

PATRIOTISM AND THE SOIL

"Let the Practical and Scientific Join Hands in Retaining the Land in its Resplendent Beauty and Unexcelled Fertility for Those Who Follow. This Is But Our Duty if We Truly Love our Glorious Country."

WHAT is patriotism? Is it but a feeling of sentimental boastfulness for one's country? Is it to find expression only in celebrations on the national holiday? Is it cultivated only by fiery orations of the country's worth? Or is it a thing to lie dormant until the martial drums call men to the battle line? No. Patriotism is more than this. A patriot is one who loves his country and and zealously and unselfishly supports its authority and interests. Patriotism can be shown in the daily life of every citizen in times of peace as well as in time of war by taking an interest in the country's present and future welfare. Patriotism is more than saluting the flag or singing the national anthem. It is a respect for the nation, a deep seated love for the soil itself.

The framers of the Constitution had a truly patriotic spirit. They said in the preamble of the Constitution that it was established, among other things, "to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity."

A nation is not built in one generation, but it takes many generations of far-sighted men and women to build a lasting republic.

The ability to peer into the welfare of our posterity is essential to wholesome national life. If we are to have a strong nation, we must see to it that those who follow us find their natural endowments as good as or better than we found them.

The American people are noted as being citizens of a materially rich nation and lavish squanderers of their riches. We ruthlessly waste our national resources, as coal, forests, oil, and soil fertility.

In no walk of life has this American characteristic been more apparent than in Agriculture. When the European colonists, coming from lands that were intensely cultivated to support the dense population found here in America a whole continent of choice land, they felt they had been freed from a mighty yoke of conservation and economy. Hence they did not practice crop rotation and soil fertilization, but continued to use the land until it was exhausted, then moved to virgin soil. Economically it was

cheaper for them, because land was cheaper than labor. The whole story of the advance of civilization westward is one of extravagant waste. As the frontiersman penetrated into the western wilderness he practiced the same prodigal methods. He built temporary homes and sold at the first opportunity. So long as new land could be easily obtained from the government for a mere song and a few months' patience, the pioneer farmer was utterly careless of his treatment of the soil. He moved from state to state, skimming the cream of the land, following the frontier line westward, leaving half-wasted lands behind in his trail. It was a sad day when the farmer ceased to think of his farm as a home but as a speculative asset. In the central states the enormous herds of buffalo that occupied the territory were wastefully exterminated by hunters who sought them only for their hides. In the west great forests have been utterly demolished in order to establish a few scattering farms.

We have thought we lived in a land of plenty where there is no need of conservation. So we have greedily taken from the soil all we could get. There came a time, however, when the choicest, and the easiest obtainable land was taken. Then conservation and economy began to be a watchword. This was the real beginning of scientific thoroughness and efficiency in agriculture. We have come now to a time when we can see that the new is practically gone; we see that we must hold on to what we have already partly spoiled and thrown away. We see that new lands can be brought into profitable productivity only by expensive means.

The problem of conservation of soil fertility now mets us squarely. American farming has dawned on a new era. Instead of soil mining, taking all and returning nothing to the soil, we have come to a time when we see that a continuance of such practice means depletion of the soil's fertility.

We see now that the apparent large returns of American agriculture in the past are really loses if depletion of the soil is taken into consideration, and we know that soil fertility must

be taken into consideration if we are to have an enduring national life.

The scientists have come to the aid of agriculture. In no field, perhaps, have the benefits of scientific research been of more practical use than in that of farming. The methods of farming of the early 19th century were little above those used by the ancient Romans before the Christian era. The difference in the amount of crops produced now, as compared with those produced in the centuries gone by is enough to change the whole economic and social order of the world. The hoe farming methods have been replaced by more efficient ones. The farmer today can plow thirty to forty times as much with the use of mechanical inventions as his grandfather could do fifty years ago.

The day of the old farmer with his axe and flint lock gun, is past. The frontier line can be pushed no farther west. The new farmer meets a new problem: How can he produce the nation's food supply with a rapidly increasing population and a very slowly increasing acreage? In other words, how can he make two blades of grass grow where one grew before?

The new farmer faces his problem just as bravely as the pioneer farmer did his. But instead of putting his faith in the strength of his arm and rifle he puts it in the strong arm of science. His problem is just as momentous as his predecessors', but he is just as sure of success. He has at his hand the accumulation of the most comprehensive aid the world has ever known. The accumulation consists of the results of scientific research of the last 75 years. He believes he will win because he is in line with the ongoing forces of civilization.

Agriculture is based upon science. It is not a single science, but a complex combination of all of them. In years past, it has been considered merely as an art. No progress was made until this notion was changed. Before any progress can be made in agriculture, an intensive study of the major sciences must first be made. An understanding of the fundamental laws of nature is essential to scientific progress, hence students of agricul-

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