

# The Country Gentleman.

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## The Farmer's Influence.



THE true test of ability in farming, all the world over, is the greatest amount of success in the management of those two practical antipodes, *cost* and *result*. A man who may raise enormous crops at a cost of ten times all that these crops will repay; or who may compel his farm laborers, however industrious and efficient they may be, to work without tools, or at best, to hoe his corn with a garden-trowel, or to water his cattle in an egg-shell—would be set down as decidedly a bad manager. On the contrary, the farmer who applies his means in the best possible manner, to obtain the greatest amount of results, whether by enriching his land ultimately, or increasing its immediate products—who turns all the currents of waste into profitable channels—shows that the touch of his hand is that of a master, and that he possesses the true philosopher's stone, which turns all his applied energies into gold.

But our present object is not to point out the best way to secure large dividends from farm capital. We shall deviate for once from this almost universal track, and endeavor to show how the farmer may increase the physical and mental comfort of himself and those about him, quite as much (and by the outlay of far less monied capital,) as by simply heaping together piles of gold. The means by which this most desirable result is to be secured, is the proper *use of his influence*. "My influence? I have no influence!" exclaim a host of moderate farmers, more ambitious and restless perhaps, than they are willing to admit, and who failed to secure any nomination at the last town caucus. "What influence can I possibly have," gravely expostulates the more sedate country resident, "when I cannot even persuade my own boys to avoid the city, and become cultivators of the soil?" "You can't expect me to have any influence?" is the inquiring exclamation of the young farmer of taste, who failed in saving from the remorseless axe, a beautiful group of sugar maples which stood in the public road; and whose public spirit has been chilled by the jeers of his stupid neighbors, for proposing to line the highway with a mile of forest trees.

But our friends must not by any means despair. They possess a power of which they are not conscious, although it may not be capable of operating quite in the way they would most desire. The truth is, there are too many who are looking only for some great or extraordinary occasion to exercise their powers. They may profitably remember the fable of the sweeping mountain torrent, that was soon dry, contrasted with the perpetual

rill, which always enlivened and refreshed its banks, and in process of time filled a vast lake with its waters.

In the first place, every one may exert a most healthful influence for *rural taste*. A friend of ours moved into a district of country where the people generally would have been regarded as utterly destitute of all taste of the kind. He could not persuade a single man among them to plant an ornamental tree. He however resolved to have the comforts and embellishments of country life, though of a cheap character, for his own family. His wondering neighbors began to inquire about the trees he planted, "that were good for nothing but to look at," and pitied the wretched taste which he exhibited by not placing his lilacs, honeysuckles, magnolias, and evergreens, "all in a row." But it is a characteristic of the works of true taste, that the more they are scrutinized, the more pleasing they appear; and those rude inhabitants evinced, before they were aware of it, that the latent principle of genuine appreciation of the beautiful, which had so long slumbered within them, was beginning to show itself in the little plantations of roses and shrubbery about their dwellings, that they might enjoy something of the same delightful home scenery which they had been insensibly led to admire in their pioneer neighbor. It was not many years before a great change had come over the face of the country, and many had learned that there was some satisfaction in neat dwellings surrounded by tasteful grounds.

In the next place, every one may exert a most valuable and powerful influence, in leading his children, and those more immediately beneath his care, to exalted views of the scenes around them. It does not at all destroy or lessen one's skill to manage those two refractory opponents, Cost and Profit, to look up occasionally from the plow-point before him, to the rich, varied, and magnificent panorama around him,

From the blue rim, where skies and mountains meet,  
Down to the very turf beneath his feet;  
neither does it at all require the rare gifts of the "philosophic few" to look upon

The warbling woodland, the resounding shore,  
The pomp of groves, the garniture of fields,  
All that the genial ray of morning gilds,  
And all that echoes to the song of even,

with something of the eye of a painter, naturalist, and admirer of the wonderful and beautiful in Design. This study very soon becomes contagious. We knew a skillful cultivator of the earth, whose delight in reading the works of creation, had rendered him quite as skillful in making this study attractive to others; and when we have remembered the great numbers of young people whom he had fascinated into this pursuit, we have often involuntarily been led to contrast him with

"The churl who holds it heresy to think,  
And knows no music but the dollar's chink;  
Who never found what good from science grew

Save the grand truth, that one and one make two;  
And he, across whose brain scarce dare to creep,  
Aught but the parent pair, to get, to keep."

Again—every farmer may exert an excellent influence in his own neighborhood in many ways. By perseverance, he may accomplish much in elevating the character of the neighborhood schools—those fountains from which are to flow the very life-streams of intelligence to our successors on the great theater of life. He may promote agricultural knowledge by assisting in the diffusion of periodicals. He may often find means to contribute to the happiness of those whom sickness has stripped of physical comforts. It is scarcely necessary to point out all the ways in which a really earnest, straight forward, kind and modest man, may benefit the community in which he lives, if he is not afraid of labor, although all and even more may be done while others may be idling, talking nonsense, or attending public amusements—and it is impossible, from the very nature of things, that all this should not make a strong impression on those who come in contact. In his own family, too, his influence is still greater than elsewhere, either for good or evil. Domestic sunshine or storms are very much at the command of the head authority. A single ill-natured remark will often send its poison and contagion through a whole household—a uniform air of kindness cannot fail greatly to soften the asperities of life; and especially when, to speak colloquially, "every thing goes crooked," a few words fitly spoken, will drop like balm into the corroding irritation of bad nature, and like the atmosphere of spring, breathe cheerfulness and sweetness about those within their influence.

Now, if any one believe that the accomplishment of these duties does not greatly increase one's own happiness, to say nothing of the happiness of others, "then has he no human blood in his veins." He is one of those chrysalids of mortality, whose object in living is to suffer as little, and enjoy as much as possible, within their own shell of physical selfishness. There are others who assent to all we have said, but who commit the supreme folly of chasing the rainbow of promised enjoyment, by trying *first to get rich!* No wonder that farmer's sons rush into the city, when their country homes, with the inexhaustible attractions which *might* be thrown around them, are made repulsive, or at least dull. Fortunately, the exercise of taste in rural improvement—the study of the beauties of country life—the performance of neighborhood amenities—and the soothing influence of kindness in families—do not require the income of a duke; and he who has accomplished all these well, in addition to the skillful management of his plantation, has perhaps as just an expectation as any one, of a pleasant evening to his life, in the hope that he has not lived wholly in vain.