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Southern Pines Hotel, Southern Pines
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IT WAS "PARADISE LOST!"

Consequently Sensible People Have Given Up Seeking the Eldorado

A HEART TO HEART TALK BY PASTOR DAVIS WITH HIS FLOCK—AND OTHERS



A LETTER came to the office of the Sandhill Board of Trade the other day which contained this sentence: "It would be difficult to find a Community of such interesting people as you have in the Sandhills anywhere else in rural America; but isn't it a pity that they didn't settle in some section where the possibilities were greater?" ¶ Well, the only answer to this question is "yes," but the next question is just where in this world or the next, is the place that the correspondent had in mind? One can travel all over the civilized world and also cross Texas, without finding it. The bookworm may burrow through Mohammad's description of the Arabian Paradise, Vergil's lines on the Field's Elysian, John's writings about the Orthodox Heaven, and John Milton's verses telling of the Puritan Hereafter, without finding the slightest trace whatsoever of a better place to build up a diversified agriculture and a healthy, livable, prosperous country life than right here in the sandhills of North Carolina.

The only other place to look for "greater possibilities" would be the lower regions. Dante gives a vivid and detailed picture of the Inferno that haunted the imagination of the Middle Ages, and Homer tells of Hades; but the only parts of the Sandhills that are inferior to the places described by those writers are the one or two towns that are too stiff-necked or dead-in-the-shell to come into the Board of Trade and help do the work that is improving conditions here and increasing the value of land! ¶ Where then are we to find this Utopia which the letter suggests, and to which our progressive Sandhillites, ever bent on making the best better, would perhaps move en masse like the Israelites coming out of Egypt or the Mormons going to Utah?

The soil here has little so called "natural fertility" in it. Thinking men who are interested in seeing the best agriculture and the best rural conditions in the United States built up here are glad that the soil is as it is. Plunder farming, which has impoverished the South and cursed the West, can never be practiced here. In Eastern Kansas, where I had the misfortune to be born, we robbed the soil year after year and supposed we were farming! The fields over which I chased the corn drill in my freckled youth are now so poor that they will not produce grain enough to pay for their cultivation. The man who owns them says pessimistically that they are "worn out." ¶ But Bradford Knapp at Louisville last spring said: "There is no such thing as a worn out farm; but there may be a worn-out man on top of the farm." ¶ Plunder farming is done forever on the old home place, and now after fifty years of hard

work, the tillers of that soil have gotten to the staring point; that is, they have gotten to where the Sandhills now are. Soon or late every farmer in this land of the free and the home of the crank, must realize that the soil is very little more than a prop to hold the plant up and that he must furnish the "table board" for his crops by proper fertilization. This has been the experience of every old farming country except Egypt. ¶ *Real agriculture begins where soil robbery leaves off.* ¶ The Sandhills are starting right; we don't have to mess around half a century before hitting the up-grade.

The best agriculture, and more notably still, the best social conditions, are not found on the best soil. One can challenge the world on that statement. Buckle's "History of Civilization" will furnish all the data one needs to prove the assertion. Compare perennially fertile Egypt with the sand dunes of Denmark, for example. Agriculture and human achievement have nowhere risen higher than in Germany, and yet here is what Macaulay says of Germany in its natural state: "The soil was for the most part sterile. Even around Berlin, the capital of the Province, and around Potsdam, the favorite residence of the Musgraves, the country was a desert. In some places the deep sand could with difficulty be forced by assiduous tillage, to yield thin crops of rye and oats. Where the soil was rich it was generally marshy, and its insalubrity repelled the cultivators whom its fertility attracted." ¶ That was but a few decades ago. ¶ And yet that country already has a glorious past and today has wealth and strength enough to fight all Europe to a standstill. Egypt never produced a great people and never will. After they had spent a few generations on that rich river soil, it took the Lord himself forty years to get enough of the laziness and servility out of his chosen people to make them fit to possess and hold the promised land; which, by the way, is a rougher rockier and more forbidding territory than any in North Carolina. Men could be raised in it, however; men who could write poetry like the Psalms, produce philosophy like Ecclesiastes, build Solomon's temple, and when it came to fighting, could route the hosts of Sisera, or go down into a pit and in a hand to claw tussle slay a lion on a snowy day. The men who did these things were not milk-and-grape juice pacifists, but real he-men. For good rural conditions read the book of Ruth. As for profit, we read that in the time of Solomon they had made silver as common as stones in the streets of Jerusalem. But the records of Egypt can be searched in vain for such achievements.

But now to reef our rhetorical sails a little, and drop from the empyrean into the proximate. ¶ What the deuce is a good farm anyway? ¶ Dr. Knapp, the greatest man that the department of agriculture ever had, said that the ideal farm should not be large enough to support the owner without effort, nor so small that it would make him a mere toiler, for that