

THE PROGRESSIVE FARMER.

"You Can Tell by a Man's Farm Whether He Reads It or Not."

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CLARENCE H. POE.

DR. TAIT BUTLER, ASSOCIATE EDITOR AND MANAGER.

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315 Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill.

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What Christmas Really Means.

OUR CHRISTMAS festival is supposed to celebrate the birth of Jesus, though it is very unlikely that He was born within two or three months of December 25th. The time seems to have been a season of Pagan festivity in old Italy, and when the new religion was officially adopted the politic dignitaries found it easy to change a Roman holiday into a Christian one, changing the name rather than either the form or the spirit of the celebration.

As Christianity spread to our ancestors, the wild Teutonic peoples of the North, the day absorbed again into itself the shadowy myths and traditions that clung around the mid-winter festivities of the Scandinavian peoples. It is from these races and from the old worship of Odin and Thor that we have derived our Yule logs, and our Christmas trees, and our stories of the benevolent Kris-Kringle with his loaded sleigh and galloping reindeer.

So it is that Christmas is not only Christian but Pagan, and is derived not only from the hills where the shepherds watched their flocks by night, but also from the dim, mysterious forests of the Northland, where the beginning of the sun's new ascendancy was a time for great rejoicing.

To us to-day, however, all these old traditions have been blended into the one central idea of the day. We are glad, not because the sun is again growing brighter and the days longer, but because the light that gleamed from the manger at Bethlehem has brightened the whole wide world. We make it a time of rejoicing for the children because the Man of Galilee was once a little child. We give gifts in some far-off typification of the blessings His life brought to us all. The traditions of the day have become as thoroughly Christianized as its name.

It is rather doubtful, though, if the spirit of the celebration has lost its old-time Pagan characteristics or become much more harmonious with the doctrine of helpful brotherhood and unselfish love. All too many still seem to regard Christmas as a sort of Bacchanalian feast, a time for all sorts of unrestrained self-indulgences. Could there be a greater mockery than that the birthday of the self-sacrificing Nazarene should be celebrated by a riot of noise and extravagance, gluttony and intemperance? Surely no two ideas could be more alien.

Yet all this folly, and all the hollow mockery of commercialized giving, sadly and glaringly inappropriate as they may be, are only the attempts of those who have forgotten the better way to get in tune with the chimes of joy rung out by the Christmas bells. Whatever we older folks may make of it, Christmas is to thousands of little children the year's day of supreme gladness, the one central point to which the long-lasting days lead at length for glad conclusion.

Happy are they who can accept Christmas with the simple faith and the unquestioning gladness

of childhood, who know that there is somewhere in the mysterious realms of the unseen a great loving Friend watching over them and ready to give them all the good things that in their hearts they most desire.

A One-Horse Farmer Who Was a Hero of Industry.

WE DO NOT recall that *The Progressive Farmer* in all its history has ever printed a more inspiring story than that told by Mr. Dumville on page 4.

One man, a comparatively poor man, a stranger in the community, without any special advantages of position or influence, by practical, intelligent, every-day work not only makes a good living and acquires a competence for himself, but remakes the whole industrial life of his neighborhood.

"I fully believe three times as much is sold off these farms as was twenty-five years ago," Mr. Dumville tells us. "At that time the price of a cow was from \$15 to \$25, while the stock has now been so improved that an average cow brings \$40 to \$55." To say that a man brought about these things is a far finer thing than to say that he acquired a great fortune—ininitely finer if one must also say that the fortune was acquired by questionable means or by the destruction of the country's natural resources.

In a private letter Mr. Dumville tells of the pride and comfort this man took in his farm and his stock. He was a man who did his work well (worked with his own hands and kept no servants) and had a right to rejoice in it—a real hero of industry, worth a thousand like many of the so-called "captains of industry" whose only work is to exploit for their own benefit the achievements of others, or those natural resources which belong in right more to humanity than to individuals.

This man, in his humble way, made a good living for himself and his wife; better still, he lived an active, happy, helpful life, and, without any display or any claim to greatness, did his work so well that he left his community forever better for his having lived in it.

And this man, be it remembered, was only a one-horse farmer. Let us all take off our hats to him—and nothing else could happen of so much value to our Southland as that a hundred thousand other farmers who read this article (one-horse farmers, two-horse farmers, three-horse farmers, or what not) should get the inspiration of his magnificent example, and resolve to become themselves like leaders in the great agricultural revolution upon which Southern prosperity depends.

And you, Mr. Reader—why not YOU?

Our Special Offer.

WE WISH to call your attention to our special offer on page 20; and, strange though it may seem, we are doing this as much for your sake as for ours. We have never made a better offer than this, and we think we can make as good offers as anybody. We know that it will do you good to take *The Progressive Farmer*. You know it, too,—no use to argue about that. We are sure as can be that those trial subscriptions will be good for your friends, and we believe you will agree with us about that. Your wife will certainly be pleased with a journal of dress-making and fashions, and she should be. Your wife has as good a right to be dressed attractively and modishly as has anybody's wife—nothing is too good for *Progressive Farmer* folks. Of course, you need a "Southerner in Europe"—if you have already read the letters you will want them in permanent form; if you have not read them, you should. There doesn't seem to be much else to say, does there? It's a fine offer, and good only till January 1st.

Send on your dollar and a half—or better, your two dollars—and get the binder also; because *The Progressive Farmer* next year is going to be worthy of preservation, if we are any judges of things that are worthy.

Why the Uplands of the South are Not Fertile.

IT IS a well recognized fact that the uplands all over the South are not so fertile nor so productive as are the uplands of the North and West.

Why is this? Is it because of our system of farming, as so commonly charged; or is it due to natural conditions—climatic and geologic?

In the sense that virgin soils of the North and West are rich and productive, we have few rich and productive virgin soils in the South and never did have, except those which receive the soil washings of other areas and are so located that they cannot lose this increment of soil fertility. In other words, there are no rich virgin upland soils in the South. If this is a fact—and it is—then the question, "Why are the uplands of the South not fertile?" becomes one of deep interest; for we must know why they are naturally poor in order to learn the most direct and certain way to make them rich, and also what we must do to keep them rich when we have once made them so.

Southern upland virgin soils are not rich because (1) of our long, hot, moist summers which cause rapid and complete oxidation—rotting—of all dead organic substances which fall upon them. Notwithstanding the favorable conditions for the growth of vegetation, our virgin upland soils are comparatively bare because of the rapidity with which all vegetation which falls upon them decays, and (2) because of our heavy rainfall at nearly all seasons of the year, which washes and leaches away the organic plant food that would otherwise accumulate.

In the arid regions of the West all soils are rich—water alone is needed to produce large crops. Nothing has been washed or leached from those soils. In the North a different formation, less heat and rainfall during the shorter summers, and the protection of frost and snow during drier winters, save the organic materials and make far richer virgin soils. Moreover, not only do those regions of the North and West, where rich virgin soils abound, have less rain, but it also falls more gently; they do not have the "gully-washers" characteristic of the South.

This accounts for the lack of organic plant food—nitrogen—in our Southern soils, but how about the mineral plant foods? In many instances geologic causes, the character of the rocks whence the soils were formed, no doubt account for the lack of mineral plant foods in our soils, but the very same causes which are responsible for the lack of organic plant food in our soils are also responsible for the lack of available mineral foods. The retention on and in our soils of decaying vegetable matter would render available the mineral foods, hence the absence of this decaying organic matter—humus—is largely responsible for the apparent lack of mineral plant foods in our virgin soils.

And now what is the practical lesson to be drawn from all this? It is imply that Southern farmers should recognize the foregoing facts and make greater efforts than farmers elsewhere—not less efforts, as in the past—to supply organic matter to their soils. Not only should they supply increased and increasing quantities of vegetable matter to their soils, but they must also adopt measures to keep the plant food thus supplied from washing and leaching away. In other words, instead of growing hoed or clean culture crops, cotton, corn, tobacco, etc., almost exclusively, and leaving the lands bare during the winter in the condition most favorable for washing and leaching, they must adopt a humus-supplying rotation of crops and employ winter cover crops to hold the plant food that becomes available during the winter.

More fertility, very much more fertility, is removed from Southern soils by washing and leaching than by cropping. Or to put it in other language, we lose vastly more fertility by unnecessary than by necessary exhaustion.

Let's stop it.