

Health on the Farm

From Wallace's Farmer.

The farmer and his family are worth more to the community and to the world than the farm live stock and the crops. The health of the farmer and his family is worth more than the health of the farm, the live stock and the crops. If the farmer does not have health—and by this we mean not that negative condition which can get along without a doctor, but that degree of health that will enable him to enjoy farming—the farm itself will become unhealthy, unthrifty.

The great essentials of health are plenty of pure food of sufficient variety and well cooked, plenty of pure air, plenty of pure water, and plenty of exercise. The farmer has them all, as no other man has, or at least can and should have them.

On many farms there is a lack of variety in the food, sometimes a woe-ful lack; but it is largely the fault of the farmer and his family themselves. He can have cured meat during the summer, and if he will only learn to cure it properly, it will be better than any he can buy out of the shops. He can have good milk, buttermilk, cream, poultry, and eggs of a quality for which the city man will pay ten cents a dozen extra the year round. He can have fruits and berries and vegetables, if he has only been endowed with sufficient grace to lay out a garden, put a fence around it, and work it himself instead of leaving it to his wife and children. It is enough for the wife to gather the vegetables, prepare and cook them. She has no business to raise them unless she prefers to do so.

Any farmer can have good water, provided he will dig a well or wall up a spring, and see that it cannot become polluted by either human or animal wastes. Any farmer can have pure air, if he will simply let it in at night. He has enough of it, in all conscience, in the daytime. It is his family that is more apt to suffer from lack of it, especially the women folks. As to exercise, he has enough of that, if he will only take it wisely. The women folks usually have plenty of exercise indoors, but often not enough of the outdoors.

Why, then, do so many farmers and farmers' families lack in health? This body of ours is the most wonderful creation on the earth. David is not supposed to have known much about anatomy, or physiology, or the circulation of the blood, or the nervous system, or hygiene or microbes; but he said long centuries ago that it was "fearfully and wonderfully made." The more we know of it, the more strongly do we echo his sentiment.

This body is continually changing. It is not the same body that it was last year, nor last month, nor yesterday. There is an intake and an outgo; and the relation of the intake and the outgo has much to do with health. There is not much danger of farmers eating too much. That's the sin of the city man. If he is well-to-do, and takes life easy, he eats himself to death. Solomon was wise when he put gluttony and intemperance in the same category. The farmer, with his outdoor life and abundance of exercise, can be a heavy eater, if he is wise in his eating. He can eat an amount of fat meat that would send the city man to the hospital, because the farmer needs the calories of energy that the meat furnishes for his work. The main thing is to have it well cooked; and while the best farm cooking is the best on earth, the worst farm cooking is—

well, we don't like to say much about it. So much for the intake.

It is just as necessary to look after the outgo as the intake. One of the first and most important things is cleanliness of the skin. Varnish a man, and he will be dead in a short time, because the pores of his skin have been closed. They are simply one part of the innumerable sewers on the system to carry off the dead matter. Farmers and their wives complain that they do not have a bath-room with hot and cold water. This is particularly true on tenant farms. While this is a comfort, it is not an absolute necessity for cleanliness. You can keep clean, even if you do not have a bath-room. We boys at college used to rig up a shower bath that was a marvel of simplicity. We had one tin bucket with holes punched in the bottom. Then we had another bucket that we could upset into the bucket with the holes in it. We stood under it and had a fine shower bath. You don't need even that.

All you really need is a couple of stiff brushes, about three inches long and an inch wide, some good soap, a rough towel, some hot water, and some cold, and a private room. Use one brush dry as a curry comb. Use the other with the soap and warm water. Wash this off with tepid or warm water. Then rinse with cold water, and rub with a coarse towel until your skin is in a glow. Try this at least twice a week, and if you don't feel better for it, you need not renew for Wallace's Farmer next year. We heard a story the other day of a doctor who was called to see a farmer, an old man. He was astonished at the wonderful healthiness and flexibility of skin. On inquiry, he found that the farmer had used a stiff horse brush on himself nearly all his life.

If the skin is neglected, the kidneys will have to work overtime, and the result may be some of the various kidney troubles that are vexing the present generation. These troubles are not all due to lack of keeping the skin clean or the pores open, but they are in part. In city people, at least, most of the rest of them are due to impure food. The farmer is not compelled to eat impure food; the city man can not always help himself.

Another important thing is to keep our old friends, the bowels, open, and that without taking medicine. Much of the ill-health of the farmer, and of other people, too, is due simply to neglect. It is all-important to train children to regularity in this matter. Irregularity is an invitation to disease. You can no more have a healthy child with its bowels stopped, than you can have a good fire if the chimney is full of soot. It is not easy to break the bowels of a bad habit, but it can be done.

Eat coarse, food, such as oatmeal, graham bread, and, above all things, apples. There is something in the malic acid of the apple that stimulates the bowels in a most wonderful way. Farmers can have apples at least eight months in the year, especially if they own their farms. Drinking plenty of water between meals, at night, and early in the morning, will also help. When the habit is once formed, it is easy to maintain. Hence the necessity for making this part of the training of children.

If the farmer wants to be healthy—not merely such health as will excuse him from the necessity of calling the doctor, but vigorous, abounding health that will enable him to make a joy out of his work—he will

have to quit working twelve hours a day. Some farmers work fourteen. Now, the human system was not built for that amount of work. We do not believe there is any people on the face of the earth that can work twelve hours a day at any work without suffering for it. More than that: they will do more work in ten hours a day than they will in twelve; and in certain lines they will do more work in eight hours a day than they will in ten. The eight-hour day is not possible for the farmer. His work is not usually of such a nature as to make it necessary; but the farmer should get onto a ten-hour day, if for no other reason than to maintain efficiency in his work. It is possible to work twelve hours a day, working in a sort of half-hearted way, and longing for sundown; but it is not possible to work hard twelve hours a day and maintain the health. When on the farm, we never found it necessary to work longer than ten hours, and the work got along quite as well as on the farm of our neighbor who worked twelve.

Farmers are in the habit of buying patent medicines for every real or fancied ailment. When a boy we read this sentence in the old English Reader, we believe it was: "Those who for every trifling infirmity take medicine to repair their health, do they rather impair it," and we have never forgotten it.

In the first place, most of these patent medicines are frauds, and the man who expects to get up steam by taking them will be grievously disappointed. Even if these patent medicines contained no poisons or pain-deadening or stimulating or intoxicating ingredients, they would be shot-gun remedies at best. In the next place, most of them are the former of drug habits. The farmer does not need them; and the wider berth he gives them, and the quicker he fires out of his home periodicals containing advertisements of them, the better it will be for him and for his family. Now that these medicines have been shown up in their true character, and their ingredients published, there is no excuse for ignorance about them.

The human body was built to run a hundred years, if we may judge from the ratio that exists in other animals between the years it requires to attain maturity and the year of life. When we get to living healthily, wisely and sanely, and teach our children to live so, we will approxi-

mate to this length of life, especially on the farm. To do this, however, the farmer will have to work less hours. He will have to avoid unwise exposure. Unfortunately, the farm necessitates men taking chances which the town man does not need to. He is liable to get wet and chilled; has to stand extreme cold and extreme heat; and the only way to meet these difficulties without harm is to keep himself in such physical condition that he will be able to stand these extremes. Otherwise, he is liable to suffer from colds, catarrh, consumption, or rheumatism. If he gets typhoid fever, it is usually because he has neglected to provide a pure water supply.

Our readers may say: That's all theory. Before discussing whether it is all theory or part theory, whether it is part experience or all experience, we simply ask: Isn't it reasonable? If it is reasonable, try it as soon as possible. We have no fear of the results.

It is needless to say that the less alcohol in any form that the farmer takes into his system, the less energy of his system will have to be used to get rid of it, and the clearer will be his brain, for alcohol is a racial poison.

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