

THE CAROLINA UNION FARMER



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Books for Farmers, or Traveling Libraries

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Country life has charms and advantages all its own but children in the country, and the grown-ups likewise, are thrown almost entirely upon their own resources for amusement and employment. Public libraries, with their wealth of books and periodicals, and many other educational advantages are lacking. The winter evenings are long and the daily or weekly papers do not occupy all the spare moments until bed-time; and there are stormy days when the regular work must stop. The almanac is read over and over again until every member of the family knows it by heart. Trade catalogues are read just as thoroughly. Can there be any place where the right kind of a book will prove more valuable than in a farmer's home? It brings recreation, information and inspiring views of life; and a succession of such books well read will develop better morals, better character and a better citizenship.

New York was the first State to realize the importance of sending books into the open country and to devise a scheme whereby the farmer and the farmer's family could have access to free books. In 1892 the New York Legislature made a special appropriation for a new system of library extension, which was so simple, practical, and economical that it was immediately successful. A number of small libraries, containing from fifty to one hundred volumes each, were arranged in suitable boxes, and loaned to villages, to schools and to farming communities for six months. These itinerant boxes of books soon became known as "traveling libraries."

Other States soon followed the example of New York and now traveling library systems are in active operation in at least thirty States of the Union. The blessings resulting from the use of traveling libraries have been so great and the expense so small comparatively, that the movement has quickly won the approval of the farmers in every State where it has been tried. There is not space to tell in detail of the instances where individual, family and community life has been brightened and quickened by the wholesome and entertaining books that have found their way to remote homes and isolated hamlets by means of the traveling library.

North Carolina is an agricultural State, the great majority of the people live in the country and for the most part do not have access to good books. But they would appreciate and enjoy good literature as much as the people of the cities and larger towns of the State, and is it not as much the duty of North Carolina to provide her rural population with books as it is of New York, New Jersey, Kentucky, Tennessee, or Virginia?

A Traveling Library System in North Carolina.

If a system of traveling libraries were inaugurated in North Carolina there would be at the service of the farmers of the State hundreds of boxes of books. Each box would be a miniature library,

containing between thirty and fifty volumes of the best books in fiction, history, travel, science and literature for adults and children. When the proper application had been filed, a library would be sent to a country school, to a small village, or to a farming community. There it would remain for three months, or six months, if desired, and then it would be returned to the Library Commission office. Another library, containing a different collection of books, would be sent to take its place, and it in turn would be sent to another community.

The libraries so loaned would be kept in the most convenient public place—school-house, post-office, or store—probably in private homes in some instances. There would be few restrictions connected with their loan. The borrowers would sign an application agreeing to pay the freight both ways, to see that the books were properly cared for, and to lend them without charge to all responsible persons in the community. In addition to the fixed groups there would be debate libraries, study club libraries and libraries on special topics. In short, the traveling library would give to the people who live in villages and on farms the same opportunities for reading, for pleasure, for self-improvement and for information as are now enjoyed by the citizens of Charlotte, Greensboro, or Raleigh.

The right sort of books help us to live happy and useful lives. They enlarge knowledge of the world of nature and of man. We cannot know personally all the great men and women of our time, but we may, through books, know most intimately the great people of all times. Having a good book in the home means bringing interesting people to the home circle—fireside visits with inspiring leaders; fireside travels through the wide world; words of advice from people who have done successfully the very thing we are trying to do, be it farming, house-keeping, teaching, or selling merchandise. But the traveling library is of most value, perhaps, to the young people and children of the family. It furnishes books which will interest the young, induce to habits of reading, form high ideals, and give a proper conception of the value of the farmer's work and how to do that work well. "It is just as much the duty of the home to feed the mind of a child as to feed its body; to select what is to be read as to select what is to be eaten; to provide good books as good clothing. . . Good books, and only good books ought to be within the reach of every child."

These are the functions of the traveling library and these are some of the advantages which an efficient system would give to the farmers of North Carolina.

We cannot live among men, suspicious of our own interest and fighting for our own hand, without dishonor and hurt to our own nature.—Black.

WHAT THE UNION FARMER SHOULD DO.

Greater in Number Than Ever in Its History Farmers' Union, Says Barrett, Points One of the Most Significant Tendencies in American Life Today—to Perpetuate Their Astounding Power For Upbuilding and Self-help, Members Must Follow Certain General Principles.

To the Officers and Members of the Farmers' Union:

To my mind, one of the most significant facts in current American history is that the Farmers' Union is today greater in membership than at any period since its founding. The producer in this country is at last awakened to the necessity of organization. What this means in the agricultural, the economic and the political life of the nation is not easily estimated.

From reports made me by State officials, and from my recent travels which have embraced virtually every State organized, I find more money in the State treasuries and a greater paid up membership than ever before. The membership include residents of three-fourths of the States, and farmers of every grade, from the one-horse variety on up to the very wealthy individual. Throughout the rank and file there is a new attitude toward the interests of the farmer, a new loyalty toward co-operation and an aggressiveness that is new in American organization.

It is essential, however, if the organization is to remain at top-notch in numbers and efficiency that both officers and members bear in mind and practice certain principles. One of the first, is the exercise of due care in the matter of leadership. The Farmers' Union, like any other great body, whether religious, civic or otherwise, has its rascals, its lukewarm brethren, its hypocrites and its snakes in the grass. We are gradually shaking them out of the organization, and there are fewer in now than at my time. But the fight to keep down this element must be an eternal one, if the organization is to succeed, permanently. Farmers' organizations have, heretofore, made slow progress because of the pitiful scarcity of men who, in the first place, really understand the farmer and who, in the second place, were willing and ready to make sacrifices for him; in other words, were willing to pay the price.

It is not sufficient that a leader be an excellent business man or brainy, as that word is generally understood. I can point you to plenty of ordinarily able men, brilliant men, in fact, who would make an absolute failure in heading a farmers' movement. The leader who steers a farmers' organization, and that means its various branches, including business enterprises, to succeed, must stand ready to be knocked down and dragged out by the brethren time and again, and then come back again and serve them humbly. He must put health, strength and self-interest cheerfully on the altar for them. When the brethren go back on the promises they made at a hallujah convention, and they are apt to do that at any old time, he

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