

THE PROGRESSIVE FARMER AND SOUTHERN FARM GAZETTE



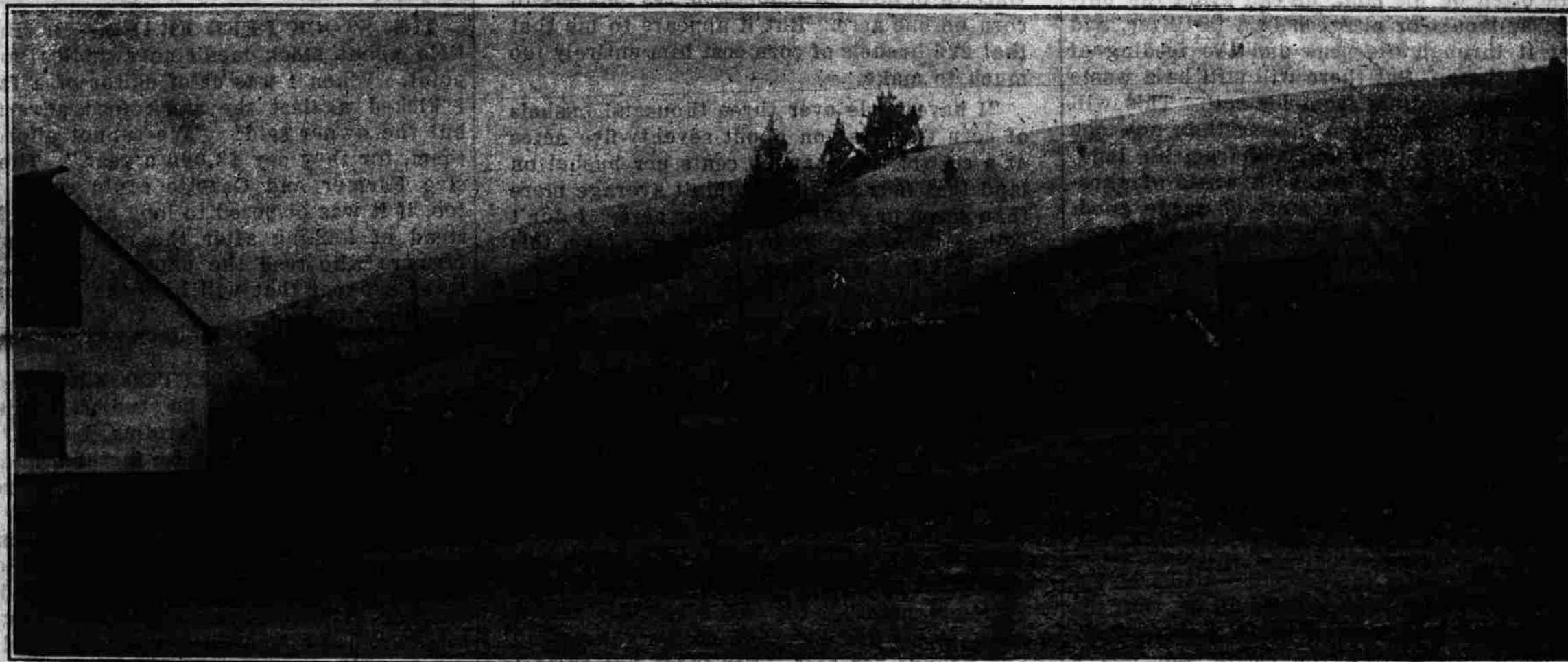
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The King of the Corn and His Reign of Mercy.



BELIEVE in the divine rights of kings I never shall, except in the divine right to be kingly men, which all men share; but truly a divine right lies for any man in the ownership of a comfortable barn in winter. It is the feudal castle of the farm to the lower animals, who dwell in the Dark Ages of their kind—dwell on and on in affection, submission, and trust, while their lord demands of them their labor, their sustenance, or their life.

Of a winter's day, when these poor dumb serfs have been scattered over the portionless earth, how often they look towards this fortress and lift up their voices with cries for night to come; the horses, ruffled and shivering, with their tails to the wind, as they snap their frosted fodder, or paw through the rime to the frozen grass underneath, causing their icy fetlocks to rattle about their hoofs; the cattle, crowded to leeward of some deep-buried haystack, the exposed side of the outermost of them white with whirling flakes; the sheep, turning their pitiful, trusting eyes about them over the fields of storm in earth and sky!

What joy at nightfall to gather them home to food and warmth and rest! If there is ever a time when I feel myself a mediaeval lord to trusty vassals, it is then. Of a truth I pass entirely over the Middle Ages, joining my life to the most ancient dwellers of the plains, and becoming a simple father of flocks and herds. When they have been duly stabled according to their kinds, I climb to the cribs in the barn and create a great landslide of the fat ears that is like laughter; and then from every stall what a hearty, healthy chorus of cries and petitions responds to that laughter of the corn! What squeals and grunts persuasive beyond the realms of rhetoric! What a blowing of mellow horns from the cows! And the quick nostril trumpet-call of the horse, how dependent, yet how commanding! As I mount to the top of the pile, if I ever feel myself a royal personage it is then; I ascend my throne; I am king of the corn; and there is not a brute peasant in my domain that does not worship me as ruler of heaven and earth.

Or I love to catch up the bundles of oats as they are thrown down from the loft and send them whirling through the cutting-box so fast that they pour into the big baskets like streams of melted gold; or, grasping my pitchfork, I staff the ricks over the mangers with the rich aromatic hay until I am as warm as when I loaded the wagons with it at midsummer noons.

With what sweet sounds and odors now the whole barn is filled! How robust, clean, well-meaning are my thoughts! In what comfort of mind I can turn to my own roof and store.—James Lane Allen, in "Aftermath." (Harper & Bros.)

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