

The SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE SECTION

A Magazine for your Reading Table

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS' PAGE



Mr. John Burroughs

DODGING BANKRUPTCY TO KEEP ALIVE

By JOHN BURROUGHS

THE high cost of living is not worrying the country so much as the cost of high living. Wastefulness, extravagance and a distorted demand for greater conveniences, luxuries, improvements, advantages every year, more and more time-saving and labor-saving appliances, more and more facilities for transportation and communication, more and more telegraph and telephone lines, more and more trolley and railroad lines, more and more devices for instruction and amusement—better houses, better clothes, better foods, better tools—in fact, a higher standard of living all around is at the bottom of the higher cost of keeping abundantly alive.

The fathers of our country produced ninety per cent of what they ate and wore. They made their own cheese, sugar, bread, cereals, candles, soap, dried their own fruit and vegetables, grew their own meat, lived almost entirely off their own farms and passed sane and contented lives. Now, their descendants buy nearly all these things and are soured and discontented. Our fathers in the cities and towns bought things in bulk—flour, sugar, potatoes, and apples by the barrel and other things in proportion. The grocery store around the corner, if there was one then, was less depended upon. With their baskets they went more to the general market. In the large town near where I live, I believe I am the only man ever seen on the street with a market basket on his arm. To many people, I suppose it is a humiliating spectacle. I did once see a judge in that city bringing home his Xmas turkey, but only once.

Inflating the Retail Price

PEOPLE in the large cities buy their potatoes and other vegetables by the quart—ten cents a quart, when in the wholesale market apples are two or three dollars a barrel, potatoes fifty cents a bushel, onions even less. In the Connecticut valley the other day I saw onions enough rotting on the ground to supply a large town. I myself paid recently forty cents a peck for potatoes in a country store—just four times as much as the price in the open market. Yet, the groceryman is not getting rich, he pays tribute to so many men behind him and around him, the small packages and the delivery system of necessity doubles and trebles his clerical help. In the great cities it seems as if the apartment builders were in league with the food vendors. My friends who live in flats tell me they have no place suitable to store a bushel of apples or of potatoes or a tub of butter or a barrel of flour. Hence they are compelled to purchase their supplies by small measure in very limited quantities.

Plain Living and High Thinking

IT IS easier to give reasons for the higher cost of living than to suggest remedies. One remedy which is in the hands of everybody is an application of the old doctrine of "plain living and high thinking." We could all be nourished more cheaply. Recently a college

CONTENTS

COVER DESIGN—PRESIDENT-ELECT WOODROW WILSON'S GARDEN	Page 2
DODGING BANKRUPTCY TO KEEP ALIVE— <i>Editorial</i> JOHN BURROUGHS	2
THOSE WHO WORK IN GARDENS MARGUERITE O. B. WILKINSON	2
A GARDEN TO LIVE IN	3
ROSES FOR THE AMATEUR	3
BEST PERENNIALS FOR THE HOME GARDEN	4
ANNUALS FOR THE RENTER TO GROW	4
GARDEN FERTILIZERS—STUMBLING BLOCK OF THE AMATEUR	4
FORTUNES INVESTED IN FANCY POULTRY	5
PLANTING TABLE FOR FLOWERS	6
PLANTING TABLE FOR VEGETABLES	7
TABLOID TALKS ABOUT VEGETABLES	8
THE AMATEUR'S SMALL FRUIT GARDEN	9
A NEW THOUGHT IN ROSES	11
PLANTING AND PRUNING SHRUBS	12
FLOWERS FOR PORCH AND WINDOW	12
GARDEN WRINKLES	16
COLD FRAMES AND FLOWERS	19

student boarded himself on less than one dollar a week and an analysis of his food showed it had all the needed food values. Another remedy is to bring the producer and consumer nearer together and thus cut out the parasitic army of middle men. The farmer gets three cents a quart for his milk, the consumer pays nine—most of the cream sticks to the hands it passes through. The middlemen do not like to handle cheap produce, therefore vast quantities of it rot on the farm and prices are kept up to the consumer.

THOSE WHO WORK IN GARDENS

By MARGUERITE O. B. WILKINSON

HOW STRONG and sane and sweet do they become who work often in gardens, for the sheer love of it! They are always learning, loving, seeking to understand and to utilize. They foster the beloved weak and fight the inimical strong. They root out the fulness which is a fault and fill the emptiness that cries for more. They are able to beget and breed beauty.

Those who work in gardens plant other things than seeds and bulbs, tubers and cuttings. They plant hope and faith and love.

They gather in more than crisp vegetables, luscious fruits, and flushed flowers, for they gather hardihood and health and a rich fulfillment.

Having planted according to the law, they expect germination according to the law, and the flower and the perfect fruit. They do not worry lest what ought to be will not be. They have the confidence of seeds, wherefore they are seldom disappointed.

Those who work in gardens work in the laboratory of life. They know as much as any one of its coming and its going; and far more do they know, than most of us, of its growing and striving, fighting, winning, blossoming, becoming and being. They see many meanings unintelligible to others.

God has given into their hands a book of secrets.

As they press the earth with kindly hands they smile inscrutably, and the earth yields up her smiling strength as their reward.

In a garden there is as much chance for self-expression as in any art, if only the soul of the gardener be free of a money bond.

For a garden may be compact enough to reveal the careful soul, whimsical enough to show the dreamer, stately for the proud, homelike for the hearth-lover, fragrant for the serenely religious. The variety is endless. The combinations can not be counted.

But always, those who work in gardens, make them, in something, like themselves.

And there is in a garden as great a chance for altruism as in any philanthropy.

The sick of soul will lag beside a sloping lawn, or under the generous, shade-bestowing tree. The weary of heart can find a bit of peace in benevolent arbors, or in bowers of friendly shrubbery. Naughty children sometimes become good when they peer through hedges and are surprised by the sight of a fountain. The poor can forget their debts for a space while they watch bewitching poppies nodding to each other. And are there not a few convicts who would be gentler with their arms full of roses?

How natural it is that those who work often in gardens should be strong and sane and sweet! They are very close to the heart of life. Perhaps, also, they are close to God!



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