

WHAT I SAW IN THE MIDDLE WEST.—II.

CLARENCE POE.

Madison, Wisconsin. (Editorial Correspondence).—It's a beautiful country between here and Chicago. Not only are all the farm homes painted, but all the barns are painted, too,—and paint on the house is almost as cheerful as a smile on the face. With our increasing prosperity in the South it's a shame that we haven't more painted houses—and barns, too,—in the country. It pays, and it makes you prouder of your farm and prouder of your neighborhood. I should hate for a Western traveler to come down and see our backwardness in this respect.

Most of the farm dwellings in this Wisconsin-Illinois territory are, of course, much prettier than our average farm homes in the South; well designed two-story buildings, tastefully painted; but the dominant feature of the farm landscape are the big red barns, usually about twice or three times as big as the dwelling itself. And it is unfortunately true that the barns are in some cases better equipped than the homes. One farmer out here has electric lights in his barn, and burns kerosene in his house!

In other words, the farm woman is the most neglected factor in the whole rural problem out here, as she is in too many other sections. The institutes for farmers' wives, which Dr. Butler started in North Carolina, have proved one of the most effective means of popularizing improved methods in the home as well as on the farm, and I shall not let up in my efforts until every other Southern State does as well, or better, by the farm women than North Carolina has been doing. Then there ought to be free bulletins of all kinds for the farmer's wife as well as for the farmer, and certainly any farmer ought to be ostracized who does not get improved, labor-saving conveniences for his wife as fast as he gets them for his own work. For example, I have been distressed to hear out here in the West that an advertisement of a washing machine to lighten the house work will not make half so many sales as an ad. of some labor-saving farm tool for the man himself. These things ought not so to be.

Where the farm woman's work is lightened by labor-saving conveniences and where she is studying her work and is trying to learn about foods and food values, sanitation, and also about how to make the most splendid examples of physical and moral manhood and womanhood out of her children—well, she has a chance to find ten times as much joy and sweetness in life as the wealthy society woman in town who fritters her time away on matters of no more importance than how to play bridge or how to deck her body a little differently to-day from what she did yesterday. It seems to me that I should as lief not live at all as to reproach my Creator with a life wasted in such aimlessness.

At the bottom of most of our rural problems is the fundamental trouble of rural isolation. If we can bring farmers nearer together, we shall do more than we can do in any other way to stop the drift to towns where living is twice as hard as it is in the country. Only yesterday a professor in Chicago University, whose special study is improving the conditions of poverty-stricken people, declared that poverty is solely a city problem. Compared with the vast number of city destitute and half-starving, the number of hopelessly poor in the country is insignificant.

Our problem, then, is to see if we cannot provide in the country better advantages for social contact as well as better financial returns. Out here in Wisconsin one of the most important fac-

tors has been the rural telephone. The women chat with each other at night, after the day's work is done. No matter how bad the roads or how busy the horses, Mrs. Farmer Jones can talk with her sister ten or twenty miles away just as if they were face to face. The farmers, too, own the lines in most cases—putting up their own poles and stringing their own wire, a co-operative company controlling the system. Usually each farmer has one share of stock for each 'phone he uses, and the average cost per 'phone on these party lines is only about \$5 a year.

But what we of the South need most to consider is the big fact pointed out by Dean Russell of the Wisconsin Agricultural College, namely, that **isolation is admittedly the crux of the rural problem, and that the solution lies in smaller farms, bringing the people closer together.** When we get all our farmers educated, each man owning his own farm of 40 to 80 acres, intensively cultivated, we shall have about the finest democracy that the world has ever known.

Of course, our problem in the South is harder, because for social purposes only members of one's own race count. If there are 40 persons on a square mile, and one-half of them are negroes, socially considered, it is the same as if the section had only 20 persons per square mile. This is one reason why our Southern white people must welcome immigration from the North and West. The Farmers' Union has acted wisely in discouraging indiscriminate European immigration, but these hustling, enterprising Western farmers will do us good if they come to us. They will get us to using more two- and three-horse plows, for example, and immigration of this sort must be our main hope in relieving the tenseness of our race problem. So long as the proportion of negroes is as large as it is now, neither race can do as well as it ought, and there is great encouragement in the fact that while our negro population will grow only by their actual increase, our white population will grow by their natural increase plus a great immigration.

For this immigration is bound to come South—just as surely as water seeks its level. Land is cheaper in the South—one-half to one-third the price of land of the same fertility in the West—and the climate is better. A man of distinction, who was in western Canada a few months ago and then visited Texas, says land in Texas is worth only one-third as much as in the Canadian wheat country, although the Canadian wheat settler must be watchful not to get snowbound and starve to death in winter. Right here in Wisconsin the snow was seven feet deep this winter and you couldn't see the ground from December to the 1st of March. "It's too cold up there for me," an Iowa man who had come to Arkansas, told me the other day. "I wouldn't go back if they gave me a farm." This cold, moreover, is not a matter of personal comfort alone, but with forests too scarce to supply firewood and coal at \$9 a ton to haul from the nearest railroad station, it cuts a big hole in farm profits when the farmer and his family alone are considered. But there is the stock, too—and everybody knows that stock in cold weather must consume a certain quantity of food simply to keep up animal heat.

What money the Western farmer would give for our long growing season, for the great variety of crops for hogs and cattle we can grow nearly all the year round, and for the succession of vegetables our gardens can furnish—opportunities that we in our blindness are too often content to throw away!

(Continued next week.)

"What's The News?"

The Week's Happenings.

THE METHODIST Conference at Asheville, N. C., has steadily refused to make any changes of note in church government or regulation. The principal matters of interest have been the control of Vanderbilt University, which remains with the Church, and the election of seven bishops. These are: Dr. Collins Denby, of Tennessee; Dr. John C. Kilgo, of North Carolina; Dr. W. B. Murrah, of Mississippi; Dr. W. R. Lambuth, of Tennessee; Dr. R. G. Waterhouse, of Virginia; Dr. E. D. Mouzon, of Texas; Dr. James H. McCoy, of Alabama.

The Ballinger investigation has at length been finished, but the committee has not reported at the time of our going to press. While it is probable that the committee will report in favor of the Secretary, enough has been shown to make it clear that his conservation policies are very different from those of Mr. Roosevelt. His presence in the Cabinet certainly adds nothing to the strength of Mr. Taft's administration, and the President himself has been drawn into the matter by the statement of a stenographer that his (the President's) review of the case last fall was really prepared by one Lawler, an assistant in the Attorney-General's office. Secretary Ballinger had virtually denied the existence of the paper prepared by Lawler, but President Taft acknowledged having read it in making his decision in the matter, though he used only one or two paragraphs in his public statement. We hope to review the case more fully when the committee makes its report.

Both House and Senate have tacked on to the administration railroad bill amendments designed to prevent the charging of more for a short haul than for a longer one over the same line. The amendments are very different, however, and it is decidedly uncertain what the shape of the bill will be when it finally becomes law.

King Edward was buried with great ceremony last Friday. The English Catholics are making a great effort to have the old clause reflecting on the Roman Catholic Church and the Pope omitted from the coronation oath. The new King is said to favor the change.

Five thousand Democrats from all over the State met at Nashville, Tenn., on the 18th and selected a complete State judicial ticket in opposition to the one that will be named in June by Governor Patterson and the regular organization.

It is now regarded as certain that some sort of savings bank bill will be passed by Congress. The parcels post will come only when the demand for it becomes too strong for the express companies to resist.

A new order for the expulsion of the Jews from all except the frontier provinces of Russia has been promulgated. June 14 is the date fixed and 100,000 people will have to leave their homes.

The Southern Baptist Convention at Baltimore refused to enter into any arrangement whatever for co-operation with Northern Baptists in home missionary work.

Hard fought campaigns are in progress between the conservative and the insurgent Republicans in most of the Northwestern States.

In Norway municipal suffrage has been granted to women over 25. There will be half a million female voters.

A Thought For the Week.

EVER HELD a scanty and penurious justice to partake of the nature of wrong. I held it to be, in its consequence, the worst economy in the world. In saving money, I soon can count up all the good I do: but when, by a cold penury, I blast the abilities of a nation, and stunt the growth of its active energies, the ill I may do is beyond all calculation.—From Edmund Burke's "Letter to a Noble Lord."