



THE



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REPORT OF THE BUREAU OF LABOR.

The second annual report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics has been upon our table for some days. We have not heretofore called attention to the work because we desired to fully examine it before attempting to review the same. Having read the report carefully and with much interest, we desire now to say that in our opinion the report is a valuable public document, presenting, as it does, thorough investigations of subjects of the highest importance to the people of the State. The report covers 432 printed pages, and is divided into six chapters. The first chapter is made up of investigations and reports upon the general condition, wages, &c., of mechanics in the different counties of the State. Separate reports are presented from 860 mechanics representing nearly every trade and occupation followed in this State. Wages as reported are on the average low; but low as they are, it would not be so serious a matter if constant employment were afforded. The number of days reported as lost from inability to obtain work, is appalling. We find reports from mechanics, stone masons,

carpenters, blacksmiths, &c., with families numbering from four to twelve, who were unable to obtain employment during much of their time the past year. Some report sixty days lost and others one hundred, and as high as two hundred days lost.

These facts call for serious consideration. A State cannot be prosperous except as her producing classes prosper. Idle hands bring neither wealth nor contentment. The question may be asked, why do not these men leave the over-crowded trades and go to the farms, where there is abundant room for all? They do not for two reasons: First, they have large families and no money; they are tradesmen and not farmers. Second, they see large numbers of farmers leaving their farms every year unable longer to continue farming with the odds so fearfully against them as is the case in these latter days. What encouragement have they to go to the farm?

The report points out as one reason why so many of our mechanics are not able to find regular employment, the ill effects of our inefficient apprentice system, the result of which is to turn out a great number of poor mechanics. The Bureau offers a remedy for this which is worthy of careful consideration. The Commissioner thinks the law should provide for the grading and licensing of mechanics as is now done with teachers, doctors, lawyers, &c., and he suggests that this could be done by the county superintendents of public schools, and should be so arranged as to work to the protection of mechanics and employers as well.

To this subject of apprentices the Bureau has devoted much space, and the information presented is most valuable. Opinions and suggestions are given from many public and private citizens, representing nearly all the counties; the testimony is almost unanimous against our present apprentice law.

The report also gives extracts from the apprentice laws of sixteen States which have in operation apprentice systems both compulsory and voluntary, from which a law could doubtless be framed that would be a great improvement upon the present law. It is due to the mechanics and the children of the State that this should be done.

Chapter 11 of the report gives returns from the proprietors of 421 factories, mills, work-shops, &c., giving amount of capital invested and product of each, amount of wages paid and general condition of hands employed by them. The Commissioner says:

"It will be seen that those reporting make a very creditable showing as to capital invested and the amount of business done. It may be safely assumed from the figures given that the manufacturing and mechanical pursuits of the State have trebled and even quadrupled since the census of 1880."

Chapter IV is devoted to manual and technical training, and remarks of some of the leading thinkers along that line are given. As is stated in the report, "while this subject has not received the attention in our State which its importance would seem to demand, yet it has received some attention—enough to cause the establishment of the College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts at Raleigh."

The subject of public roads is recognized by the Bureau as one of leading importance in this State at present. Much attention has therefore been given to this subject. Information on the road question has been sought and obtained from every county in the State, the replies to the questions sent out by the Bureau are full of interest, the large majority of them condemn the present system, and most of them favor the system known as a "combination of tax upon property and assessments upon labor." Many are strongly in favor of working the roads by taxation entirely, and declare that we can never have good roads until this is done.

Many of these letters are from men of experience and wisdom—men who have given much thought to this sub-

If every reader of The Progressive Farmer whose subscription has expired, or will expire during the month of January, will renew, we will enlarge The Progressive Farmer with the second issue in February. Look at the label on your paper, brethren, and send in your renewals at once. Do not wait for a Club. Remember we will drop from our list the names of all who have not paid by Feb'y 1st.

ject—and they will be read with interest by those who are concerned about the condition of our public roads.

The chapter upon Agricultural Statistics is an interesting one. It shows among other things that there has been no money made in the farming business the past year in this State; that upon the whole there has been a loss of three and a half cents upon every dollar invested in the business. If an average crop had been produced, says the Commissioner, a profit of 8 1/2 per cent. would have been realized. The average product per acre is put down at \$10.50. The cost of labor per acre was \$3.83, or 36 per cent. of the product. By comparison with chapter two, it will be found that the farming industry pays nearly twice as large a per centage of the product to labor as is paid by the manufacturing business of the State. The farmer pays 36 per cent. to labor, the manufacturer pays 19 per cent. Does the farmer pay too much for labor? The trouble is not there. The difficulty is that he gets too little for his product. The amount of commercial fertilizers used as given in the report, averaged 52 cents per acre, cultivated. Was the home-made fertilizers as much? We doubt it. The food supplies used on the farm and not raised on same averaged \$87 to the farm.

Does not this account largely for the fact that farmers made no money last year? In this connection we notice that a farmer from Warren county says "I have always made my supplies at home, and by doing this have made some clear money every year for forty-two years."

It will thus be seen that the report deals with important and practical questions which concern the people of the State, and a perusal of its contents will repay any citizen interested in the welfare of the State.

PINE STRAW THE BEST SUBSTITUTE FOR JUTE.

In an interview with A. W. Maas, the well-known architect of this city, we obtained some information about the manufacture of pine straw fibre that will be of interest to our readers. Mr. Maas with the late Robert J. Mosely during the years 1877 and 1878, established a factory for the manufacture of a fibre from pine straw that was used in making mattresses. If we are not mistaken the factory was burnt, at all events Mr. Mosely's death in 1878, who had furnished most of the capital caused its abandonment. Mr. Maas while manufacturing the fibre applied for and obtained a patent for a method of making the fibre which he says greatly cheapens the cost, and would enable him to make the fibre at a cost of 1 1/2 cents or 2 cents per pound. He says that the

entire cost of a small factory to make fibre will not exceed eight or nine hundred dollars. It requires a small steam engine of six or eight horsepower and about 150 dollars' worth of other machinery. He thinks the best way to make it, is near a saw mill where pine trees are being cut for lumber. Only the green straw will answer. That which falls and becomes dry will not do. The straw of the long leaved pine is best. The short straw will not make a good article. The straw is stripped from the twigs and cooked in a solution of caustic soda. It then goes through a rubbing machine, that rubs off the woody matter from the straw and splits up the fibre. It is then thoroughly washed with a machine, and dried on scaffolds in the sun after which it is ready to be packed in bales. A good sized tree will yield 800 pounds of green straw, that will turn out 400 pounds of the dry fibre. When Mr. Maas first engaged in the business made a brown fibre similar to that made at the Acme Mills in North Carolina.

Samples of the bagging made from it, and used in baling cotton were sent here. This bagging is of a rich brown color. Mr. Maas says the patent he obtained makes a white fibre, much better in every way than the brown. He has samples of it that are of a creamy white and appear to be superior to the brown. It is the white fibre he says can be made at a cost of 1 1/2 cents per pound. We learn there is a prospect of organizing a joint stock company, and manufacturing the fibre near Meridian. The fibre can be made and shipped to the factory. It would not be advisable to have the bagging made where the fibre is manufactured, as the machinery would have to be moved from place to place where the pines were cut down for saw logs. We believe this industry can be made a large and valuable one for the South. The material for it exists in immense quantities and when not used for that purpose is absolutely wasted. If the fibre can be made and sold for 2 cents per pound it cannot fail to be a great success. The coarse jute used in the manufacture of bagging costs 2 1/2 cents per pound, and as it contains a great many butts and refuse matter there is a loss of 25 per cent. in preparing it for the loom. On the other hand the pine straw fibre is like cotton fit to be worked up as soon as made. There would not be a loss of two per cent. in using it. The bagging made from pine straw is equally as good as jute. When the fibre is prepared it will be easier to make into bagging, and a difference of one-half cent per pound would make it supersede jute entirely and render the South independent on the bagging question.—Meridian Democrat.

LETTER FROM RANDOLPH COUNTY.

MIDDLETON ALLIANCE, No. 883, KEMP'S MILLS, N. C., Jan. 5, '89.
COL. L. L. POLK.—Dear Sir:—Having been appointed corresponding Secretary for our Alliance, I beg a little space in your valuable paper. We have endorsed the demands of State Alliance and stand ready to co-operate with the order in anything which will advance the interest of the laboring classes. In response to a question in THE FARMER of December 25th, I would answer as follows: The acreage in wheat is about the same; oats one-fourth more; grasses are not cultivated to any extent; our people will plant more cotton but the cotton crop will still be small. Our farmers try to raise their own corn and meat, but farming is not a success. Our people, as a general rule stick to the system followed by our fathers, the main competition being to see who can haggle over the most territory, regardless of results, but we are being aroused and stimulated to a better system by reading, THE PROGRESSIVE FARMER, which, by the way, is the best guide to successful farming in our land. Long may it and its editor live and prosper.
Fraternally,
N. L. SPOON, Sec'y.

LETTER FROM MCDOWELL CO.

NEALSVILLE, N. C., Dec. 26, '88.
COL. L. L. POLK.—Dear Sir:—Allen Alliance, No. 1089, was organized in August with 15 members; we now have a membership of 59, 34 male members and about 15 applications for initiation.

Our Alliance is prospering finely. We had a hard fight with the merchants and some others, and have about completed arrangements to take stock and run an Alliance Store. The merchants in this country wanted to sell us goods at 20 per cent. on prime cost. We, with two sister Alliances, think we can better ourselves by running a store of our own, think we can sell all leading articles at 8 per cent. clear of cost and carriage.

Our Alliance adopted the demands of the N. C. S. F. A. as to convict labor and the railway free pass system. Our country is adapted to the growth of all kinds of fruits and grasses, the staple crops being corn, wheat, rye, oats and tobacco. We have timber of all kinds in abundance, water powers to drive all kinds of machinery from a cotton factory to a grist mill. Cannot be excelled in any country.

Brethren, let us improve our farms and raise our own supplies, and not be dependent on some other country for what we eat and wear; let us have our smoke-house in our own yard, and cribs full of North Carolina corn.

Our Alliance would like to hear a good Farmers' Alliance Lecturer. We are up in the mountains; we will give him conveyance from Marion any time he would come and speak for us. Success TO THE PROGRESSIVE FARMER.

Fraternally yours,
H. C. GRAYSON, Sec'y.

SOME PERTINENT INQUIRY.

PIKEVILLE, Wayne Co. N. C., January 14, '89.
COL. L. L. POLK.—Dear Sir:—I will just say that we are still alive and working for the good of the order and the best interests of the farmers. Our membership is still increasing. Prejudice is fast being dispelled from our midst and our best men and citizens are taking hold. May it continue to grow and spread until its mighty wing will overshadow our entire beloved Southland.

What has become of our State Agency Fund? We hear little about it in THE PROGRESSIVE FARMER. Our State, County and Sub-Agents ought to be at work; what is the matter; whose fault is it; what part of the State is delinquent? Why do they not come forward and pay up? Do they want more light? We are all poor and in straightened circumstances owing to short crops, but our Alliance holds receipts for about \$200 paid to the State Fund. There are now over 1400 Alliances in the State, and there are 538 Alliances older than ours, and if all would come forward as we have done, according to age and membership, we could have to-day \$150,000 in hand. We are anxious to know what is the matter. Please look into the matter and let us hear from you through your valuable paper. Long live THE PROGRESSIVE FARMER, and a happy and prosperous New Year to its editor.
Yours fraternally,
H. R. HIGGINS.

OFFICIAL ORGANS OF FARMERS ALLIANCE.

National Alliance—Southern Mercury, Dallas, Texas.
Alabama—Alabama Farmer, Athens.
Arkansas—State Wheel Enterprise, Little Rock.
Mississippi—The Farmer, Winona.
North Carolina—THE PROGRESSIVE FARMER, Raleigh, official organ for North Carolina and Virginia.
Florida—Farmers' Florida Alliance, Marianna, Fla.
Tennessee and Kentucky—The Toiler, Nashville, Tenn.
Louisiana—The Union, Choudrant.
Free Speech, Beaumont, Texas, of the counties of Jefferson, Orange, Tyler, Hardin, Chambers, Liberty.