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# ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

CHESTER COUNTY AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY,

AT THEIR

ANNUAL EXHIBITION

HELD AT

WEST-CHESTER,

SEPTEMBER 26, 1857,

BY

SIDNEY GEORGE FISHER,  
OF PHILADELPHIA.

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PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE SOCIETY.

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PHILADELPHIA:  
MERRIHEW & THOMPSON, PRINTERS,  
Lodge Street, North side of Pennsylvania Bank.  
1857.

## ADDRESS.

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Every one acquainted with the habits of the country, knows the importance of that period of the year called "after harvest." It is a very expressive phrase, somewhat like the old proverb, "Duty first and pleasure afterwards," though the multitude of things always to be done after harvest, serves to occupy pretty closely that short holiday. Are briars and bushes to be grubbed, it is put off till after harvest; are barns and stables to be repaired, is any work of convenience or ornament planned to house or grounds, after harvest is the time for it. Excursions for amusement, and meetings for social pleasure, are arranged for this auspicious era. Harvest like duty is the main thing, and if the seed time has been well employed, crowns with victory the labors of the year. It is the reward of industry, sure to follow, if the plow and harrow and manure cart have made due preparation for the reaper. It is the fulfilment of hope, stowing barn and crib and garner with plenty, as the labors of a well-spent life fill the mind and memory with fruitful knowledge, happy thoughts, inspiring hopes and delightful recollections of duties worthily performed.

After harvest is also the time for these agricultural exhibitions which have become so numerous of late years throughout the country. Their rapid increase and the interest they excite prove their utility and harmony with the sentiments of a people fond of labor and its rewards, passionately eager for material progress, and alive to every hint of improvement in the arts that promote it. They are festivals of industry, at which we meet, not only to rejoice over the kindly fruits of the earth, with which the returning seasons have blessed us, but to display, from year to year, the advancement we have made in the means by which those fruits are produced. Each year shows some new triumph in ingenuity, some new idea, which, applied in practice,

extends man's dominion over nature, who yields her secrets and her treasures, not to rude and ignorant, but to skilful labor directed by thought and knowledge.

We do not meet on these occasions, however, merely to gain practical information in our art, but for the cultivation of friendly feeling, the enjoyment of social intercourse, and the interchange of opinions on all subjects connected with the duties, pleasures and position of a farmer, as an owner of the soil and a member of the most important, and if it knew its power, the most powerful, class in the community. There are many topics interesting to him, other than the means of improving the land and harvesting its produce. On these I should not venture to speak to such an audience as this. I remember that I am among the farms and farmers of Chester County, with whose reputation I have been familiar all my life, and that it would become me to seek instruction from them, not to offer it. You are more deeply versed than I in all the lore of crops and cattle and manures; know better than I do, whether it is advisable to plow deep or shallow, to sow broadcast or by the drill, whether guano has permanent or transient effects, whether it will pay at present prices, or whether it be not preferable, in the long run, to rely on our old friends and benefactors, lime, plaster, clover and the barn-yard. I should ask you what is the proper rotation of crops, how often and when lime should be applied, and at what rate per acre; whether it be wiser to breed cattle or only to feed them, and what is the most profitable kind, the large, fast-growing, but coarse Durham, the small, compact and fine-grained Devon, the milk-giving Ayresshire, or the cream-giving Alderney; or whether the native breeds are not the most prudent investment for all, except the fancy farmer, whose bank stock can help to feed his live stock when the grass is short, whose railroad shares may come to the aid of his plow-shares, when the fly destroys his wheat or the drought his corn, and whose mortgages on other men's lands may make the deficient harvests of his own, of small importance. On all such points I bow with deference to Chester County. I come here, indeed, to instruct no one on any subject, but simply to express thoughts suggested by the scene and its associations, to tell you the meaning they have for me, and if I can find fit words to give it utterance, to

meet, I hope, some sympathy of sentiment in those who hear me.

The first ideas that arise at the sight of this beautiful and highly cultivated region, are of the pleasures and advantages of country life. This fresh and wholesome air, so different from the closeness and dust of town; this wide and varied landscape, such a contrast to brick walls and confined streets; this stillness and repose, interrupted only by pleasant rural sounds, instead of the uproar of crowds and carts and omnibuses, form attractions so real and so delightful, that it seems difficult to imagine how any one who can control his destiny should be content to live in a city. The many farms well managed and productive, the the substantial and comfortable homesteads around this village, prove how easily the life of a farmer may be supplied with all the conveniences and refinement that a city can furnish. Healthful and interesting occupation, the beauties of nature and an independent support, these wooded hills and bountiful vallies will give, whilst the railroad, the wondrous talisman of modern civilization, brings to the farmers' door all the comforts and luxuries of manufactures and commerce. What is true of this neighborhood, of this county, is true of almost every part of our magnificent State. Everywhere within its wide borders similar advantages of soil and climate and scenery are offered by the prodigality of nature, and made easily accessible by the improved science of man.

Nevertheless the tendency of our people here, as elsewhere at the North, is to the towns, which are increasing in numbers faster than the country. The laboring classes go to them allured by high wages, and, too often, by the opportunity they afford for dissipation and license; the rich and luxurious find there pleasures and conveniences which the country either does not furnish at all, or not with equal facility; shops, markets, servants, mechanics, dinners and balls, the theatre and the opera, the mental excitement of daily intercourse and conversation, and a scene for display in dress, furniture and equipage. But the chief cause which is building up our cities is the superior advantages they offer for making money, the high profits of commerce and manufactures, the intoxicating chances and risks of speculation, the all-powerful charms of cent per cent. We are an industrious, money-making and money-loving people; we

are also a democracy, and there is no class among us that lives for the enjoyment of leisure or for mental culture. The consequence is, that whilst our cities increase rapidly in size and wealth, there is no proportional improvement in those things that constitute the real and valuable advantages of a town life, security and order, cultivated society and the pleasures of literature and art. Suburb is added to suburb and is merged in the town, the wilderness of brick walls extends, the country becomes more distant every day, fresh air or a glimpse of any pleasant, verdant scene, more rare and difficult, the crowds and noise and dust of the streets thicken, and noisome alleys and lanes, where misery and want and vice find their dwelling and hiding places, multiply. But parks and gardens for public health and recreation do not multiply, neither do galleries of art, and institutions of letters and science. As the streets grow longer, they also grow more dirty; as revenue increases, so does corruption and misrule; as the population gathers together in thronging, busy, eager thousands, vice and crime flourish with rank and pestilential growth. The improvement of the useful arts has not improved our manners or our morals; boundless acquisitions of wealth seem to have increased ignorance, not knowledge; and the costly appliances of modern luxury to have encouraged a love of mere sensual pleasure, not of intellectual effort and enjoyment. Fifth Avenue palaces, in and out of New York, often present, in their beautiful architecture and rich decorations, a sad contrast to the barren and coarse minds of their occupants; and at many a costly entertainment, ignorance and dulness surround the splendid board, and the only things that sparkle and shine are the cut glass, the chandeliers and the silver plate.

Whilst cent per cent thus rages, the dog-star of the hour, lowering the tone of thought and sentiment, degrading the standard of manners and conversation in our cities, the masses of ignorant and vicious population which they also attract and breed are rapidly destroying social order and security, once regarded as among the advantages of a town life. In early times people went to cities for safety, seeking protection from violence in the mutual help, the police regulations and good government they afforded. Now the cities are dangerous and the country safe. Cent per cent has crowded our wharves with shipping,

has built up blocks of granite warehouses and long lines of architectural mansions, has filled glittering shops with the fairy fabrics and rich productions of every clime, has lighted our streets with gas and brought water through magnificent aqueducts to every house; but notwithstanding all this, pauperism and crime increase with frightful rapidity, mob violence is ever ready to rise against legal authority, organized bands of ruffians, Empire Clubs, Schuylkill Rangers, Killers, Plug-uglies, and hundreds of others with similar hideous but expressive titles, control the elections, and by offering the bribe of office to contending demagogues, govern the magistrate, suspend or annul the laws and secure impunity for every outrage. To what results these evils tend and whence they originate, it would not be appropriate here to discuss; but certain it is that the Five-points influence and the Fifth-avenue influence are rapidly diminishing the attractions of city life, by destroying the security, order and cleanliness of the streets, by presenting constantly to the mind the revolting spectacle of ignorant and corrupt government, and by substituting for the cultivated elegance of refined society, the low sentiments and coarse manners of upstart wealth and the brassy splendor of vulgar ostentation.

A great city must always be an interesting spectacle to a just and catholic taste. The triumph of art and industry over the obstacles of nature that it exhibits, the ready supply of every want, the impressive life-movement of humanity, swelling and surging through its streets, the constant and ever-varying drama, the picturesque groupings seen in its busy crowds, are all exciting and suggestive. But it is not necessary to live among them to enjoy them. They will be more truly appreciated, and their meaning be better understood when seen occasionally, and contrasted with the peaceful seclusion of the country and the superior charms of nature. In the capitals of Europe, to the ordinary convenience and luxury which a large town affords, are added the associations of history, the embellishments of mediæval and modern architecture, extensive parks and gardens of exquisite beauty, libraries and galleries filled with treasures of art and knowledge, accumulated through ages of wealth and civilization, the attractions of a brilliant society and the magnificence of a court. Yet even there, particularly in England, an habitual residence in the country is preferred by the cultivated

classes, whose means enable them to choose. They go to town to enjoy for a brief season the excitement of crowds and conversation, of operas and balls; but they soon return to their remote country homes, to their parks and gardens, their cottages and halls, the cherished and embellished scenes of their interests, their domestic happiness and their purest enjoyments. Many indeed never visit the city at all, but prefer the simple pleasures and sequestered retirement of provincial life, interested in rural occupations and sports, content with the excitement which a library and family can supply, and satisfied with the company of neighbors whose tastes and pursuits are similar to their own.

The enjoyments and advantages of European capitals belong to a state of society that does not exist here. Our cities are places of business, growing rapidly in size and wealth, and for that reason becoming more disagreeable as places to live in. Around them the country blooms. It offers peace and security, cleanliness, pure air, light and space; the song of birds, the rustling of winds, instead of the uproar of the streets; the sight of green fields and stately woods, instead of stoney pavements and enclosing walls. How fortunate could a way be found to combine the advantages of both; of the city, as a place to toil in and thrive in; of the country, as a place to enjoy life in. The railroad, which controls so much of our destiny, has done this. It has offered to all, the pleasures of rural life without interfering with the duties of the store, the counting-house or the office. It has been found very easy to live ten or twenty miles from town, yet transact business in it with as much regularity as if residing there. One or two hours passed daily in a car, comfortable in any weather, suffice to take the man of affairs to and fro, between the crowded mart and his quiet and shady home.

This discovery was of great importance, and is producing extensive changes in the habits of society. Out of it has grown the villa-life, which has increased so rapidly of late in the neighborhood of our cities, and which, only a few years ago, was confined exclusively to persons of wealth and leisure. The railroad has thus emancipated the business-man from the confinement of town, and given to him, and, what is perhaps of more importance, to his family, the freshness and freedom, the wholesome air and exercise, the fine moral influences of the country. It

offers its advantages to the poor as well as the rich. The mechanic, the small manufacturer or trader, can escape to the suburbs from the narrow street or alley, and around his modest house enjoy a patch of grass and space for a few flowers and shrubbery, and a look-out into a green and distant landscape. At greater distances from town, wealth and taste have chosen their abodes. Wherever the rail-car runs, among wild and rocky hills, in sheltered vallies, in green lanes winding through overhanging cedars and embowering woods, convenient and tasteful cottages and spacious mansions, with their lawns and groves and decorated gardens, have arisen as if at some enchanter's call. They have sprung up by thousands, like flowers in the spring, and visibly represent the love for beautiful things, and the desire for the tranquil charms of nature, which live in the heart through all the cares of business and the exciting struggles of the world. They are built in greater numbers every year, as the taste increases and fashion leads the way, and are planned, planted, decorated, and cherished with such care and fondness as no town house ever inspired. They offer pleasures, the purest and best, pleasures cheap in the country, but which no wealth can procure in town, the simple pleasures of fresh air, of seclusion, of beauty; for the sake of which, palaces are erected and parks enclosed, but which require no such expensive aids. The small cottager may enjoy them, if able to appreciate them, as well as a lord or a millionaire, for they are the common property of every one in the country, however humble.

"Boon nature to his poorest shed  
Has royal pleasure grounds outspread,"

wherever there are fields and woods and hills; for his delight also has put in motion the wholesome winds, carpeted the earth with grass and shaded it with trees, hung the fleecy and fantastic clouds in the blue arch of heaven, and painted with crimson and gold and purple, the evening and the morning sky.

Some years ago there was an account in the newspapers of a young girl, in the city of New York, who had never seen a flower. There was something very pathetic in the story. It was expressive of the hardness, the barrenness, the unnatural confinement of city life. What idea could this young creature have had of the beauty and glory of the world, who had never

beheld so common an emblem of sweetness and grace as a flower, Flowers and young girls are so much alike that it is a pity they should be separated. This poor thing should herself have been a human flower, redolent of the freshness and charm of youth, and would have been, but for her imprisonment among brick walls, where all is barren and harsh and dissonant, and no sight of beauty or sound of melody lets in upon the soul the divine light of nature, and calls forth the sentiments of admiration and joy and tenderness, natural to the young heart. It is probable that hers is no uncommon case. She belonged to a very numerous class of our city population, one too which is increasing very rapidly, though not much thought of, except by politicians on the eve of an election. She was the inhabitant of an alley. There are no flower beds in alleys, any more than there are fields or woods; and as New York is a large city, and the distances from alleys to avenues is great, it is possible that this little girl had never wandered so far as the Battery, or Union Square, or what, in occidental, which is bolder than oriental hyperbole, is called the Park; so that perhaps she had never seen a tree or a piece of green sward in her life. Her alley, therefore, with its dirt and misery, its alley manners and morals, and the narrow strip of blue sky to be seen above it, were her world. Of the wonders, and beauties, and delights that lie beyond the wide wilderness of streets, she had no conception. She had never walked in bowery lanes, or gathered butter-cups in a meadow, or nuts among the rustling brown leaves of the autumn woods, or drank fresh water from a spring or milk at a dairy, or fed chickens, or had a pet bird or lamb. Alley-born and alley-bred, the relations which connect man with the outside world were in her case sundered, except with things hateful and disgusting. All inlets of healthful and ennobling knowledge were closed to her, and the fountains of thought and sentiment, of love and reverence, which would have gushed forth at the touch of nature and beauty, remained sealed up in her stunted and withered soul.

There is a great difference certainly between alleys and streets. Comfort and elegance soften the feelings and manners, business and conversation stimulate and exercise the mind; but true knowledge comes only from the study of nature, as well as true taste. A prosperous merchant, or a successful lawyer,

may be ignorant and narrow-minded, insensible to truth and beauty. The mere merchant and mere lawyer who has passed his life in towns must be so. An Arab in the desert, a shepherd who feeds his flocks on the mountain, or a farmer who follows his plough in the valley, has higher instructors, and lives in the presence of nobler influences. Divine power and divine law are revealed to them in the changing seasons, in the returning fruits of the earth; in the rain which "causeth the bud of the tender herb to spring forth," in the drought, "when the dust groweth into hardness and the clods cleave fast together;" in the horse who "paweth in the valley and rejoiceth in his strength," and the ant, "which having no guide, overseer or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer and gathereth her food in the harvest." To the dweller in the country, every fact and spectacle of his daily life leads his mind to the contemplation of the bountiful but terrible, the mysterious and beautiful nature around him; which spreads out before him a prodigal feast of enjoyment, yet tasks his industry with stern severity; which every moment supports his life, yet every moment threatens it with destruction; which constantly provokes his curiosity to discover her secrets, yet remains wrapped in impenetrable obscurity; which waves ever before his eyes a grace ineffable on all her works, the largest and most minute, on mountain and forest, on sky and ocean, and on

"The frailest leaf, the mossy bark,  
The acorn's cup, the rain-drops arc;"

yet leaves him in doubt whether this witching charm is in herself or in him, within him or without him, in what he sees or what he is. This is a higher school of wisdom than the marketplace, the court-house or the exchange; higher even than the library of the scholar, unless he bring the light of nature to illuminate his pages. He may pass his days and nights among books, wasting the midnight oil,

"And hiving knowledge with each studious year,"

yet if he be a stranger in the woods and fields, if he never held communion with the hills and clouds, and knows nothing of bird and beast, and the wondrous powers of earth and air, if he be street-born and street-bred, his learning is as husks and chaff. Like the little girl who never saw a flower, the

best part of his soul is undeveloped and dark, and the very books of poet and sage that he pretends to read, he cannot understand. These drank at the fountains of nature, and gathered their wisdom from her humblest as from her grandest scenes. From

“Mountains, on whose barren breast  
The laboring clouds do often rest,”

and from the flower that

“is born to blush unseen,  
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.”

They were glad to be instructed by seed time and harvest, by the seasons, by the rising and the setting sun, by the grain of corn, which, cast into the ground, comes up from it a beautiful plant, and by the wriggling worm which is changed into a painted butterfly. They could find sources of thought and hints of moral truth in common and familiar things, in a “sable cloud” which

“Turns forth its silver lining on the night;”  
in the leafless trees of winter,

“Bare, ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang;”  
in

“a poor sequestered stag  
That from the hunter’s aim had taken a hurt,”  
or in a mountain daisy,

“Wee, modest, crimson-tipped flower,”  
uprooted by a poet’s plough. The visible, tangible, outside world to them was moral and spiritual, and things were words full of power and meaning.

Though the streets of a city be not without their interest and their wisdom, it is well for us to receive lessons from nature, to listen to her eloquent voices, to study the mystical lore that is everywhere in the country offered to our contemplation. Thus it is that this villa-life, made possible by rail-roads, is producing such beneficial results upon many, who otherwise would be condemned to the confinement and unwholesome influences, physical and moral, of the town. Ere the day is spent, the man of business is whirled away from his counting-house or office, from customers and clients, from bills receivable and bills in equity, from notes to pay and notes to sue, from discounts and de-

murrers, the exciting struggle of affairs and the uproar of the streets, to his quiet, rural home. He discovers gradually the grace and charm which invest the external world beyond the city limits. They purify and refresh his feelings, they win his affections, they become to him a source of daily enjoyment. He is introduced to trees; to the oak, the chestnut, the beech, the poplar, the pine, the maple, the aristocracy of the forest, and finds to his surprise, a majesty in their aspect, a dignity in their manners, a charm in their conversation of which before he had not the slightest idea. He makes the acquaintance of grass, wheat, oats and corn; learns to distinguish one from the other, and discovers in each a whole world of wonder and beauty. He becomes intimate with horses, cows, sheep, pigs and poultry, those mysterious races which have lived by our side through the ages, which seem to be themselves a sort of undeveloped humanity, yet of which we know so little, and their habits and qualities open to him new sources of interest and instruction. He plants, he embellishes, he enjoys the pleasure of creating beautiful things, flower-gardens, lawns, groups of trees, orchards of fruit; he acquires a new taste, at once elevating and delightful, and new objects of desire which are unselfish and require for their attainment knowledge which expands the mind and elevates the feelings. He discovers perhaps, also, if of a thoughtful spirit, that the wisdom he has gathered in his garden or his farm, has its uses in the world of business in which he acts. If a merchant, that by some mysterious and unconscious process, rectitude and probity of thought and deed, even the humbler virtues of punctuality and economy, have acquired new charms in his eyes; if a lawyer, that his thoughts take a higher soar and wider sweep after a contemplation of the eternal laws of creation, that he values principles more and precedents less, and that when it is his part to enforce the maxims of truth and justice, to defend the right and protect the innocent, a thousand illustrations, before unthought of, crowd his mind, and his lips are touched with the fire of an unwonted eloquence from the divine altars of nature.

But a villa is not a farm, nor is villa-life the life of a farmer, though not inconsistent with it, for all the pursuits and pleasures of a villa may be and ought to be added to the farm.

The occupant of a villa is a horticulturist, a florist, a landscape gardener. His chief object is the creation of a scene of beauty and luxury around his home. If he farms, it is on a small scale, and as a subordinate pursuit. His interests, and generally his occupations, are in town; thence he derives his income, there he makes, or hopes to make, his fortune. The farmer, on the contrary, lives from his fields, and relies on them for the increase of his wealth. With him the crops are the chief object of interest, and tasteful embellishment a thing too often neglected. He seldom visits the city, but leads for the most part a secluded life, away from the crowded marts and thoroughfares of the world. This retirement, if sometimes too solitary, is nevertheless a chief blessing of his condition. It produces individuality of character, it encourages a taste for pure and simple pleasures, and forms the mind to habits of thought and contemplation of a higher order than is often acquired amid the temptations and excitements of commercial and professional life, provided the avenues to knowledge be not shut. The press, eager, animated, teeming with every sort of information, opens to him, "through the loop-holes of retreat," a view of active life in all its varied scenes, at home and abroad, and brings to him news from every quarter of the globe, and discussions on all the interesting questions of the day.

"The grand debate,  
The popular harangue, the tart reply,  
The logic and the wisdom and the wit,"  
all reach him at his quiet fire-side, where he may set

"The imprisoned wranglers free  
And give them voice and utterance once again;"  
whilst books, which "like ships pass through the vast seas of time," enable him to participate in all the thought and action and learning of the past.

The love of the country and country pursuits is a characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon race which requires only fair scope and opportunity to exhibit itself. It has built up already in our State that plain and homely, but substantial and valuable rural life for which it is celebrated, and it is evident that a change of public opinion, similar to that which has caused an overflow from the cities, and produced the villa-life already described, will ere long carry capi-

tal, enterprise and cultivated intelligence further into the interior, and give a new character to the pursuits and habits of the farm. The railroad offers the same facilities in the one case as in the other. When visits to a city need be only occasional, the difference of a few hours in the time of travelling is of small importance, and distance is now measured by time. A hundred miles now is nearer to town and all its conveniences, than twenty miles once was. The improvements in the arts and domestic architecture have also enabled the inhabitant of the interior to possess conveniences once confined to the city. Hot air furnaces, gas, water for baths and other uses, can be had as easily and cheaply among the Alleghanies as in Chestnut street. Books, magazines, newspapers, every luxury of dress, furniture and equipage, may be obtained there as easily as in Chestnut Street. If life be a burthen without now and then a visit to Chestnut Street, notwithstanding the manifold attractions of a country home, the railroad offers a conveyance, in four or five hours, dry and warm, through the snows and icy blasts of winter, from the quiet solitudes of remote hills and valleys to the excitement and bustle of town. Why not then live among the hills and valleys? Health dwells with them and beauty and peace and wisdom. Why not prefer a farm, not a villa with its fanciful prettinesses and cockney luxuries, but a real farm, with the grander features of woods and fields of grain and grass and barns and cattle and wide landscapes stretching out around it, to a house on a narrow street, however carved and decorated and however luxurious? It is a nobler thing to possess as an appendage and ornament to a man's position; it is a more beautiful thing to look at; it is a fountain ever full of thought and sentiment; it opens a sphere of healthful, interesting, useful occupation; and as a home, instead of confining that sacred and endearing name to a miserable thirty or forty feet front on a stony pavement, it extends it and its sweet memories and hopes, its privacy and enjoyments, over broad acres, over stately woods and peaceful fields, all associated with some domestic scene or event, all eloquent of work done or intended, all painting to the mind's eye the noble and beautiful scene that is to be, when wealth and taste shall have executed their plans of improvement. Is not such a life, surrounded by the beauties of nature, occupied in pursuits that promote bodily

health and mental tranquillity, that stimulate thought but rouse no baleful passions, better than the hot excitements of the Court-House, the gambling vicissitudes of the Exchange, the wearing anxieties of commerce, or the frivolous pleasures of the card-table or the club? Yet how many are there, wasting life, health, feeling and intellect in such pursuits, who

“Hacknied in business, wearied at that oar,  
Which thousands once fast chained to, quit no more,”

lack not the means but the will, to break through the web of false enchantment in which they are bound, and transfer their talents and capital to the country; who might, if they chose, become the owners of sylvan domains in our magnificent State, the improvement of which would afford them interesting occupation, and also leisure for rational reflection, the acquisition of knowledge and mental culture; who might extend agricultural science, create scenes of rural beauty and at the same time establish estates, which if not so productive of income as either commerce or manufactures or stock securities, would be safer investments and more likely to remain as a competent provision for their families. Land has been well called *real estate*. It remains secure amid the shock of bank explosions, rail-road bankruptcies and Wall street panics; and its owners too, if they live on it and by it, are tranquil and unmoved by the crash of the money market, the fierce contests of bulls and bears, and the periodical “hard times” in business, which produce often such sad changes of fortune, and cast into sudden penury the children of opulence and ease. Farmers who are only farmers do not often become bankrupt, and many a respectable name has kept its place and its property through successive generations, by resisting the temptations of cent per cent, and holding fast to inherited land. It is a maxim in England, that a family fifty miles from London lasts a hundred years; a hundred miles, two hundred years, and so on; the further from the city, its snares and allurements of pleasure and business, the more firmly does the family tree root itself in the earth, the higher and wider do its sheltering branches rise and spread.

This sense of security and permanence, this freedom from alarm and anxiety, is alone a sufficient compensation for smaller profits. But it is by no means certain that the profits of a well-

managed farm are smaller than those of other pursuits, when the safety of the investment is considered. We are apt to be dazzled and deceived by instances of success in business and to overlook the numerous failures. If losses from this source were to be deducted from the profits of the trade of cities during a course of years, the comparison would be much in favor of the steady, sure, and regular gains of agriculture, in which though yearly returns may vary with the season and the price, the capital, the land, the sit-fast acres, keep their place and rise in value with good management and the growth of the country in wealth and population. A farm, moreover, furnishes a home and a support for a family, and if all that it yields of food and fuel and house rent be added to the five or six per cent of interest on capital that it will give with ordinary skill, the result would be equal to the profits of any other prudent and legitimate business. There are thousands of acres in all parts of Pennsylvania, penetrated by rail-roads, now wild or rudely farmed, which wealth and knowledge and taste could convert into productive estates, and also into embellished and delightful homes, combining the attractions of a fertile soil, a healthful climate and the finest scenery in America, with the charms of cultivated art. Would not such an estate be a more agreeable possession than a pile of mortgages or ground rents, or a roll of bank-stock certificates? Is not a thousand, or two or three thousand acres of stately woods and picturesque hills and fertile vallies, a thing more delightful to own, to look at, to think of, than a few pieces of parchment or paper stuck into the pigeon-holes of a fire-proof, or even a brown stone house in Walnut street, however filled with the pretty baubles of the upholsterer? Is not the manly and healthful exercise in the open air, on foot and on horse-back, which the management of land induces, better than the daily saunter down to counting-house or office and up again to dinner? Are not the occupations of a farm, which exercise taste and require knowledge of the laws and forces of nature, and lead the mind to a contemplation of the wonders and beauty of creation, more ennobling and purer sources of enjoyment than discounting paper, or speculating in stock, or selling dry goods, or suing out mortgages and promissory notes, pursuits which inspire no elevated thought or sentiment and call into action none of the

higher faculties of the intellect? Is not the independence which the land confers, whose returns come from the bounty of nature, better than a reliance on banks for discounts, or on customers and clients for patronage, by which too often the voice of truth is silenced, virtuous impulses checked, and the expedient preferred to the honorable and just? Is not the leisure which the employments of the farm permit and which they do not overshadow with care, leisure for books and meditation and self-knowledge, better than the days of harassing excitement which arise from the difficult and complicated affairs of the man of business, or the toils and contests and heavy responsibilities of the lawyer, which never cease, and fill the mind even in the hours of repose?

These are some of the advantages which the country offers—security of investment, healthy and agreeable occupation, independence, leisure and the constant presence of nature's beauty. In no part of America are they offered with a more prodigal hand than in our own beautiful and fertile Pennsylvania, and no where else have they been treated with such indifference and contempt. Even our summer tourists go in search of fresh air and the picturesque to Saratoga and Newport, to mountains in Virginia and New England, ignorant it would seem of the wild magnificence of the Alleghanies, the romantic beauty of the Lehigh and the Susquehanna, the healthy breezes that blow from a thousand hills, and the smiling charms of a thousand vallies in their own State. Pennsylvania farms send constantly to the city, candidates for wealth and honors, but it rarely happens that a city capitalist ventures far into the country, which he seems to consider either a desert waste or a trackless wilderness. Like the cautious mariner, who, before the discovery of the compass, did not dare to go out of sight of land into the billowy unknown of the ocean, our citizen prefers the safe neighborhood of town both for himself and his money. If he does leave the pavement, it is for some suburban villa within easy reach of it, surrounded by a few acres embellished with costly care and filled with the effeminate luxuries of the city. He prefers this to a farm, with its nobler and more striking beauties, its ruder plenty, its more robust and hardy occupations, its simple pleasures and thoughtful retirement. It is not so in

other parts of our country. In the great West, large farmers abound, men who improve immense tracts of land with intelligent enterprize, and who are founding a race of independent cultivators of the soil in that exuberant region, destined hereafter to play a conspicuous part in the history of their country. In the State of New York, hundreds of miles from the city, there are in almost every county, gentlemen of education who live on their estates, some of them containing many thousands of acres, who devote themselves to the pursuits of agriculture and mingle with these the charms of cultivated mind, refined taste and social elegance. The South has long been distinguished for its planters and farmers, who have given to our history some of its most illustrious names, and the most elegant and refined society there is to be found, not in the cities but in the country, in the old hereditary homes of Carolina and Georgia, of Virginia and Maryland.

It seems, therefore, that in many parts of our vast country, talents and wealth are devoted to the cultivation of the land on a large scale, as they are in the cities to the various pursuits of trade and manufactures. The land-owners of America are a large, intelligent and wealthy class, though their value and power are unknown even to themselves, because they are scattered over a great expanse, and lead quiet and retired lives; whereas the capitalists and men of business in the cities are conspicuous because grouped together, and influential because accustomed to combined and concentrated action. The influence of the land, however, though not so apparent, is not less real, and it is becoming stronger every day as its constantly increasing value attracts more and more of the wealth and superior mind of the nation. When contrasted with the evils that multiply with the rapid growth of our cities, the advantages of the farm, as affording at once a secure investment, an agreeable occupation and an honorable and dignified position, are too conspicuous not to command attention. These are understood in the South and in New York, and the time is not distant when the healthy hills and rich valleys of Pennsylvania, the beauty and magnificence of its mountains and rivers, will be appreciated.

There are some peculiarities that distinguish the ownership and management of land from all other kinds of property or

business, which are of deep significance and importance. Land is an object of affection, often of very strong and passionate affection, to those who cultivate it and live on it. The farm that a man has himself created and adorned, and which is thus the representative of his thought and taste, associated with the hopes and labors and pleasures of his best years; or the hereditary home where his fathers lived, and the trees they planted, and under which he sported when a child, are dear to him. He loves them and desires to transmit them to his children also. If he cannot keep them, he parts with them with regret. He has no such feeling for his counting-house, or store, or mill, for his mortgages or ground-rents, or bank-stock. Scarcely for his town house, or, if for this at all, because of long residence, in a much weaker degree. All of these, without a pang, he converts into money, content to leave to those who succeed him the same value in a different form.

Another characteristic of land is, that its management is a pursuit in which men engage not merely for the sake of profit, but for the enjoyment it affords. It is a taste, often a very expensive one, to which some devote themselves with enthusiasm, without either expectation of gain or desire for it. They try experiments with manures and systems of cropping; they drain, they plant, they breed improved stock, often at great cost of labor and money, simply because of the interest they feel in the pursuit itself; and even where profit is, of necessity, the chief object, it is rarely the whole object which occupies the mind. This is not the case in other branches of business or industry. There are no amateur mechanics or manufacturers. Men engage in commerce merely to make money; they do not spend money in commerce for the enjoyment it gives them, though they often continue in business from habit and the want of other occupation and mental resources. The learned professions of law and medicine have indeed intellectual excitements which are not mercenary. They imply the acquisition of important and interesting knowledge, they exercise superior talents, they stimulate ambition by the promise of reputation, position and honors as the reward of success. But few men become lawyers or doctors except from the impulse of necessity. The severe labors and studies of those difficult professions, their steep and thorny ways

are so formidable, that none attempt them with ardor and perseverance, to whom the primrose path of even a moderate fortune is open; and those who succeed, generally withdraw from practice as soon as they can. But rich men become farmers, simply for the pleasure of farming. They farm to spend money, not to make it, and frequently retire from the toils of business or a profession to the sequestered and quiet life, the tranquil enjoyments and genial occupations of the country, whilst it rarely happens that a farmer willingly leaves the country for the city.

Another peculiarity of the land is, that whilst the poorest and humblest classes of society own it and cultivate it, so also do the highest and most distinguished. The land is the common mother of us all, and prince and peasant are alike honored in serving it. In all ages, the cultivation of the soil has been a dignified calling, and the ownership of land, the passionate desire of the poor man, has been also the peculiar badge of rank and superior station. In the oldest record we possess of the manners of remote antiquity, an example is given of one, eminent alike for his virtues and his wealth. He was a man "perfect and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil." He "withheld not from the poor their desire, nor caused the eyes of the widow to fail;" "He made not gold his hope nor rejoiced because his wealth was great." This selected and distinguished person was a herdsman and grazier. "His substance was seven thousand sheep and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; and so," adds the record, "this man was the greatest of all the men of the East." In the republics of Greece and Rome, during their period of magnificence and splendor, as well as in the early times of struggles and hardy simplicity, whilst all other laborious and mechanical arts were committed to slaves, agriculture was held in high respect by all classes, and the cultivation of the soil was the chosen pursuit of the powerful and great, as well as the elegant and accomplished. The hand that wielded the sword of conquest did not disdain to hold the plough, minds that swayed the course of empire were also employed in arranging the rotation of crops and the feeding of cattle; and the poets whose works are still read with admiration, are those who described the pleasures of the country and the

labors of the farm. The Tusculan villa of Cicero and the Sabine farm of Horace will be remembered as long as fine thought and elevated wisdom preserve their names from oblivion. Virgil wrote a book on agriculture in poetry, describing in graceful lines all that was known of it in his time; and the majestic father of Grecian song has preserved in his immortal verse, pictures of antique country life, so true, so real, that they touch us with a thrill of wonder and delight at finding in these portraits of a long past era, daguerrotyped by the hand of genius, the humanity that we see around us every day. The land has continued to prove its influence over men's minds and feelings ever since. When the disorders of the middle ages had subsided into regular forms of government; when commerce, literature and the arts had introduced security and order, and had softened manners, we find still the superior governing classes in Europe everywhere land-owners and farmers. First, the Church, which kept the fire burning on the altars of learning and religion during the long night of storms and darkness, became a large proprietor, and the monks were the most intelligent cultivators of the soil, and the most beneficent and humane landlords of the age. Then, as social improvement advanced, the great barons were gradually transformed into the modern country gentlemen, who, on the continent and in England, but more especially in England, whether titled or not, maintain their position in the front ranks of government and society, and are at the same time farmers, foremost in knowledge, in zeal and activity for the improvement of agriculture. Everywhere in Europe the management of land is the favorite occupation of the cultivated, the refined, the rich and the noble. Everywhere land, more especially if inherited, is regarded as a mark of birth and rank, and confers a greater influence on its possessor than a much larger amount of any other sort of property. Indeed, it is not many years since it was considered an essential accompaniment of high station, which was lost when the land was lost. Shakspeare makes Bolingbroke complain of his enemies, that they had—

“Disparked my parks and felled my forest woods,  
From my own windows torn my household coat,  
Razed out my impress, leaving me no sign,  
Save men's opinions and my living blood,  
To show the world I am a gentleman.”

The growth of commercial wealth and the consequent diffusion of knowledge and refinement, though they have increased the importance of other classes, have not diminished the influence of land or the desire to possess it, or the taste for all pursuits connected with it, in England. The ambition of every man engaged in business is to purchase a piece of land, to which he can retire to enjoy his wealth. The social influence and political power which the aristocracy and gentry still possess, notwithstanding the enormous wealth and equal intelligence of the mercantile class, are founded on the ownership of the land. They are farmers, and at the same time statesmen and lawgivers, and whilst their enlightened policy has placed England at the head of Europe in civilization and power, and preserved liberty in the midst of surrounding despotism, they have at the same time made British agriculture the most scientific and productive in the world, and covered the island with rural homes, whose comfort, elegance and splendor have no rivals either in the past or the present. Most of the eminent men of England have lived in the country and been occupied with farms and country affairs. Bacon was one of these, Lord Burleigh another, so also Temple, Swift, Pitt, Fox, Mansfield, and many more. Spenser wrote the Fairy Queen in deep rural seclusion. Shakspeare retired to a cottage at Avon, Pope to his Twickenham villa; Scott and Byron have made the names of Abbotsford and Newstead Abbey famous as their own; and the counsels that rule the politics of England now are, as they have been in all ages, meditated, not in the streets of cities, but in the solitude of “trim gardens,” and under the shade of park trees. Here, as in England, the land has attracted to it the superior mind of the nation, and the most eminent men in our history have been farmers, and have given celebrity to their places. Every one is familiar with the names of Ashland and the Hermitage, Lindenwold and Marshfield; Monticello and Montpelier are forever united to the memory of Jefferson and Madison, and distant generations will behold with reverence, may they also without shame and regret, the sacred soil of Mount Vernon. No other occupation of industry is thus distinguished by the preference of the most gifted and eminent of all ages and nations. Statesmen and philosophers and poets do not become merchants and manufacturers

from choice, or amuse their leisure by operations in the stock-market. No poet has yet described the charms of a cotton mill, the happiness or ennobling influence of commercial adventures, the simple pleasures and peaceful serenity of the Court House or the Exchange. Every other sort of business is dull, prosaic and repulsive, adopted only to make money, and generally abandoned as soon as that end is attained. The farmer's life and labors alone have ever been the theme of poets and philosophers, and the choice of the wisest, the brightest, the ruling spirits of the world.

What is it that gives to the farm this supremacy of influence? Why is it that the land is loved, that its ownership confers power, that its cultivation and improvement, whilst they employ the ignorant and the rude, gratify also the most cultivated taste, and attract the finest intellect?

There are many reasons, some of which lie on the surface. Land is beautiful, to own it is to possess beauty, to live on it is to be surrounded by beauty to which none are wholly insensible, and which minds the most highly gifted prize the most. To cultivate land, moreover, is to create beauty, to use the choicest materials of nature to produce the fairest scenes. The occupations of the farmer are healthful and manly, they promote physical strength and courage, and he passes his days in the free air and light of heaven; not shut up in a counting room or office. The land bestows on its owner the greatest blessing of life, independence. It requires obedience only to its own laws; its bounties come from nature, not from the favor of men, the voices of the poor, or the patronage of the rich. The land brings the farmer into the daily presence, not only of the beauty, but of the wonders and mystery of nature, and thus into the highest school of knowledge and wisdom, a school more instructive than the library or the world. To him,

"The landscape is an armory of powers,  
Which one by one he knows to draw and use,"

and these powers of light and air, of earth and water, so regular and sure, so true and trust-worthy, so commanding and inexorable, lead his thoughts, if he be capable of thought, from the visible to the invisible, from the manifold to the one, from the finite to the infinite, from the temporal to the eternal. The land proclaims its owner and gratifies the pride of wealth by multi-

plying a thousand-fold the influence of property. A man may have millions in mortgages and bank-stock, yet no one sees them. They are locked up in iron chests and do not impress the imagination through the senses. But land, spreading out in hundreds of acres, with its woods and fields, its orchards and lawns, is a visible thing that appeals to all beholders, that influences a neighborhood and the generations of a neighborhood, and declares to the public the riches of its owner, and not his riches merely, but his spirit and enterprise, his liberality and taste. There are few things that reveal a man's mind and character more clearly than a farm, or which go further to establish his reputation, and there are few which are a better monument to keep his memory alive among his neighbors, than a piece of land improved with skill and embellished with taste. The trees he has planted will whisper his name to every passer-by for many a long year after he has gone, and successive harvests from the soil he has enriched will sing his praise. The land is the source of life; out of it we came, into it we shall go. We cannot leave it. An invisible power chains us to its surface. We are not only on it but of it, fashioned out of it and related to all its forces and laws, its moods and aspects, in mind and body, by a thousand mysterious ties which bind all alike; for, as it is written, "The profit of the earth is for all, and the king himself is served by the field." The farmer is the agent and minister of this common parent, this generous but severe mistress-mother Earth, and holds the key of her store-house. He fells the forest, he grubs and cleans, he ploughs and sows, and thence crops of grass and grain, thence herds and flocks, and thence man. Man himself is a product of the farm. All nature is in constant change and motion, wide-flowing, incessant, altering and transforming us and everything around us, converting the sea into clouds, the clouds into rain, rain into plants, vegetable into animal, animal into vegetable life in a continued circuit that never stops. The cattle and sheep that feed on the meadow, the corn and wheat that fill crib and garner today, in a few weeks or months become human bodies, are ploughing perhaps the very fields where they grew, or thronging the busy streets of a city, suffering, enjoying, toiling, voting, speculating, making money or making love. The farmer, therefore, grows men, an important crop, and alone sufficient to elevate his calling above every other. The amount of the population, the

prosperity, nay, the very existence of the people depend on his skill and labor. American farmers have a wide sphere of usefulness, for they not only grow American citizens, but a large number of Englishmen and Frenchmen also, and it is their proud task to make their own country independent of all others, for the prime necessities of life, and all others dependent on it. The land of America, indeed, worked by farmers and planters, not only feeds but clothes the nations of Europe. The free Saxon farmer of the north, as he drives his reaper through the waving wheat or husks the yellow corn, is producing bone and sinew for English factories and French armies, is placing food, else deficient, in the cottages of English and French laborers, and is thus helping to keep in order the masses of Manchester and the faubourgs of Paris. The negro of the South laughs and labors in the cotton field, unconscious of the important part he is playing in the great drama of politics and trade, and every stroke of his clumsy hoe vibrates through the markets of the world, echoes in the dirty purlieus of Wall street, knocks at the parlor door of the Bank of England, and commands attention with a monarch's voice in the stately retreat of Broadlands.

Such are some of the qualities of land, which distinguish it and its cultivation from all other property and all other business. The land grows human bodies, it produces also a crop of thought and sentiment and passion; and what that crop shall be, whether knowledge, patriotism and honorable love of liberty and justice, or ignorance, apathy, intellectual torpor and moral degradation, depends on the way the land is owned and farmed. The attributes of the land connect it therefore with the most important questions of social and political philosophy. To discuss these would not suit the present occasion. My theme is, the advantages and pleasures of country life. The privileges and benefits which the land confers on those who serve it and love it. These have prompted me to say a word in favor of the farm, and the farmer's sequestered labors amid the pleasant scenes of nature, and to exclaim with an old writer,

" Who would pursue  
The smoky glories of the town,  
That may go till his native earth,  
And by the shining fire sit down  
Of his own hearth?"

This theme was suggested to me by the farms and farmers of Chester county, by the thought of the beauty and fertility, the majestic scenery and unbounded resources of our solid, substantial Pennsylvania, which has iron enough to command the gold of California, coal enough to warm her neighbors as well as herself; and rich land enough to supply happy homes for a race of free, independent, educated farmers, whose industry would increase her wealth, whose taste would embellish her natural charms, whose cultivated intelligence and conservative virtues would soften and refine the manners of private life, and at the same time give stability, purity, and the influence of enlightened views, high aims and liberal knowledge, to her public counsels.

**End of  
Title**