From 'I he Farm to Table--Road of a Hundred Profits.

Agnes C. Lamt, in Technical World Magauine.

(There is a national pickpocket who snatches 75 per cent of the farmer's profit and 80 per cent of the city man's income. He exacts a toll both going and coming, and his operations furnish one cogent reason why men are driven from farm to factory and country to counting house, and why the country man cannot make and the town man cannot save. This article suggests a remedy for the national pest.)

A man and wife had given up farming in one of the best fruit regions of New York State for what they thought a more lucrative position in town. As they were taking the train away, children came selling grapes around the station at 2 cents a box.

"Don't let us open the suit case! We can buy these grapes just as well in New York," demurred the man.

"But the express charges," suggested his wife.

"Won't be more than a cent a box for those! I should know! I've shipped enough of them."

But on arrival in the city, what was the man's amazement to find he could not buy that 2-cent box of grapes under 40 cents.

Forty cents! The ex-fruit farmer rubbed his eyes. That was an advance of 2,000 per cent on the price the buyers used to pay him. How in the world was the price made up? Express was only one cent. That brought the cost to three cents as the box reached New York. Allow 1 cent more for risk and handling—4 cents. Now 20 to 40 per cent advance is a high profit for a wholesaler; at most, so far only 6 cents. Add the retailer's profit of another 20 to 40 per cent. At most, the grapes should not be marked to exceed 10 cents. What unseen hand had juggled prices up to 40 cents—75 per cent too high for the man who eats; 2,000 per cent too low for the man who grows?

The city man had not added 1 cent to the value of the grapes. He had not paid for the labor and the forethought and the care and the first outlay of growing them. All that had to come out of the 2 cents paid the grower. Give the wholesaler and the retailer each a profit of 100 per cent. That would bring the grapes to only 16 cents, not 40. Was it a skin game both going and coming? Did it skin the man who produced the food; and then skin the man who consumed the food?

And who got the big increment? That was the question. If the grapes had paid the grower a flat 10 cents, he could have made his fortune on the farm and put away 80 per cent profit on investment. All these farm-improvement evangelists — railroad men, chambers of commerce, pink-gloved professors—could stop shouting themselves black in the face preaching "back-to-the-land." If farmers could put away 80 per cent profit a year, chains and wild horses and regiments of rifles could not keep them off the land. If the farmers were putting away 80 per cent of the first cost of their land a year, there would be such a rush from factory back to farm as would outsprint speed laws. If farmers could earn even 50 per cent on capital invested, there would not be a banker in the United States, from Hetty Greene to Pierpont Morgan, who would not turn farmer quicker than a motor car turns turtle. And after all, aren't the farmers the bank of the nation? And what per cent do they make on their investment? This man knew when he had to let grapes rot, or sell for 2 cents, he was not making 1 per cent on his investment. He was not breaking even. He had to quit.

Why, he could have afforded to pay the freight, to pay the New York end of the handling, to pay a man to look after the sales, and still have pnut away 50 per cent profit on his grapes. Then, he wanted to knock his head against something; for was not that exactly what he had been doing, though he did not know it? Paying for the freight—that is, his price had been knocked down so buyers could pay for the freight out of what should have been his profits, leaving their own profits intact. Paying for the New York end of the handling--that is, knocking his prices so low it left them margin to pay that handling. Paying the risk whether there was loss or not. Paying the wages of the salesman out of what should have been the farmer's margin. Paying the New York extortionate ground-floor rents—the big grocery, where the ex-farmer made his first inquiry, was on Broadway and paid a rental of $12,000 a year. And then over and beyond these preliminary charges against the grapes, paying a clear dividend of about 500 per cent each to commission man, wholesaler, retailer.

No wonder the wealth of the nation centered in the cities! No wonder the boys and girls broke away from the farm to pursue that wealth! This sort of game made the farmer's nine-billion-a-year crop a sort of sluice box for depositing gold in city vaults. When the farmer, however, wanted a loan, he had to come on his knees to those bank vaults for it.

They might yell "stop—stop" till they were hoarse, that farm-improvement crowd, at the exodus from country to city. If they really wanted to turn back the human flood, they would have to turn back some portion of the big money sluicing into those city vaults. Long as the gold flowed to town, so would the boys and girls; though you might preach your head off at the folly.

But, perhaps the grapes were an exception owing to their perishable nature. Your ex-farmer continued his first-hand investigations of the things he used to grow for the city man to eat. The more he investigated the hotter he grew. This is the record his accounts showed at the end of a month:

Potatoes, price paid the farmer, 35c.; cost to the city man, $1.50; advance, 300 per cent, of which only 30 per cent went for freight and handling in the case he investigated.

Asparagus, price paid the farmer, 8c.; cost to the city man, 30c. to 40c.; a neat little advance of 400 per cent.

Milk, price paid the farmer, 4c.; cost to the city man, 8c.; advance, 100 per cent.

Pork, price paid the farmer, 4c. to 6c.; cost to the city man, 20c. to 30c.; advance, 500 per cent.

Wood, $3 a cord; city price, $8; cost of cutting, $2; advance, 100 per cent.

Strawberries, 10c. a quart, or 2c. for a quarter dish; cost in city hotels, 25c. a dish, or $1 a quart—an advance of 1,000 per cent. No wonder there were million-dollar eating-places and twelve-million dollar hotels.

Eggs, country price, 20c. to 48c. a dozen, or 2c. to 4c. an egg; cost in hotels, 30c. for two, or 15c. an egg; advance, 400 to 800 per cent.

Apples, price paid grower, $2 for a 10-dozen box, best grade, or 20c. a dozen; cost to city man, $1 to $1.50 a dozen; advance, 500 to 700 per cent.

Oats, price paid farmer 1c. a pound; cost of oatmeal, 7c. to 10c.; advance, 700 to 1,000 per cent.

Cabbage, price paid farmer, $1 per 50 cabbages, or 2c. each; cost to city man, 10c. each; advance, 500 per cent.

Tomatoes, $2 for 24-pound crate, or 8c. per pound; cost in town, 25c. per pound; advance, 300 per cent.

Beef, per steer, $50 to $60 to the farmer; cost to city man figured out on the basis of prices paid in the Senate Restaurant, $2,000; advance, 3,000 per cent.

Wheat, $1 per 60 pounds; breakfast cereal, 15c. a pound, or $9 per 60 pounds.

Bread, 8c. to 10c. per pound; advance, 800 to 2,000 per cent.

Now, our farmer-man had not gone far in his investigations before he became convinced of several things. Railway charges did not account for the difference between the price on the field and the price on the city market. The farmer alone created the wealth; but he didn't create it for himself; and he didn't create it for the consumer. He created it for the man who came between the producer and the consumer; in a word, the middleman. A sort of colossus, or giant, that middleman appeared, as you thought about him, with one hand picking the farmer's pocket an dthe other hand digging into the city man's coat tails; with one foot out on the farmer's back and the other foot solidly planted on the consumer's stomach. But as our farmer-man was not a Sir Galahad to knock his head against stone walls or a Don Quixote to tilt wind-mill theories, he accepted the gospel of things-as-they-are, and came to a still more pertinent and personal conclusion. The town was the place to make big money. The town was the place to come to; and so the farmer comes and comes and comes in spite of the cry "back-to-the-land"; comes with Dick Whittington's hopes in his heart to make good, and save money, and get in on this game that skins both going and coming; or know the reason why.

Before many weeks passed, he knows the reason why making good as a city man is still harder than making good as a country man. It is that matter of **saving** before you can get in on the game. Your farmer-man does not begrude the railway its freight—even for dividends on watered stock. He does not begrude the wholesaler and retailer their 20 or 40 per cent; or the milk people their $8,000,000 surplus; or the pork packers their 500 per cent; or the mill men their 1,000 per cent. He would make all that for himself, if he could. It is, that having been skinned off the land and forced to come to town, the high cost of living now skins him out of that margin he was going to save. The town salary that looked so big when he was out on the farm has a surprising way of melting to nothing at the end of the week when bills are paid. He is a consumer. He is the man who is paying 75 per cent too much for those grapes that ought not to have cost more than 10 cents.

If those potatoes could have been sold direct from the farmer to the city man for 75 cents, it would have netted the farmer 100 per cent profit and saved the city man 100 per cent cost.

If that asparagus could have gone straight from the producer to the consumer at 15 cents, it would have netted the farmer 100 per cent profit and saved the city man 100 per cent cost.

If that milk could go direct from farm to table, at the present cost of producing milk, the farmer could make 66 per cent profit and the city man save 33 per cent.

Pork at 12 cents to the farmer would give him 200 per cent profit and save the city man 100 per cent cost.

And so on down the list as supply and demand determined **natural** values, with the undue depression of the middleman's foot removed from the farmer's back and from the consumer's stomach.

If this farmer-man were a story-book hero, he would rise from his figures fired with a great purpose to bring producer and consumer together; but he isn't a story-book hero. He is just a plain ordinary person, one of the million and million who have gone from country to town to find the same insidious and unseen hand picking the same old stupid pocket.

If you want to know whether his figures are based on fact or fiction, just consider a few well-known cases that are on record.

A farmer in New Jersey sold two hogs on the local meat market at the current prices for live squealors. Before going home, he asked the butcher to keep a couple of hams for him. A week later, he came around for the hams and asked for the balance of the money coming to him. The meat man presented him with a bill for $2.85 over and above the credit due for the live hogs. A like case is on record of a similar dicker in lamb. Why did the farmer sell at the low price of 4 to 6 cents, and buy at the high price of 25 cents? Because your middlemen are so leagued together, the prices are—one cannot say "fixed"—but uniform; and the dealer breaking those uniform prices will have to look out for independent means to supply himself with meat.

There was a great scarcity of turkeys one Thanksgiving. Vermont farmers supplying the Boston market could not understand why in a scarce year prices ruled uniformly 12 cents a pound lower than beef or bacon. A written agreement in restraint of prices would, of course, have been unlawful; but the fact remained, not a commission agent offered prices above 12 cents. The Vermont farmers picked and dressed their turkeys. Then they pushed a tiny letter inside those turkeys, amidships, telling the unknown city buyer what price was paid in Vermont and asking him to write back from Boston and report what price was charged there. The letters came back. Boston had paid 36 cents a pound for its turkey—an advance of 300 per cent.

Or go West! A rancher in Washington found it hard to make ends meet. He could not sell wood at any price. His beef brought only 4 cents, his pork 8 cents. He went in one winter to Spokane. Wood was selling at $8 a cord, beef at 30 cents, ham at 35 cents.

A Michigan fruit man sent a specially fine lot of grapes by water-feight to Detroit. He realized only 10 cents a basket. He traced up that fruit. It had sold for 20 cents to the city people. One of the big potato growers of Maine sent a carload to a Massachusetts city. The commission agent credited him at 35 cents a bushel. Deductions of feight and commission left on 19 cents a bushel. Those potatoes sold in Springfield at $1. Another Maine man sold his at 36 cents. They sold in Boston at $1.15. A north Carolina trucker sent a half-barrel of beans to New York. Deducting express and commission, they netted him only 78 cents. They sold in New York at $4.

Secretary Wilson says the farmer gets but 55 per cent of the consumer's price. Mr. Yoakum says the