrons is often costly to those interested.

Mice often make a lodgment in the cellar and damage is done and a loss in price of the goods is the result. This pest should be carefully excluded.

Buyers often come to your factory, examine and run the trier into the cheese to note the quality without any intention of buying. This is a practice that should not be tolerated in a well regulated factory. Cheese on the shelves should in no case be mutilated until a grade price is determined between a buyer and seller. Then is the time to examine and try the quality of the goods. If this rule is adhered to a leak in the business would be stopped.

Bad or impure milk should in no case be accepted or milk from dirty, unsanitary cans taken at a factory. This duty of determining the quality of milk is in the hands of the cheesemaker and if he neglects to perform this important duty he is not competent to handle a cheese factory so as to return a profit to the company.

The building and surroundings and the cellar should be kept clean and sanitary. Disposal of the whey must be
managed so as to avoid bad odors. This the cheesemaker should control. Your cheesemaker should be regarded as a partner in everything pertaining to the business. He then will take an interest in the welfare of every patron and will do his best to turn out a good quality of goods that will sell at the top price. While he is making money for the company he is establishing a reputation which means money to him. Comfortable quarters should be provided, good wood furnished and the contract on the part of the company should be honestly and cheerfully performed. Then the cheesemaker can be held responsible for a violation of his part of the contract and trouble avoided which to often occurs in the cheesemaking business.

Handling and care of the dairy herd is just as important as making and caring for the cheese. Bad feed and stagnant water can produce only unwholesome milk and if the proper precautions in this respect are not taken with the dairy herd a loss is sure to result and is too often charged to the unoffending cheesemaker. Regular hours to feed and milk can not be neglected without loss in production and can not be recovered even if the change in time is but for a single day.

On my farm I use no stanchions; I stand my cows in stalls and tie with chains. The driveways are cemented and the cows stand on a plank floor raised about two inches above the level and are liberally bedded with straw which serves a two-fold purpose. It makes the herd comfortable and clean and absorbs the liquid waste and can be returned to the land.

I have no desire to inflict my methods of handling a dairy herd on others and have only briefly stated my way on some of the many points of the business connected with the cheese industry. With a careful study of a system of management of the dairy herd—their feed, the ventilation of the barn and the sanitary conditions of everything pertaining to the business marks the high way to success and whoever violates these general principles invites failure and disaster in the dairy industry.

Much as we have gained by this new method of farming, we hope to gain through the deliberation of this convention composed of a class of gentlemen who have given the sub-
ject much study of scientific knowledge and culture, whom we trust may illucidate and make clear and comprehensive the correct mode of managing and working the cheese factories of our country so as to bring profit to its patrons, the country and state at large.

I trust I voice the sentiments of the farming masses when I say our state has done nobly in advancing the interests of the farming public. The institutes and dairy centers are laboring to spread the gospel of better methods, instilling in the minds of our farmers principles, which are of untold value, educating and sending out our young men equipped for the stern duties of an agricultural career.

Gentlemen—We hope your coming and presence here may be fraught with success. And the impressions left at the close of this convention may bear fruit and that we can say that you have given us a better and clearer understanding of the great cheese problem, its failures, its needs, and its possibilities. That as farmers and dairymen we can work and labor more intelligently by reason of this exchange of views on an industry that in my opinion is the keynote of success of our farming public.