



# A SUCCESS TALK FOR FARM BOYS

*The Farm Boy and His Recreation*

By CLARENCE POE

MY DEAR Boy:

Viscount Grey or Lord Grey, recently Ambassador from Great Britain to the United States, has just published a notable little book on "Recreation." I have decided to take the same subject for this month's letter to you.

Every boy ought to play and to love play, just as truly as he ought to work and love to work. Every boy should have some favorite form of recreation—a "hobby" which gives zest or color to his life. I am sorry to say that in my own case, when I was growing up on the farm, our public schools lasted only about three months in the year and "hard times" made it necessary for me to be in the fields almost every possible work hour during the other nine months; consequently, I felt that I must give practically every leisure minute to study, and as a boy I did not get the time for hunting, fishing, swimming and playing I wish I had had. But conditions are better now, and there is no reason why you should not find time for all these forms of joyous recreation.

I repeat that you should have a hobby in recreation. If, for example, you like fishing better than hunting and trapping or playing baseball, specialize in fishing. Learn all about it. Talk with other fishermen and find out what they have learned. Get some books on the subject and learn everything you can about the different kinds of fish, their interesting habits and life histories. Lord Grey is such an enthusiastic fisherman that he makes this amusing confession in his book:

"The best salmon and trout fishing in Great Britain ends in September. The best salmon fishing begins in March. In my opinion the very best of all is to be had in March and April. In October I used to find myself looking forward to salmon fishing in the next March and beginning to spend my spare time thinking about it. I lay awake in bed fishing in imagination the pools which I was not going to see before March at the earliest, till I felt I was spending too much time, not in actual fishing, but in sheer looking forward to it. I made a rule, therefore, that I would not fish pools in imagination before the first of January, so that I might not spend more than two months of spare time in anticipation alone."

Hunting is a sport nearly every man enjoys. If you have never read Ernest Thompson-Seton's delightful "Trail of the Sandhill Stag", you ought to do so at your first opportunity. It throbs and thrills with all a boy's tingling delight in the glories of the chase. For my own part, I have seldom enjoyed anything more than a fox hunt on some gloriously clear and frosty November morning—the unrivaled music of a score of hurrying hounds echoing from hill to hill, and hard behind the hounds a score of happy hunters on horses almost as happy as their riders. And if you and your father love fox-hunting, be sure to read at your first opportunity John Masefield's wonderful new poem, "Reynard the Fox." In all our literature there is no other such vivid pen-picture of one of the noblest sports of our people.

Every boy ought to play baseball, and every boy who can should play tennis. Every country school, in fact, should have both tennis court and baseball grounds, and they should be used not only during the school term but on Saturday afternoons all through the year—and by older people as well as pupils.

Nobody in America needs to make an argument for baseball. Tennis has the advantage that boys and girls can play it together; and I believe it is a fine and wholesome thing for the boys and girls of a community to learn comradeship and develop friendships on a tennis court.

So far I have spoken only of sports, but you should by no means depend on sports alone for recreation. Lord Grey lays especial emphasis on a love of nature as one of life's greatest sources of recreation and happiness; and the farm boy has unrivaled opportunities for cultivating this source of enjoyment.

You know how it is when we walk through the streets of a strange city. There are scores of faces, hundreds of faces, thousands of faces. But we get no satisfaction from seeing them because they mean nothing to us. On the other hand, let us walk through the streets of our nearest town

or village where we know everybody, and there every face has a message and excites our concern. We know the story of each man's life—the romance and comedy and tragedy of his career, and we are interested in what he is doing and what he is becoming. The fact that we know these people makes them interesting to us.

Well, now, in the same way, one man walks through a field in the daytime and sees rocks, dirt, weeds, wild flowers, insects, birds and fish, and at night he sees the stars; but none of these things have any interest for him because he doesn't know them. Another man sees a rock, and it instantly tells him its name and its history and how it came there. It speaks of enormous hissing volcanoes, and colossal drifting glaciers, and prehistoric monsters, and mighty earthquake convulsions, and all the other wonders of geology. He sees a weed and it tells him its name and how it grows and blossoms, how its pollen is carried and its seed scattered, or how it differs from other weeds. He sees a wild flower, and for him it too not only has beauty but individuality—a life and a story all its own. A bird sings, and he recognizes it as an acquaintance; he knows from the note just how the sweet-toned songster looks and the story of its life and wanderings. A bee buzzes by, and for this man it calls to mind facts about the bee's life and habits far stranger than fiction—the truly marvelous record as set forth in Maeterlinck's "Life of the Bee." And when the stars come out at night, this man sees them not as mere specks of light on a blue background. He knows them by name and there comes to his mind not only the romance of ancient legends about Orion and Mars, Aldebaran and the pole star, but also that lift of the soul which comes from thoughts of ten million worlds as large as our own, of swirling systems and burning suns, and of planets dead for a million years but still spinning through space under the compulsion of some Power beyond themselves.

No other recreation I know will add more to the happiness of a farm boy than the kind I have just suggested. Everywhere you go, you should recognize an acquaintance and know what it stands for. A soil should not be so much dirt, but you should know its name, its relative productiveness and characteristics. If you see a hog, cow, or sheep, you should know what breed it belongs to, and the most significant qualities and characteristics of the breed. And so on with regard to birds, fish, insects, trees, weeds, wild flowers, stones and stars.

Mr. Roosevelt, for example, was not only a mighty hunter but a great bird-lover, and before he went to England in 1910, he arranged to take a long tramp with Lord Grey on purpose to see the English birds and hear them sing. One might suppose that two such men would have talked and

## POEMS OF NATURE AND COUNTRY LIFE: "COUNTRY PEACE"

THE spirit of God's own "peace that passeth understanding" breathes through this charming rural picture-poem, entitled "Country Peace":

Country peace,—the warbling birds,  
Friendly faces and friendly words,

Grassy fields and tranquil streams,  
Cloudlands beautiful as dreams,

Singing brooks that wander slow  
Where buttercups and daisies grow,

Old barn-roofs where drowsy doves  
Sit in the sun and tell their loves,

Robins whistling clear and sweet  
Over acres of swaying wheat,

Children playing among the flowers  
And singing away the sunny hours,

Rosy country girls and boys  
Filling the day with happy noise,

Old-time garden-walks that seem  
Haunts of reverie and dream,

Poets' books to read at ease  
Under the bowing apple-trees,

Memories that wistful go  
Back to the golden Long Ago,

Faith that He who rules above  
Encompasses this earth with love,

Faith that His mercies never cease—  
These are the joys of country peace.

—J. Russell Hays.

thought only of mighty world-problems, but Col. Roosevelt found a far keener joy in listening to "the golden, leisurely chiming of the wood thrushes, chanting their vespers; the warble of the vireo and the tanager; the flight of the oven bird," etc. And he wrote at the time that during twenty-four hours he saw or heard the following birds:

Little green heron, quail, red-tailed hawk, yellow-billed cuckoo, kingfisher, flicker, humming bird, swift, meadow lark, red-winged blackbird, sharp-tailed finch, song sparrow, chipping sparrow, bush sparrow, wood thrush, purple finch, Baltimore oriole, cow-bunting, robin, thrasher, catbird, scarlet tanager, red-eyed vireo, yellow warbler, black-throated green warbler, king bird, white-breasted swallow, oven bird, thistle finch, vesper finch, indigo-bunting, towhee, grasshopper sparrow and screech owl.

I wonder how many of our grown-up American farmers, living all their lives in the country, can recognize by sight or song as many of their feathered friends as Roosevelt did in this single twenty-four-hour period?

There are many other forms of recreation which deserve more discussion than I am able to give them in this letter. For one thing you should cultivate a love for music, and if possible learn to make music in some form—either by singing or with banjo, guitar, violin, piano, or organ. And in every farm home on winter nights and summer evenings the whole family should listen to the world's greatest singers and musicians, as modern invention has made it so easy for us to do. It is also easily possible to have in any home now reproductions of the world's greatest masterpieces of art; and to the cultivated mind the study of pictures is one of the most delightful forms of recreation. You should learn to recognize Corot, Millet, Reynolds, or Bonheur and appreciate the special excellence of each. There are also many delightful indoor games in which the whole family can find recreation of a wholesome sort. And of course I do not need to enlarge upon the pleasures of picnics, parties, pageants, and similar social occasions.

Lord Grey mentions one form of recreation which I suspect will sound a little strange to you. "I mention for a high place in recreation," he says, "the pleasure of gardening." Now the word gardening to you, I suspect, calls to mind mainly a lot of hard work under hot suns—hoeing beans, potatoes, cabbage and squash; and if that is what he calls delightful recreation, you think Lord Grey has a mighty queer idea of "a good time." But what he had in mind is gardening in its more English sense—the care and development of wonderful lawns and beautiful shrubbery and majestic shade trees and shapely hedges and ancient vines and all the magic of flowers. About every old English home one finds these things—as I hope we shall some day find in America; and gardening, in the sense of caring for these things, Earl Grey agrees with Lord Bacon in calling "the purest of human pleasures."

But "the greatest and most satisfactory" of all recreations—what do you suppose it is, in Lord Grey's opinion? "Reading," he says; and he is right. Every man should have other forms of recreation, but no matter how many others he may have, he should have also the joy of reading. On winter nights, on rainy days, in solitude, in sickness, and when old age comes—under such conditions all our favorite forms of recreation may wholly fail us or to practice them may be utterly out of the question. But under any and all conditions, so long as God gives us the use of our eyes and minds, we can enjoy what Lord Grey rightly calls "the greatest and most satisfactory of recreations—the use of books for pleasure."

Sincerely your friend,  
CLARENCE POE.

## A Thought for the Week

WHEN we are bored, when we are out of tune, when we have little worries, it clears our feelings and changes our mood if we can get in touch with the beauty of the natural world. There is a quaint but apposite quotation from an old writer which runs as follows: "I sleep, I drink and eat, I read and meditate, I walk in my neighbor's pleasant fields and see all the varieties of natural beauty . . . and he who hath so many forms of joy must needs be very much in love with sorrow and peevishness, who loseth all these pleasures and chooseth to sit upon his little handful of thorns."—Viscount Grey of Fallodon.

## Favorite Bible Verses

MANY are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all. Psalms 34:19.

Love beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.—I Cor. 13:8.