



A Farm and Home Weekly for
 The Carolinas, Virginia, Georgia, and Florida.
 FOUNDED 1886, AT RALEIGH, N. C.

Vol. XXXI. No. 48.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 1916.

\$1 a Year; 5c. a Copy

The Country Church and Sunday School: A Thanksgiving Thought

THIS issue of The Progressive Farmer appears on the eve of the annual Thanksgiving season, a Thanksgiving that comes at a time when the Southern farmer is enjoying the greatest prosperity known in this generation. It is a fitting time therefore to recall the Lord's own parable of "The Prosperous Farmer"—the parable of the man who rejoiced over his fruitful fields and bursting barns but forgot the higher things of existence.

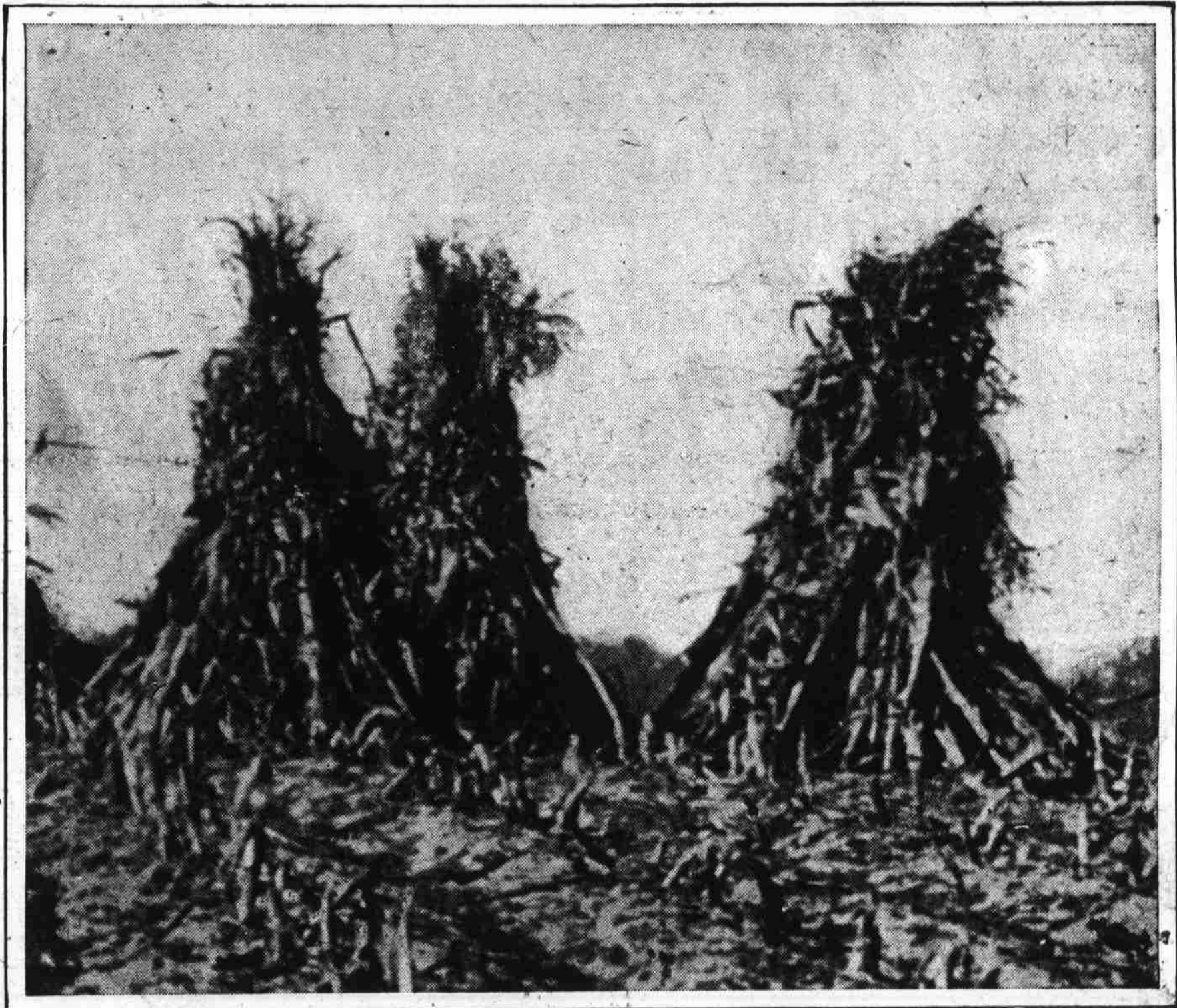
We hope we may be pardoned therefore for urging upon our readers a very sincere observance of the "Thanksgiving Day" proclaimed by authorities of state and nation for next Thursday. It will be a good thing if throughout the rural South our farmers and their families come together in church and schoolhouse, and make acknowledgement in prayer and song to the Giver of All Good Gifts.

It is also a good time to inquire whether the daily life, the common round, of the family is shot through with this gleam of diviner things. Does each family observe the old-fashioned habit of "returning thanks" not only one day in the year, but at each meal where the sustenance for the body reminds us of Him Whose sunshine and showers have made such sustenance possible; and that other ancient custom which the poet Burns portrays so beautifully in "The Cotter's Saturday Night":

"The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,
 They, round the ingle, form a circle wide;
 The sire turns o'er, wi' patriarchal grace,
 The big ha'-Bible, ance his father's pride.
 The priest-like father reads the sacred page."

The growth of absentee landlordism, which has laid its blighting hand on so many a noble influence in rural life, has weakened the religious life of the country, too; and we believe, therefore, that there is more than usual need for turning our thoughts at this Thanksgiving season to those influences and practices which may strengthen the spiritual forces of our section. The old-fashioned customs of "grace at dinner" and a chapter-reading at night in each family should be supplemented by efforts to build up church and Sunday school. In many a neighborhood in which there are not enough people of any one denomination to support a strong Sunday school, the people might yet gather

at the schoolhouse in a union Sunday school that would be the pride of the community and a tower of strength to all high purposes. The country church should also be strengthened by advancing the pastor's salary in accord with the advance in the cost of living and by painting



"THE FROST IS ON THE PUNKIN', AN' THE FODDER'S IN THE SHOCK"

or enlarging the church building now while times are good.

As for the injurious effect of absentee landlordism on the religious life of the South, this fact does indeed deserve increased attention. The tenant neglects the church and the church neglects the tenant.

Moving from place to place, the landless man forms no strong attachment to any one religious group, and too often the local church organization and its Sunday school make no effort whatever to secure the attendance of the new-comer tenant and his family. These things ought not so to be, and to every Progressive Farmer reader who is active in church or Sunday school work, we would make this as our final and most important appeal: *Don't forget to secure the attendance of every tenant in your neighborhood, and where you cannot interest the man or his wife, get the children to attend.*

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