

THE PROGRESSIVE FARMER

AND SOUTHERN FARM GAZETTE



A Farm and Home Weekly for Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, Arkansas and Tennessee.

RALEIGH, N. C.—BIRMINGHAM, ALA.—MEMPHIS, TENN.

V. XXVII. No. 2.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 13, 1912.

Weekly: \$1 a Year.

If You Are Going to Farm at All, Be a Good Farmer.

OVER fifty years ago in one of the best of all books about farming, Donald Grant Mitchell said:

"The farmer who neglects any crop, will find, sooner or later, that whatever is worth planting, is worth planting well; whatever is worth cultivating, is worth cultivating well; and that nothing is worth harvesting that is not worth harvesting with care."

After all these years it is doubtful if there is any one lesson most of us need more to learn than this. We need to learn that if one is to be a farmer at all, it is his duty

to farm well—to do things as they should be done; to take a proper pride in his work; to care for his land, his livestock, his crops, his machinery, so that all of them, in turn, may do their work well and thus be sources of profit and satisfaction. We need to hold our calling and its duties in more respect; to feel more truly what it should mean when one of us says, "I am a farmer," so that we can say it with decision and emphasis, in the full confidence that it is a good thing to be a farmer and that we are farmers of the right sort.

"I am a farmer," says the man, and sees in his mind's eye, not well-tended fields, enriched and cared for and made more and more productive, but stretches of briars and broom-sedge and seedling pines, lands scarred here and there with gullies, or marred with red galls, and barren of even a covering of weeds, or flooded with stagnant water and so made sour and sick.

The man says he is a farmer, but what do his fields say? Ages ago Solomon, the wise king, wrote:

"I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down."

Today the field of the slothful and the land of the man who lacks understanding tell the same story of neglect and mistreatment.

None of us, of course, can have all his fields as he would wish them, for all of us no doubt wish a domain like that of prodigal Lear—

"With shadowing forests, and with champains rich'd,
With plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads."

Still each of us should feel that no man is worthy the title of "farmer" whose fields are not tending toward such a state as this. They may be far from it yet, they may even be overgrown with thorns and nettles, just as the sluggard's were, but they must be getting better and not poorer.

"I am a farmer, and this is my farm." Unless the man can say this with that healthful satisfaction and that just pride which come from a hopeful prospect and the inner knowledge of past progress, he is not the right kind of farmer. But if he can look out over his land and see the grass growing where the soil was once bare, or the prospects of good crops where once only poor ones grew, or the marks of orderliness and beauty where once was waste and dilapidation—if he see these things, he has indeed a right to be glad and to rejoice in the work of his hands.

"I am a farmer," says the man, but what do his horses say, or his cattle, or his swine? Are his horses poor and gaunt and rough-coated—under-fed, ungroomed, evidently regarded only as beasts of burden out of which he is to get all he can and into which he is to put as little as possible? If so, it is little satisfaction indeed he can get from his

horses. They add nothing to his love of the farm; they give no added sense of dignity and worth to his life's work. So with the thin, despondent-looking cow, the scrubby pig, the neglected poultry. All these things, bearing witness as they do to the farmer's lack of respect for his calling and of joy in his work, must inevitably tend to make him less and less of a real farmer—a farmer in mind and at heart as well as with his hands.

"Whatever is worth planting, is worth planting well; whatever is

worth cultivating, is worth cultivating well." If all of us could only realize the truth of these words at this year's beginning, and then let this realization control our work until the year's end, next year would find us more prosperous, more confident, more aspiring than we had ever been before. No man calling himself a farmer should be content to look on fields in which he can take no pride, to handle livestock of which he is half ashamed, to see on his farm and about his home indications of carelessness and shiftlessness, to feel that he is making the country less beautiful and farming a less desirable calling.

Individually, each of us can this year make a start in the right direction. If we begin to build up our land, to beautify our homes, to tend our crops

better, to get better horses and cows and pigs and chickens, to take better care of buildings and machinery, to read and study more about our work—in short, to do the very best farming our circumstances permit, and to prepare ourselves for still better work, we will most surely find in our farming more of both pleasure and profit and will be helping to bring to realization the dream we have all had of a wonderful rural Southland, rich with the bounty of luxurious crops, with fattening flocks and grazing herds, with ample barns and crowded silos, with fruitful orchards and fragrant gardens, all clustering round and ministering unto peaceful homes in which dwell farm-folk who find their work good and receive from it a rich reward of prosperity and contentment.



ANYONE COULD BE PROUD OF THIS COW.

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