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THE COUNTRY CHURCH

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The church and country life. Pamphlet issued
by the Board of Home Missions of the Presby-
terian Church.

Department of Church and Labor, the Board of Home Missions
of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 156 Fifth Ave., New York

Conservation of Boys

By WARREN H. WILSON, Ph.D.

The first man I ever married was a farm hand, and I was always proud of the job. He was under twenty, however, and at first I hesitated. His father objected, because the old man was accustomed to collect the boy's wages. He preferred to have the money rather than that his son have a wife. But I made the girl's father consult a lawyer, and we went ahead, married them and rescued the boy from his exploiting father. The result demonstrated that the evils of early marriage were less than those of "skinning" the boy of his personal rights. He had to become a woman's husband to escape from being his father's property.

Boys are "natural resources." They can be "worked out" as soil can be im-

poverished by forever exacting the same thing of them and never fertilizing them with play. Country boys need rotation of experience, as fields need rotation of crops. Boys are exploited like a timbered hill, when the nobility that crowns them is cut off and turned into money. And when the crop of boys is exhausted in the country town the community produces less of everything else.

Boys leave the farm because they are made work-cattle. They sleep and eat in the house, but they "work like a horse." When a boy feels most at home in the barn his father ought to ask the question, "What am I doing to make him at home with me instead of with the hired man?"

When a boy smells like a cow every time he comes into a closed room his mother, instead of scolding him, should help him to find associates among ladies rather than bovines. That boy is in danger of leaving the farm for hatred of it, or sinking to an animal level and ceasing to care. In the former case the farm loses him. In the latter case the church loses him; the school, the grange and the social gathering

lose him, and the stable gets him. In both cases the community loses him.

The great men at Washington say that all classes must work together for the conservation of natural resources. The boy is a natural resource for whom the Church should summon all kinds of people to work together in order that his soul may be saved for the heavenly city and his body saved from the earthly city. His mind should be conserved by a knowledge of the world about him. The country school should teach him the mysteries of the soil, the habits and value of birds and the marvelous wealth of the vegetable world about him. Unfortunately the country school in America has wasted more boy property than all the predatory corporations have wasted in the way of timber and water power.

The country church and school should make the community enjoyable for the boy. My first and most valued words of praise as a minister came to me from the father of a big family, who thanked me for giving his sons an opportunity for wholesome recreation and happy social life. I had no difficulty converting the souls of this

family, because their minds and hearts were starved for social enjoyment and healthy human company.

Profit-sharing, too, is as good on the farm as in the steel industry. Every farmer's son should have an allowance, even if the farm has to be mortgaged to pay it to him. If he were a laborer you would be obliged to pay him, and as he is both your son and your farm-hand he has rights of ownership as well as wages to his credit. If you do not give him a square deal in the way of money, he will desert you when you need him most and go out to practice upon the rest of the world the same unfair "closeness" which he learned on the farm where he was born and brought up.

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The Home Missions Council

Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Meeting

Held at New York
January 17 and 18, 1912

*The
Country
Church
—
Wilson*

Published by
The Home Missions Council
New York

Fifth Annual Meeting
of the
Home Missions Council

New York
January 17 and 18, 1912

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