

THE PROBLEM OF THE RURAL COMMUNITY, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE RURAL CHURCH.

THERE are many problems confronting the American people today. Some are as complex and as cruel as that propounded to Œdipus by the Sphinx of Thebes. Men with warm hearts and a stern sense of responsibility are struggling with the riddles of the degenerates and dependents, of labor and capital, of the negro in the South, and of the urban community. But no enigma is crying more for solution than is that of the rural community. Says one of the keenest thinkers of our day: "If no new preventive measures are devised, I see no reason why isolation, indigence, ignorance, vice, and degeneration should not increase in the country until we have a rural peasantry, illiterate, immoral, possessing the rights of citizenship, but utterly incapable of performing or comprehending its duties."

The traditional approach to this problem is from the religious side. Indeed, the great majority identify the problem of the rural community with that of the rural church. While I am compelled to follow the beaten path, it seems to me that this identification dwarfs the horizon. The rural church is but one phenomenon of the varied social structure of the rural community. It has a problem and a grave one; but it is only one of the problems which are bound up in the more complex one of the community at large. Even from the religious approach, moreover, one has no right to narrow the religious forces to the four walls of a country church. This is an unscientific assumption. The home, the school, the vocation, the social life are all mighty forces for the molding of men.

Vague and conflicting conceptions of the definition of a rural community give rise to much confusion in the discussion of this problem. It is variously conceived as a mere farming neighborhood, a rural village, everything outside of cities characterized by genuinely urban conditions, *i. e.*, cities of 20,000 population and over. Some of these conceptions are too broad and others

are too narrow. For convenience and mutual understanding, let us define a rural community as one that is characterized by genuinely rural conditions. This would include all farming neighborhoods and, according to the last census, all centers of population up to 4,000 inhabitants.

One must be on his guard, moreover, against the fallacies which are wont to be made in the discussion of this problem, such as *non causa pro causa*, which mistakes conservatism for decadence, crudeness for barrenness; *insufficient data*, which, observing the degeneration of one rural community, make unwarranted generalizations therefrom as to country life as a whole; *false comparison*, which compares rural life with urban life, and deduces disparaging results accordingly; and *non sequitur*, which infers that the problem of the country is the same as that of the city.

In the treatment of this question one must approach it with the broadest possible study and with thoroughly scientific methods. In most of the attempts to solve it from the religious side, the suggestions have been dogmatic and empirical rather than scientific. While I wish also to approach it from the religious side, it will be my endeavor to look upon the problem at the same time as a sociological as well as a religious one, and to study with strictly scientific methods.

The outline of treatment in this paper will be as follows: The rural problem as a community interest; the end of social action to be attained; causal relations and conditions; methods of amelioration; regulative principles; program for reform.

I.

The urban problem is that of a growing congestion, but the rural problem is that of a growing isolation. While the evils connected with the city have long provoked discussion, because they force themselves upon public gaze, the vicissitudes of the country have been somewhat disregarded, because hidden in their solitude. Nevertheless, they are just as threatening, if not more so, because the country is largely the source of that human stream that is constantly flowing to the city. Statistics

show that from 1790 to 1890 the population of the United States in cities of 8,000 or more has risen from one thirty-third to nearly one-third of the whole. The census report for 1900 shows no break. It points out the startling fact that in 1900 there were 5.4 per cent. fewer people in the country than ten years before; and that of the 13,000,000 people added to our population during the decade 73.8 per cent. found homes in urban centers, and only 26.2 per cent. in the rural districts.

The percentage of loss would be much larger, moreover, if the migration to the city were not accompanied by an immigration to the country—a movement which checks the depletion, but which is often as injurious, because it exchanges the native for foreign stock. Consequently, while the New Englander abandons his unremunerative acres and flees to the city, the farmer of the central West rents his isolated farm to the foreign immigrant and moves to town. This tends to the formation of a distinctly peasant class such as is found in Bavaria. It is said that there are several communities in the United States where the English language is never heard.

Such is the situation in the rural communities of the United States today. District after district is being drained to the cities, leaving isolated pools of human beings to grow more stagnant, dank, and noisome. The richest of agricultural states seem to be unable to stem the flood. "For twenty-five years past," said Professor Cooley at the last Michigan Farmers' Institute, "the population in settled rural districts of the northern states has been diminishing. According to the census of 1890, 66 per cent. of area in Illinois diminished, 43 in Iowa, 61 in Ohio, 83 in New York." The fruit of this growing isolation is keenly apparent.

The economic loss is great. Property depreciates in value. Farms are even abandoned. In New Hampshire 1,443 farms with tenable buildings were at one time deserted. In the last decade the rural population of Vermont decreased 214.8 per cent. As a result, many acres are for sale for one dollar an acre, and scores of farms can be bought for one-fourth what they cost twenty-five years ago. But this depreciation is not

confined to New England. Every state that shows a marked decrease in rural population reveals an accompanying decrease in farm values. This loss, moreover, increases with the farmer who remains. The road deteriorates. The taxes increase. As the roads deteriorate, the farmer is pushed farther and farther back from the village. The value of the farm falls in proportion; the cost of transportation increases, until in some communities, it is said, it costs the farmer as much to haul his produce six miles as he pays the railroad to carry it five hundred.

Moreover, the social, intellectual, and religious life likewise degenerates as the farmer is pushed in time farther back from the village. The church and school have always been prized for their value to inspire a longing for the highest life. It is a great loss for a community when the standards of these institutions fall. But as the migration grows and the roads deteriorate, this inevitably follows. The belief is growing today that the little country schoolhouse offers small opportunity for the farmers' children, and must be abandoned.

The church, not endowed with government support as is the school, suffers still more. Deprived of the best element of the community through removal, separated from the farming community through poor roads, the church rapidly goes to pieces. It is said with authority that there are ninety-five towns in Maine where no religious services are held, and that there are more villages in Illinois without the gospel than in any other state in the Union. Over one-half of Vermont, so purely agricultural and intensely American, never goes to church. Yet the church there spends annually one dollar and a half for every man, woman, and child in the population. Statistics show that people living over two miles from church in fourteen of the states east of the Mississippi river never go to church. This is largely true of the large rural populations in the South and West as well as the North. "During the past thirty years," said Josiah Strong in 1893, "thousands of churches have died from exhaustion in the rural districts of the United States." This is seen especially in the back towns of New England, which have wandered far from the Puritan traditions of their founders and

have locked the doors of many of their churches. "It is a pathetic sight," says an investigator of this section, "to see a church, firm in its aim and ideals, yet gradually decaying because its best blood is going to the cities; but it is more pathetic to see churches that have locked their doors, not because there was no one to attend, but because no one *would* attend." Such churches are growing more numerous every day in communities invaded by foreign immigrants who care more for their European customs than for the Puritan traditions of the church.

So we witness in our rural communities a vast destitution of religion. We hear annually long reports of dead and dying churches; we behold churches barely alive, with no settled pastors; we see churches having settled pastors giving their entire strength in a mere fight for existence, and having no money or energy left for community interests and philanthropy. Thus the conception of the church in the rural districts has come to be something to be kept in existence rather than something to be kept on the increase; something to be ministered unto rather than something to minister; something to be built up out of the community rather than something to build up the community out of it; "a humble pensioner upon the people, hat in hand, begging for support, rather than a divine institution which is to bestow upon men the gift of God in Jesus Christ."

With the redemptive power of the church practically *nil*, her message forgotten and marred, the spiritual condition of the community falls correspondingly lower. The other spiritual forces of the home, school, vocation, and social life lose their incentive to struggle and sacrifice. And with no broad, rich social life, no general intellectual activity, no religious inspiration, no initiative to political self-consciousness and community action, life in the rural districts tends toward idleness, vulgarity, animality, and drunkenness. Such is the problem of the rural community, with its highest factor for good an object for apology and pity.

II.

It is now essential, having stood face to face with the problem demanding solution, to get a clear vision of the end of

proposed social action and endeavor. This can be no mere superficial program of church action along the lines of the traditional ecclesiastical polity. One must dig deep into the roots of human life, and lay bare the laws, desires, and interests that prompt individual and community action. Only upon the basis of the Eternal in human life can one found the superstructure of social and individual action.

It is said that every individual acts always in reference to six ends or desires with which he is naturally endowed. These ends are health, wealth, sociability, knowledge, beauty, and rightness. Upon this basis the sociologist makes two assumptions:

The life of the individual is a process of achieving the self that is potential in the interests which prompt the desires of health, wealth, knowledge, sociability, beauty, and rightness; society, or human associations, is a continuous process of realizing a larger aggregate and better proportion of health, wealth, knowledge, sociability, beauty, and rightness.

Life in the rural districts today is in a state of growing discontent, because under present conditions it is impossible to satisfy those deep desires of the self and the community. The result is the tide of migration to the urban environment where these interests may be more successfully guaranteed. Denied the means of growth and activity, the weaker ones left behind lose interest in life, and stagnation and degeneration result. The end to be sought, then, in solving the problem of the rural community is a rational program for reform that will enable every individual to achieve his highest self potential in these sixfold desires; and that will help every rural community to realize a larger aggregate and better proportion of these interests in which life, individual and social, finds its only satisfaction.

III.

Having this end of endeavor before us, let us again take up the problem to discover, if possible, its causal conditions and relations, and lay bare the social structure upon which it rests. These causal conditions naturally group themselves about the various interests of social activity.

The cause of the farmers' discontent and migratory tendency is in the main economic. A general depression in agriculture in the past has compelled many of them to abandon their unprofitable pursuits and flee to the city. This depression is due in turn to far-reaching changes in the methods of production and distribution. The prolific development of farm machinery in late years has thrown the rural districts into a financial panic, depriving of labor a large part of every farming community. To add to the depression, a speedy development of transportation on land and water opened great areas of fertile land in the West to the small farmers of the East; and later returned its products to compete with those of the East and of Europe. This discontent was enhanced when the farmers found that the cost of transportation deprived them of their profit, and that it was cheaper to burn their corn than to sell it; while this very facility of transportation, which for the time being wrought such havoc in the agricultural districts, enabled trade and manufactures to concentrate in towns, where life was more attractive through the conveniences of urban life and through its social and cultural opportunities.

But it is only fair to say that the economic factor does not enter so largely into the rural forces that today are driving the agricultural population into the cities. The farmers have readjusted themselves to the disturbing factors. They have turned them to their own profit. Transportation and invention are making the farmers of the day wealthy. Untilled western lands are being opened to the public so gradually that the equanimity of rural life has not been disturbed except in neighboring localities. The great loss in rural and urban Nebraska has been due, doubtless, to the opening of adjacent rich farming lands. The old fear of bonanza farms has been exploded. Experience is proving that intensive farming is more profitable. The last census reports only 41,000 farms containing 1,000 acres and over. Statistics also show that, while the farms of the country are mortgaged for over two billions of dollars, it is not because the farmers are falling behind in their struggle, but because they are anxious to buy farms and to improve them.

The forces that cause individual loss are still, however, at work. Poor roads, contempt of scientific agriculture, lack of business methods, disregard of hygienic laws, low æsthetic and intellectual ideals, decay of social activity and harmony—all these help to depreciate the economic value of individual farming communities.

Another cause of the present condition of rural life is carelessness in regard to the laws of hygiene and sanitation. Here where there is an abundance of sunshine and pure air, and where life should be the richest and the most healthful, it is often the opposite. The congested cities, indeed, are more healthful through strict enforcement of the laws of sanitation. The death-rate of Chicago for the year 1901 is lower than that of several agricultural states. The lack of hospitals, trained nurses, and competent surgeons is keenly felt in the rural districts.

One of the most prevalent causes of rural degeneration is its lack of initiative and of high intellectual ideals. Motor education is very much needed. The average country schoolhouse, with its self-conscious young teacher, knowing nothing of the science of pedagogy, is of very little aid. This low intellectual plane is due to the community, which fails to entertain a sufficiently high and true conception of the public school; and it is also due to the close economic point of view which always seeks to cut down the taxes.

Another, and perhaps a stronger, cause of discontent is the poverty of stimulating social life. Man is by nature a social animal. As he requires air and exercise for the development of his body, he requires social contact for the development of his higher self. Deprived of this, stagnation results. Sociability is one of the strongest factors which is building up the cities. The lack of social life in the country is due to various causes: impassable roads, imprisoning the farmers in their homes; absence of sidewalk and street-lights, discouraging sociability in the villages; poverty of that intellectual life which stimulates social intercourse and fellowship; schisms—social, racial, and religious—disrupting the community already insulated from the world by isolated conditions; absence of those institutions which

promote healthful sociability and fellowship; narrow attitude of the church, engendering division in society by cultivating piety as an isolated thing and by emphasizing creed above character and social welfare.

Another influence, which is not perhaps so potent in disorganizing rural life, yet which blunts and kills its finer qualities, is the ugliness of human habitations in the country. The following testimony of two rural oracles is undoubtedly true:

Slatternliness in and around the house repels from their homes many youths who otherwise might be bound by the strongest ties to their firesides.

A village which is down at the heels, whose streets are unkempt, whose houses are unsightly, whose citizens are in a condition of chronic slouchiness, cannot hope to attract to it those who would add to its material or moral welfare.

It would seem that a village, with its many church-spires pointing to the sky, would be the center of growing civic and religious life. On the contrary, the ethical and religious condition of the rural community seems to be very low. Idleness, vulgarity, and drunkenness seem to be on the increase, while the churches appear to be gradually dying for lack of community interest. The causes leading to this sad condition are many.

Migration has deprived the church of its best element. Immigration has brought into the farming districts a class of people not friendly to the church of Puritan ideals. Denominationalism has subdivided the small community into organizations too weak to do anything but barely to live; while its fierce strife and contentions have created a feeling of disgust and religious indifference. Irregular and inefficient ministers, narrow in theology and weak in personality, have added to the growing indifference. A lack of means to carry on the work has put the church in a begging attitude, depriving it of its spiritual aggressiveness. The preaching of dogma and the emphasis of creed above character have deprived the church of the sympathy of the people. An undue worship of cherished ecclesiastical traditions compels the use of a polity inefficient and untimely. An illogical application of successful urban methods to rural prob-

lems wastes energy and delays the solution of the problem. A conception of religion which emphasizes its defensive agility instead of its aggressive qualities deprives the church of its inspiration and leadership. An undue exaltation of the clerical office and of the functions of public worship draws away the sense of divine agency and appointment from other offices and functions, and tends to divorce religion from the people, who feel that the clergy is exalted instead of the church, and that the community is sacrificed for the church instead of the church for the community.

A false conception, moreover, of the world-order as "permanently and necessarily corrupt" deprives the church of a large part of its proper influence. This view causes the church to neglect the general interests of society, and makes religion something external, to be gotten by special experience, a system of dogmas to be accepted, and of forms to be regarded, instead of consecrated devotion to the best interests of the community. It brings forth a scheme of redemption simply for the salvation of individuals instead of society. It postpones the hope of eternal life to a place beyond the grave, instead of helping one to enter into it in the everyday life.

Finally, the cause of low ebb of church influence in the rural districts is the failure to study the problem scientifically, and to adapt its program of reform along sociological lines instead of the traditional polity of the apostolic fathers.

IV.

Having traced the causal relations and conditions of the present degeneration of country life, and having uncovered the weaknesses in its social structure, the next step is to present the methods of amelioration actually in use, weigh them, and derive therefrom the regulative principles for a rational program of reform. As the great need of the rural communities seems to be for the socializing of education and culture, and for the "initiative of the resourceful in their social, political, and industrial problem," the present methods of amelioration naturally fall into certain institutional forms of betterment.

One of the methods of amelioration is the rural social settlement. This method has its origin and inspiration in the urban social settlement which has been such a powerful factor in solving the problem of the city. In presenting this method as a solution of the problem of the rural community, John P. Gavit, a well-known worker in settlement circles, says :

The same needs which welcome the settlement to crowded city quarters prevail in rural villages and scattered populations. There is the same occasion to exemplify higher family and intellectual ideals; the same opportunity to unify a community reft with schisms, social, racial, and religious; the same crying absence of a force to mediate the advantages of education and world-knowledge to those whose ill-paid labor has placed to their credit against society a large account of obligation; the same absence to fill of initiative to social action for the betterment of local and general conditions.

But, as he elsewhere adds :

The unification of races and tongues and religions in heterogeneous city wards is a simple problem beside the assimilation of the cliques and the theological and the caste feuds in a small village or agricultural community.

It is just here that this method fails, as must all methods that are borrowed from the urban community. The difference of social structure militates against its success. In the city the very friction of congestion helps to unify its races and religions; and the settlement method based upon this social structure is at once practical and effective. In the country, on the contrary, the very separation in its isolation helps to divide its social and religious life; and a settlement awkwardly joined to this social structure would be helpless between "a devil and a deep sea of theological discussion and prejudice." As Mr. Gavit says: "Leadership in such an enterprise would be exhausted early in the siege, and the adaptability of Paul's 'all things to all men' would be tested to the limit." One must ever take into account the independence of the isolated inhabitant of the rural district; and any method of amelioration which tinges the least of the spirit of patronage will die a sure and speedy death. "You may flatter the American farmer, but you cannot patronize him," says the editor of the *Michigan Farmer*. And this is why the rural social settlement can never be a success in ameliorating rural life.

In itself the settlement idea is a good one. It furnishes an

example in urban life of what should be done for rural life. Its noble aim, broad social view, and excellent methods must be kept in mind by one who would ameliorate the growing isolation of the rural community. However, if there is a group of persons, a family, or an individual voluntarily seeking to live where there seems to be great need, there will be found in the rural districts wonderful opportunities, by close study of local conditions, to take the initiative in unifying the social life and in helping it to attain its sixfold interests.

Another method that has just recently been introduced into the rural community is the "institutional church." Like the social settlement, its original home is in the city, where it is successfully combating the problem of congestion. According to the platform of the Open and Institutional Church League, its aim is as follows :

Inasmuch as Christ came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, the open and institutional church, filled and moved by his spirit of ministering love, seeks to become the center and source of all beneficent and philanthropic effort, and to take the leading part in every movement that has for its end the alleviation of human suffering, the elevation of man, and the betterment of the world. Thus the open and institutional church aims to save all men and all of the man by all means, abolishing so far as possible the distinctions between the religious and the secular, and sanctifying all days and all means to the great end of saving the world for Christ.

It is apparent from this platform that the institutional church is scientifically based on a broad study of world and social conditions and of local conditions and needs. It aims to adapt itself to its environment, fashioning its methods according to the peculiar conditions of the community in which it is situated. There is, however, the same objection to transplanting the institutional church in the country as there is to the social settlement. The social structures of the city and country are vastly different. Their problems are diametrically opposite in nature. It needs great hordes of people to run the machinery of the institutional church as it now exists. It takes great extremes of social life to furnish it inspiration and opportunity. It is fed by the lack of home life which is so characteristic of the city with its teeming tenements, its large restaurant population, and its luxurious hotels thronged with homeless millionaires.

Now, these conditions do not exist in the country. There the people are scattered and isolated. Life has no great extremes of poverty and wealth, ignorance and culture; and while the home life may not be so rich as it should be, it is healthful and stimulating on the whole. Moreover, the great need of society today is not the transference of home functions to the church; it is rather the restoration of those which have been taken from the home already. The important question before the American people today is how the family may be reinforced in its constructive elements. The truth must be emphasized that teaching and religion are permanent functions of the home. If we would make education "intellectual, industrial, and seasoned with character;" if we would make religion an expression of divine fatherhood and brotherhood, we must not delegate the permanent functions of the home entirely to the school and the church. While the conditions of urban life are destructive to the home life, it is not so in the rural districts. And it is the duty of the country church so to arrange its polity that it conserves and intensifies the home as an institution, instead of robbing it of its functions and of separating it into individuals.

The "village improvement society," unlike the other organizations mentioned had its origin and inspiration in a rural community. Originated to satisfy but one of the six interests of human life, the æsthetic, it has now broadened its scope to contain them all. The objects of the American League for Civic Improvement include all the cultural interests, "together with other local needs of home and community." In general, the aim of this society is to promote health by securing better hygienic conditions; to add to the community wealth by bettering all those conditions which cause economic loss; to promote intellectual life through the introduction of lectures, entertainments, reading-circles, libraries, and better school facilities; to promote sociability through the improvement of roads, sidewalks, street-lights; by giving the people interests broad enough and vital enough to enable all cliques and all persons to be interested in the same thing; by fraternizing a community through its very organization, leading all classes irrespective of rank or

sect to work for the common good; to awaken the love of beauty by cultivating flowers, vines, shrubs, and trees, and by banishing from the public gaze all slatternliness and ugliness; to promote the standard of rightness through the improvement of the home, on the basis that "if parents combine to make the circle of the home life beautiful, without and within, they will sow the seeds of truth, honesty, and kindness in the hearts of their children."

One has but to glance over the wide bibliography of this subject to see how much this society is doing to solve the rural problem. Its success is largely due to the fact that it is scientifically founded on the social structure of a rural town, and that its methods are in harmony with the rural problems of isolation and lack of initiative.

What the village improvement society has been accomplishing for the villages the farmers' organizations have been accomplishing for the farming communities. They, too, have succeeded because they are founded upon the social structure of rural life, and are scientifically adapted to its problem. It takes a unique organization, indeed, to secure the unity and co-operation of a class of people who are made intensely individual by their vocation, ungraciously independent by their isolation, and who are difficult to organize because of poor facilities of communication and transportation. Yet, despite their inborn suspicion of men, their aversion to patronage, their jealousy of leadership, their tenacity for personal views, their looseness in keeping co-operative pledges, the American farmers have actually been organized; and they are now co-operating hand in soul in the Grange and the Farmers' Institute.

The Grange, whose official title is the Patrons of Husbandry, arose in the year 1849. It was organized by its founder, Mr. O. H. Kelley, to meet two needs: to educate the farmer better for his business, and to cultivate a spirit of brotherhood between the North and the South. The following is the "Promulgation of Purpose of the National Grange":

We shall endeavor to advance our cause by laboring to accomplish the following objects: To develop a better and higher manhood and woman-

hood among ourselves. To enhance the comforts and attractions of our homes, and to strengthen our attachments to our pursuits. To foster mutual understanding and co-operation. To maintain inviolate our laws; to emulate each other in labor; to hasten the good time coming. To reduce our expenses, both individual and corporate. To buy less and produce more, in order to make our farms self-sustaining. To diversify our crops, and to crop no more than we can cultivate. To condense the weight of our exports, selling less in the bushel and more on hoof and in fleece. To systematize our work, and to calculate intelligently on probabilities. To discountenance the credit system, the mortgage system, the fashion system, and every other system that tends to prodigality and bankruptcy.

We propose meeting together, talking together, selling together, and in general acting together for common protection and advancement. We shall avoid litigation as much as possible by arbitration in the Grange. We shall constantly strive to secure entire harmony, good-will, vital brotherhood among ourselves, and to make our order perpetual. We shall earnestly strive to suppress personal, local, sectional, and national prejudices, all unhealthful rivalry, all selfish ambition. Faithful adherence to these principles will insure our mental, moral, social, and material advancement.

We shall advance the cause of education among ourselves and our children by all just means in our power. We especially advocate for agricultural schools that practical agriculture, domestic science, and all the arts which adorn the home be taught in the courses of study. We emphasize and assert the oft-repeated truth taught in our organic law, that the Grange is not a political or party organization. No Grange, if true to its obligation, can discuss political and religious questions.

From these quotations one can see how high the aim and how broad the scope of this movement. There is always some difficulty, however, in working out the ideals of an order, and it was so with the Grange. An undue emphasis was put upon the economic function of the order, at the expense of the cultural interests. Many entered it merely for quick financial gain. A kindred organization was founded for political purposes and for combating the so-called monopolies of the railroads. Farmers everywhere were swept into the movement, but as it was based on illogical principles, it soon fell, carrying down the Grange with it. But the Grange quickly recovered, readjusted its activities, and is now more prosperous than ever. Its chief work today is on cultural lines. According to one of its promoters, "it is ambitious to take a place beside the school and the church as one of a trinity of forces that shall mold the life of the farmer

on the broadest possible basis—material, intellectual, social, and ethical.”

Perhaps the best way to test an organization is not simply by its ideals, but by what it has accomplished. Not least is the legislation it has won. Among the most important national achievements is the making of the head of the Agricultural Department a cabinet officer; the establishment of an Interstate Commerce Commission; laws favoring pure foods and dairy products; laws preventing the extension of patents on sewing-machines; and the establishment of rural free mail delivery.

The Grange, moreover, is practically driving isolation out of the farming community. The following news item of a Michigan Grange is illuminating:

Macon Grange has a well-furnished commodious hall, two stories high, containing a dining-hall with tables and dishes for ninety at a sitting. The audience room is carpeted and well supplied with paraphernalia, bunting, etc., warmed with a furnace, and seated with 200 chairs. We have a good choir, a male quartette, and an orchestra; also a dramatic club. There is a maple grove on the lot and 180 feet of sheds where 40 teams may be sheltered. We have also 23 miles of rural free mail delivery, 40 miles of rural telephone which connects the homes of all the members, and is much utilized in committee work.

Again, through the legislation it has secured, through the intensive and intelligent farming it has developed, through its bitter enmity to the credit system, through the establishment of co-operative purchasing, through its mutual fire and life insurance, and through the amelioration of many influences which injure the value of a farm, the Grange has secured great economic benefit to the farmers.

This organization has also done much for education. It has given an impetus to agricultural education and to the study of domestic science. It has created the need now being filled by the Farmers' Institute. The Grange Hall itself is an educational center through its debating clubs, lecture courses, parliamentary societies, and circulating libraries.

The ethical life of the farmer has also been intensified. While avoiding sectarian discussions, it has not neglected to emphasize true religion. “Its ritual is permeated in word and

sentiment by the religious spirit." The church has not been more helpful in conserving family life, for in the Grange the whole family is interested. Every girl and boy over fifteen years may attain full membership. Woman is placed on an equal with man. Every delegate to every state Grange is a dual delegate, man and wife. The spirit of sacrifice and altruism is emphasized in many ways. It has been truly said of the Michigan Grange: "It consists not solely in trying to achieve things for the material benefit of its members, but its greatest power lies in the service it can be to the people of the whole state." This is confirmed by the legislation which it has secured, which does not so much affect the producer as the consumer; by the fact that the Michigan Grange has for six years carried on systematic "fresh-air work," giving two-week vacations every summer to hundreds of poor mothers and children of the congested cities.

But if the Grange had not accomplished anything more than to teach the farmers of America the value of co-operation, it would justify its existence. In this it has been signally successful. The Grange, doubtless, will ever exist and prosper, because it is based on right principles. It successfully combats the problem of isolation. It satisfies the sixfold interests of human life. It avoids the sectarian and political questions which might rift its unity. It includes the entire family.

The "farmers' institute" is indirectly the product of the Grange. As the farmers of the different communities met together to discuss affairs of common interest, it became customary to send to the state agricultural schools for speakers on special topics. So frequent became these summons that the state universities established bureaus for the management of lecture trips, or institutes. Finally the expansion became so great that it became necessary to ask the state legislature for direct appropriations for the maintenance of the lecture bureaus. Wisconsin appropriates annually for this purpose \$15,000. Thirteen states are now making appropriations, and in many more organized work is being done under the direction of the state school. Nearly every state in the Union is holding farmers' institutes today. In other words, a university-extension movement has

arisen among the farmers, far outreaching in its influence all other movements.

The primary mission of the institute is the improvement of methods in agricultural work. This is gained through lectures and by practical demonstration wherever possible. For instance, the county institutes in Minnesota are schools, the superintendent and his corps of assistants going together and remaining at each institute through the entire session. But agricultural technique and business methods do not occupy the entire attention of the sessions. To the departments of live stock, dairy, and farming have been added domestic science and home culture. And today, practically all the sixfold interests of social welfare are represented in each county and state meeting of the farmers' institute. This is confirmed by the following subjects, drawn at random from the annual report of the farmers' institutes of Michigan and Illinois.

Wealth: restoration of soil fertility; cash *vs.* credit; woman's share in economics. Health: sanitation in town and country; the importance of bacteria in everyday life; the prevention and restriction of communicable disease. Knowledge: agriculture and the public schools; circulating libraries; the relation of the mother to the country school. Sociability: influence of good roads on farm life; the relation of the farmer's wife to society; art of living with others. Beauty: farm-house architecture; influence of flowers on rural life; the surroundings of the farm-house. Rightness: consecrated parentage; social purity; influence of the country home.

No one can measure the power for good exerted by the farmers' institute on the rural community. A keen observer has said: "Many of the American farmers do not belong to America's laboring people. They take as much scientific interest in their work and do as much serious reading as most city physicians and editors." Prince Kropotin has spoken glowingly of the intellectual superiority of Iowa farmers over those of the old world, shown by the attendance and discussion at farmers' institutes; and Tolstoi, with his keen insight into social conditions, has recommended that the same system be instituted in Russia for the elevation of the Slavic peasant.

With high vision and consecrated service this organization, under the direction of the state agricultural schools, is now attempting to bring together in harmonious action the various forces engaged in the betterment of rural life. The Grange, the farmers' clubs, the school, and the church are asked to co-operate in each county and state institute. This year there was a joint meeting of the Michigan Farmers' Institute and the Michigan Political Science Association; and the theme of the gathering was the unification of the forces engaged in the amelioration of rural life. The inspiration in such a presentation of the forces of life must have been seen in the remarks of Mr. C. D. Smith, one of the leaders of the movement:

More than one citizen long past middle life and living in an isolated community came to me at the close of the institute, and, almost in tears, expressed his gratitude that there had been revealed to him aspects of his own life that had theretofore been withheld from him.

No presentation of the movements for the amelioration of the rural community would be complete without an account of the Hesperia movement. On the principle that "no organization, no extension movement, university or otherwise, will prove adequate to the social, civic, intellectual, and spiritual life of rural life, since the force that socializes must be in the midst of the community—must be a part of its very life," a movement having its origin in Hesperia, Mich., is on foot to erect a building in every community in which may be developed to a high degree the complete life of the community. This new movement is not intended to supplant any of the other organizations of rural life; it is to be simply a bond to draw them together in closer communion, sympathy, and love for the amelioration of the community life. In this building the different organizations may meet and give free expression to their activities. Here these activities will find united expression in a "big meeting" once a year. The evening sessions will be reserved for speakers of state and national reputation; and the day sessions, for addresses and discussions upon subjects pertaining to home, school, farm, church, and civic life. On Sunday a union service emphasizes the place of the church as a spiritual factor in

rural life. Colonel Francis W. Parker, Dr. Arnold Tompkins, Will Carleton, Hamilton Wright Mabie, Byron King, and others who have addressed this unique Hesperian gathering say that there is nothing equal to it in America for inspiration, social and civic uplift. Yet Hesperia is a village of only 700 inhabitants, and situated twelve miles from a railroad.

V.

Having studied the different methods now in use for the amelioration of rural conditions, and having witnessed the comparative success or failure of these methods, we see that certain organizations attained good results, because they scientifically founded their organization on the social structure of the rural community; their methods were arranged in technique to solve the rural problem of isolation, and were not simply borrowed from urban organizations that had solved the problem of congestion; they satisfied the sixfold interests of individual and social welfare; they secured the interest and co-operation of practically every member of the community, regardless of age, sex, sect, or politics; they strongly organized the community to realize their principles; they prohibited political and sectarian discussions, thus guaranteeing permanence and harmony; they sought the vitalizing and socializing force from the community itself, not entirely from without.

From this analysis we derive the following regulative principle: Any method based upon a scientific analysis of the social structure of the rural community will ameliorate the conditions of such community, if it secures the forceful interest, co-operation, and organization of its members, regardless of age, sex, party, or creed; and if it satisfies the interests of individual and social welfare, viz., health, wealth, sociability, knowledge, beauty, and rightness.

VI.

A rational program for reform, suggested by the failures and successes of the preceding methods and based on the regulative principles of social action derived, must be broad enough in its aim to embrace all classes, ages, sects, and parties of the com-

munity, to include all the six ends of social welfare, and all institutions which help to achieve these ends, assigning to each one its part in producing rural unity and harmony.

Such a method, however, must have some organization back of it to put it into execution. This initiative must come from within the community and not from without. Now the question is: Which one of the rural institutions is best fitted to conceive and initiate a rational program of reform?

"The true integrating force in society is a spiritual force," says Benjamin Kidd. "It is," says Washington Gladden, "the spirit of Jesus Christ in the hearts of men. The precise business of the church is to fill the world with the spirit of unity and brotherhood; to arrest and countervail the divisive and repulsive forces; to promote the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace; to preach and realize here upon earth a kingdom of heaven, a kingdom of peace and good-will." "The very function of the church," says Graham Taylor, "is to build up the community out of itself, and not to build up itself out of the community." "To unify all forces which make for righteousness and inspire them to realize the highest ideals attainable is the formative function of the church in a community." The church is so situated that it touches both types of rural life, the farming district and the village. It is a permanent organization in society. Cross-bearing is the end of its being and the source of its life. Its chief function, therefore, is to take up the burden of the rural community and bear it in a spirit of love and consecration to generate enthusiastic public spirit; and to conceive and initiate a rational program of reform.

No other rural institutions are situated to undertake this work. They lack either permanence, the spirit of sacrifice, the enkindling personality of a great founder, the breadth of scope, the opportune site, or the enthusiasm and consecration for service.

But has the church a vision of its social functions that it may take the initiative in this movement? It is true that the church at present is far from being a center of rural organization and inspiration. It has no scientific knowledge of its true function. Asleep in its rustic bower, it has not yet awakened to the change

that has taken place in religious activities. It has not yet learned that there is more than one fundamental interest in life. It has lost its own unity, its message of brotherly love, its power to counteract integrating forces—in sectarian malice it has torn asunder the unity of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It draws into its folds but a small fraction of the community. Its chief aim seems to be to build itself up at the expense of the community, rather than to build up the community out of it.

But there is beginning to dawn upon the rural church, here and there, a vision of its social functions. Rip Van Winkle-like, it has awakened from its long sleep to find that it is surrounded by a strange environment. It has discovered that, while in the good old Puritan times it was the center of the community and was its very life, today immigration, strange traditions, and multitudinous sects have swept it to one side, while many other organizations have become centers of community life. It has found that, while formerly life was narrowly individualistic, today it is broadly social; that centralization of power has de-individualized industry, redistributed the people, crowded the cities, drained the country, and transformed civilization; that a mere machine, a steam-engine, has upset the theology and polity of the eternal church.

The rural church is discovering that the great problem of the day is not merely the relation of one man to one God, but rather the relation of man to man; and that therein lies largely the relation of man to God. It is feeling the strong breath of a scientific spirit that is sweeping its dreamy security of authority from beneath its feet, leaving it to struggle for a foothold. A new science called psychology is jarring its peace by destroying its old concept of the soul, demonstrating with cruel logic the interdependence of body, mind, and spirit, and pointing out the fact that if one would save the soul he must save the whole man. Thus awakened, in wonder and dismay the church is going back with tottering steps to the companion of old, the Holy Scriptures, but only to see strange visions and faces. From the old familiar pages the newly discovered social teachings of Jesus stare it in the face. The old vision of a celestial heaven

as the kingdom of God has faded away, and there lies before it "there discovered kingdom of God on earth."

It is not the object of this paper to elaborate a program of reform. This can be worked out only through experience. A great many schemes have been suggested to prevent the present decay of the rural church, such as more music, brief liturgy, stereopticon, sensational methods, religious periodicals, enlarged giving, longer pastorates, proper apparatus, distribution of sermons, varied prayer meetings, blackboards, short sermons, political themes, rural missionaries, a visual service, and ecclesiastical superintendents. But as bulwarks of oak and rock will not check the ebb of the tide while the moon is upheaving the waters with drawing force, so no shortsighted reinforcements of present church methods will check the ebb of church decay so long as the drawing power of centralization is pulling the multitudes into social centers. In broad outline, however, the following would be the program of the church seeking to lead in the amelioration of rural life.

The church must, in the first place, secure unity in social action, if not in belief. This may be secured by a scientific knowledge of man physiologically and psychologically; by a scientific knowledge of society and its movements; by a true vision of the kingdom of God; by the Christ-like desire to sacrifice sectarian ambition for the good of the community. Secondly, the church must elaborate a program of social reform. This may be done by a scientific study of the social structure of the community; by a clear understanding and appreciation of its needs; by a clear vision of the ends of individual and social welfare; by a careful study of the casual conditions and connections; by a survey of the existing methods of amelioration actually in use, and by deriving the underlying principles therefrom.

Finally, this program may be realized by stimulating or instituting all institutions which may help in the working out of this program; *i. e.*, by conserving the home, and developing therein a happy, self-educating, and resourceful life; by promoting the centralization of the rural schools, and by securing the use of

the school buildings for the other activities of the community; by organizing a village improvement society to help attain all the ends of village welfare; by stimulating the organization of a Grange and a farmers' institute to help the more isolated members of the community realize complete living; or, if these organizations already exist, co-operating with them in the federation of all the social forces of the community; by causing the erection, if need be, of a central building in the village as a center of the civic, spiritual, social, and intellectual life of the community, where all of its uplifting elements may meet in closer union, sympathy, and co-operation; by making the church building a center of rural inspiration and regeneration through a clergy competent, confident of God, and consecrated to his service; a church building constructed in harmony with the activities of social and individual welfare; a polity and technique adapted to the needs of the community; a piety cultivated as a social interest, and not as an isolated selfish life; a doctrine interpreted in terms of life; and a salvation, social as well as individual.

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