

# THE PROGRESSIVE FARMER

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## SAVING THE RURAL SOUTH TO THE WHITE RACE

**W**E HOPE WE HAVE seen about the last of Southern white farmers leaving the farm to take work in cotton mills. We are anxious to see the manufacturing enterprises of the South build up, but we are more anxious to see the farm lands of the South held by prosperous small white farmers, and to see these small white farmers have their part in the great agricultural awakening now going on.

Someone has wisely said that in all ages and all countries the men or the classes who own the land sooner or later make themselves the aristocracy of that country. We have not come to this condition so rapidly in America as in other countries, because of the abundance of cheap land resulting from the newness of the settlement and the sparseness of population as yet; but in the long run the history of other countries must be repeated here.

These thoughts came very forcibly to mind as we rode through a cotton mill village the other day and saw its hundreds of white employes—men, women and children—who have left the farm to become the homeless hirelings of the cotton manufacturers. The negroes, finding no place in manufacturing for them, are left on the farm and are becoming land-holders in rapidly increasing numbers. Prof. W. E. DuBois, a prominent Georgia negro educator, has just published a map showing that since 1900 Georgia negroes have increased their land-holdings from 850,000 to 1,500,000 acres, and now own within the State of Georgia alone an area larger than the entire State of Delaware.

Not only this, but the negro children are going to school and developing healthy bodies in the open air and healthy surroundings of country life instead of being shut up in the cotton mill, overworked, under-educated, and poorly developed physically,—as the tendency must be in all cotton mills so long as the legislatures of the South are too subservient to the less humane mill owners to enact needed laws for restricting child labor in the mills—the less humane mill owners, we say, because there are many thoughtful and far-seeing mill owners who heartily favor stricter regulations.

Remember, we have no ill will toward the cotton manufacturers; we have no ill will toward the negro. We do realize very strongly however, that the safety of the South depends upon the presence of a large white rural population. The drift from the farms to the cotton mills not only affects this directly, but also indirectly, because when once the population of a community becomes predominantly negro, the small number of white people left may be forced to move out in order to find sufficient numbers for a society of their own.

It was a wise saying of James Oliver's, "Happy is the land that is tilled by the man who owns it," and the great need of the South to-day is to encourage the holding of small farms by white farmers. We repeat, that we say this in no ill will to the negro,—in fact, it should not be necessary for us to say this, because no one else in the South has preached more persistently than we the doctrine that it is the intelligent, prosperous negro who helps, and the ignorant, poverty-breeding negro who makes us all poorer,—but we say this for the good of white and black alike because the best interests of both races demand that the rural South maintain its large white population. Unless this is done the negro himself will not progress as rapidly as he will with white guidance, and unless this is done the cities of the South must also inevitably go backward.

We urge every white tenant-farmer, and especially every white man who for any reason is thinking of becoming somebody's hired man in town instead of owning his home in the country, to buy land. The great plantations of the South, for the good of our section as a whole, must be broken up. We must encourage the spirit of home-owning, with every man sitting under his own vine and fig tree, and we must especially encourage the development of a great class of small white farmers.

The saving of the rural South to the white race is one of the most important problems now before the people of the Cotton Belt.

In this connection, there is another thing that ought to be mentioned, and that is the problem of immigration. The Farmers' Union and other farmers' organizations are right in protesting against the coming of large numbers of Italians, Russians, Hungarians, Poles, etc. This would only make a bad matter worse, and complicate matters still further. What would help, however, is the coming of a large number of wide-awake Northern and Western farmers, buying small farms among us and making their farms object lessons in stock raising and other lines of diversified agriculture. These Northern and Western farmers will also set a good example for our Southern people in that they are ready to do any and all kinds of work with their own hands, entirely independent of hired labor. As a Southerner, reared on the farm and a descendant of generations of Southern farmers, we must confess the need of our people at this point, and the help that we would get here from an increased number of wide-awake Western settlers beside the aid they would render in keeping up the balance of population between the two races in the South and preventing the predominance of a colored farming population, which, we repeat, would be undesirable for both whites and blacks and ruinous to our section as a whole.

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