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"BACK TO THE FARM"

III.—How the R. F. D., Telephone, Trolley and Good Roads Are Modernizing the Farm.

By C. V. GREGORY.

(Copyright, 1910, by American Press Association.)

THE farm is no longer the isolated, lonely place that it used to be or that many people seem to think it is yet. Farming under modern conditions is a business and in most cases is coming to be run in a business way. The first step in the modernizing of the farm came with the introduction of the rural free delivery in 1897. Put in at first as a sort of experiment, a concession to the insistent demands of the national grange and other farmers' organizations, it spread rapidly and soon became indispensable. It was a potent factor in waking up the farmers. One of the first and greatest results was that the daily paper for the farm was made a possibility.

Before the advent of the rural free delivery the farmer who kept within



THE TELEPHONE HAS BANISHED FARM LONELINESS.

a week of the markets was doing well. As a result he usually managed to strike all the stumps in the market when he had stock or grain to sell. With a market paper delivered at his gate each morning he could follow prices of farm produce closely and take advantage of a rising market. This one factor alone has paid the cost of the rural free delivery many times over.

The market reports were not the only part of the paper that benefited the farmer. He no longer got his news a week old, but had it served up almost as hot as if he had lived in town. This daily contact with the things that were happening in the world brightened him up, rubbed off the dust and gave him a new interest in life.

The shiftless farmer who went to town two or three times a week on the pretense of "getting the mail," only to waste half a day or so each time and maybe come home "boozed up" in the bargain, was deprived of his excuse and fell into the habit of spending his extra time fixing up about the place. The farmer who had been enterprising before became more enterprising and had more time to put his ideas into practice.

Along with the R. F. D. came better roads, and when the farmer did go to town he could make the trip in much less time than he did before. His daily papers and magazines made him as well informed as any of the business men of the town. The days of the "hayseed" were numbered.

Along with the R. F. D. came a great increase in the circulation of the agricultural papers. The old type of papers edited by men who had seen little of farming except from a car window came to an end about this time, and their places were taken by papers edited by men who had grown up on the soil and who had never got very far away from it. These papers taught the farmers the value of better methods. They taught what these methods were and how they could be applied. Above all, they inspired the farmers to do the best they knew how, to respect their calling and to put it on a business basis.

Along with the R. F. D. came the telephone. Some of the first lines were little more than cheap instruments connected to a barbed wire fence, but they served the purpose. Then followed lines put up on willow poles and finally modern lines as substantially built and as efficient as money could buy. An automatic device to prevent any one listening except the parties talking is in use in some localities. Most communities prefer the party line, however, because of its social features. Often after supper on a stormy winter evening some one will put in a general call and furnish some instrumental music for the benefit of every one on the line. Then some one else will sing a song, some one will run off a few musical records on a phonograph, and an otherwise lonely evening will be passed pleasantly. Immediately after dinner is generally conceded to be the "women folks" hour at the phone. They will stand and visit, often a dozen of them at a time, until the proverbial loneliness of farm life is entirely forgotten.

The principal use of the telephone is for business. The modern farmer relies upon his telephone as much as does the business man. Most of the

telephone lines are connected with the central switchboard in town, so that a toll call will get any one in the county or in the state. Market and weather reports are sent out over the rural lines at certain hours each day. If the market is especially good the farmer can call up the local buyer and contract his hogs at once, or if he prefers he can call up the railway freight office and arrange to have a stock car ready for him the next morning. In most communities the practice of "chancing work" at thrashing time is still followed. This used to necessitate a day's work notifying the neighbors, and then frequently it all had to be done over again on account of a breakdown to the machine or bad weather. Now the notifying is all done in a few moments by phone.

On many occasions a prompt telephone call has brought the nearest doctor to the bedside of a sick child who would not have lived until a trip could be made to town for the doctor. This is one of the reasons that a telephone is seldom taken out after it has once been put in. In a hundred minor ways the telephone has become necessary to the farm folk. Often after the farmer has left for town his wife will think of something she wants him to get. All she has to do is to call up the store where he does his trading and leave a message for him. When the young folks want to give a party the telephone will quickly bring in every one in the neighborhood. A stray horse is soon located and brought back home. In weather too bad for the mail carrier to get through important letters can be received over the telephone.

One other step is necessary to enable the farmer to make the greatest use of the rural free delivery and the telephone. It is the parcels post. Local merchants have objected to a parcels post on the ground that it would favor the mail order houses at their expense. This can be overcome by giving a lower rate to packages that go over a rural route only. A parcels post of this kind has been recommended by the postmaster general. He figures that it would prove profitable for the government, turning the postal deficit into a surplus. With a cheap parcels post in operation on the free rural delivery routes the connection of the farmer with the town will be complete. He can order parcels from town and have them delivered at his door a few hours later. Things which he cannot get in his local town he can procure from a mail order house in two or three days. The farmers are united in demanding this convenience, and it is bound to come before long.

The final step in the emancipation of the farmer was taken when the trolley line and the automobile came into general use. The trolley has meant better schooling for his children. It has brought theaters, lectures and better churches within reach of the farmer's family. Best of all, the competition with the cities has brought about a much needed awakening of the country schools and the country churches.

The trolley is a great convenience in taking produce to market. Most of the cars will stop at any farmhouse or crossroads to pick up a can of cream, a crate of chickens or a passenger. Trolley lines are a great factor in hastening the "back to the land" movement. The farmer who lives near a trolley line has no desire to go to town because he has all the conveniences of both town and country.

Wherever a trolley line punctures a city the crowded population spreads out into the country. At first the city people move into the country only to buy a pleasanter place to live while still carrying on their business in the city. Once in the country few of them ever regret the change. Most of them say that they would not go back to the city to live under any consideration.

What the trolley lines are doing for the more thickly settled districts, good roads, automobiles and driving horses are doing for those communities which are not yet densely enough populated to support a trolley line. The good roads movement started with the ad-



TROLLEY LINES ARE HELPING THE "BACK TO THE LAND" MOVEMENT.

vent of the R. F. D. While country roads in many places are far from being ideal as yet, still the length of time when they are not fairly passable has been reduced to a minimum. Most of the main roads are well graded, and nearly every farmer has a road drag with which to keep the road along his farm smooth. Graveled roads are becoming common, and macadamized and oiled roads are being extended into the country.

All these modern improvements have added much to the profits of farming. They have added more to its pleasures. They have given to the farmer the advantages of the city without taking away any of the advantages of the farm. They have made the farm the ideal place to live.

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PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT.

The following proposed amendment to the constitution of the State of Nebraska, as hereinafter set forth in full, is submitted to the electors of the State of Nebraska, to be voted upon at the general election to be held Tuesday, November 8th, A. D. 1910:

A JOINT RESOLUTION to amend Section one (1) of Article seven (7) of the Constitution of the State of Nebraska.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Nebraska:

Section 1. (Amendment constitution proposed.) That section one (1) of article seven (7) of the constitution of the state of Nebraska, the senate concurring, be so amended as to read as follows:

Section 1. (Who are electors.) Every male citizen of the United States, of the age of twenty-one years, who shall have been a resident of this state six months next preceding the election and of the county, precinct, or ward, for the term provided by law shall be an elector; provided, that persons of foreign birth who shall have declared their intention to become citizens conformably to the laws of the United States and are voting at the taking effect of this amendment, may continue to exercise the right of suffrage until such time as they may have resided in the United States five years, after which they shall take out full citizenship papers to be entitled to vote at any succeeding election.

Section 2. (Ballots.) That at the general election nineteen hundred and ten (1910) there shall be submitted to the electors of the state for their approval or rejection the foregoing proposed amendment to the constitution relating to the right of suffrage. At such election, on the ballot of each elector voting for or against said proposed amendment, shall be written or printed the words: "For proposed amendment to the constitution relating to the right of suffrage," and "Against said proposed amendment to the constitution relating to the right of suffrage."

Section 3. (Adoption.) If such amendment shall be approved by a majority of all electors voting at such election, said amendment shall constitute section one (1) of article seven (7) of the constitution of the State of Nebraska.

Approved April 1, 1908.

J. Geo. C. Junkin, Secretary of State, of the state of Nebraska do hereby certify that the foregoing proposed amendment to the Constitution of the State of Nebraska is a true and correct copy of the original enrolled and engrossed bill, as passed by the thirty-first session of the legislature of the State of Nebraska, as appears from said original bill on file in this office, and that said proposed amendment is submitted to the qualified voters of the state of Nebraska for their adoption or rejection at the general election to be held on Tuesday, the 8th day of November, A. D. 1910.

In Testimony Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the great seal of the State of Nebraska. Done at Lincoln, this 29th day of July, in the year of our Lord, One Thousand Nine Hundred and Ten, and of the Independence of the United States the One Hundred and Thirty-fifth, and of this State the Forty-fourth.

GEORGE C. JUNKIN,
Secretary of State.

(Seal.) 34-3 months.

EUGENE BURTON Attorney at Law LAND ATTORNEY

Office First National Bank Bldg.
Phone 180. ALLIANCE, NEB.

WILLIAM MITCHELL, ATTORNEY AT LAW.

ALLIANCE, NEBRASKA.

H. M. BULLOCK, Attorney at Law,

ALLIANCE, NEB.

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