

READINGS IN RURAL SOCIOLOGY

BY

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PREFACE

The rapid introduction during the past ten years of courses in rural sociology in universities, colleges, normal schools and other institutions engaged in the preparation of young men and women for the rural field has prepared the way for a book of readings in this subject that may be used as a text for an introductory course.

Much of the material included in this book has been used with college classes in this institution and with classes of teachers in normal schools and in university summer courses. In the selection of the material it has seemed best to draw upon the writings of men and women whose long experience or professional standing entitles them to speak with some degree of authority.

I have assumed that an introductory course in rural sociology should endeavor: first, to develop a broad, sympathetic understanding of the real needs and actual conditions of farm and community life in the United States; second, to lead students to appreciate the relationship between life and labor, wealth and welfare on the farm, since farming is not only an occupation but also a mode of life; third, to show as concretely as possible the unity of interest of rural and urban groups based on the fact that the farm supplies the city not only with food but also with a large proportion of its population, thus making necessary a sound rural life as the condition for the development of a permanent industrial democracy; fourth, to interest students in taking an active part in the work of those agencies that make for better conditions on American farms and in American rural community; fifth, to endeavor to prevent students from making that most common of all errors—the undervaluation of the farmer's own judgment of what is best for himself.

Grateful acknowledgment is here made to the authors and publishers for their generous contributions and unfailing courtesy. Their names appear from page to page. My thanks are

due to many colleagues and friends for suggestions and criticisms concerning the organization or selection of the material, and to President Kenyon L. Butterfield for his interest and encouragement in its publication. To my wife, Ida Densmore Phelan, I am indebted for assistance in the abridgement of selections, the reading of the proof and the preparation of the index.

JOHN PHELAN.

Massachusetts Agricultural College,
Amherst, Massachusetts,
1920.

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READINGS IN RURAL SOCIOLOGY

CHAPTER I

COUNTRY LIFE IN NEW ENGLAND

FARM LIFE A CENTURY AGO¹

ETHEL STANWOOD BOLTON

IN the old days, when methods of work about the house and farm were prized for their hoary antiquity rather than, as now, for their novelty, and all farmers did as their ancestors had done, there was hardly a man in the New England towns who was not engaged in the pleasant occupation of farming. The storekeeper and the miller plowed, harrowed, and cultivated in the intervals of their other work, and the minister himself hung up his gown after the last service on Sunday, and, like the rest of the community, worked his land on Monday morning. A century ago each town owned a farm, the use of which was allowed the minister, rent free, as a part of his salary.

The struggle in modern times is for the money to buy the necessities of life; then there was less to buy, and each man was dependent on his own exertions to get the necessities themselves from the soil or from the stock which he could afford to keep.

In those days, aside from the work which the miller or the itinerant cobbler performed, each farm was a nearly self-supporting entity, both for food and clothing. In modern times the great English artist, printer, and socialist, William Morris, founded a settlement which tried to be independent of the outside world, growing and making all its own necessities and luxuries. The experiment was no more of a success than Mr. Alcott's similar scheme at Fruitlands, in the town of Harvard.

¹ Adapted from a paper read upon several occasions, privately printed.

In our great-grandfathers' time, however, this was no experiment, curious and interesting, but a fact to be reckoned with from day to day throughout their lives.

The village store sold the few luxuries of life—white and brown sugar, salt, West Indian goods, such as molasses and spices, and, most of all, New England rum.

Nearly every town boasted a foundry, where articles were made by hand, which would be far beyond the ability of our modern blacksmith. Here were made the plows and scythes, if the foundry was equipped with a trip hammer; shovels and hoes for outside work, nails for the carpenter, from the great iron spike to the shingle nail. The tools the carpenter used also came from the hands of the local blacksmith. In many country towns, old garrets will yield great chisels, primitive axes, and wrought iron bit-stocks, all made by hand and testifying to the excellence of workmanship by their age and condition. The household utensils, too, were his work, the fire dogs, toasting racks, hobs, iron kettles, skillets, and an endless array of less common things; and all this in addition to the shoeing of horses and oxen.

From 1799 to 1853, without a break, a good man of a Massachusetts town kept a line-a-day diary, and from that I am going to quote, from the four seasons of the year, to show the dull routine of work in which the lives of our grandfathers and great-grandfathers were passed; how it lacked the diversified interests which we consider necessary to our happiness to-day, and yet how little the unrest of modern times enters into any of its spirit.

Take these short sketches of the life of James Parker, known as "Captain James," a young and newly married man in 1806:

- " April 1st. I cut Hop-poles at the South End.
- 2nd. I wrought for Ivory Longley, cart wood. Mr. Edgarton Departed this life.
- 3d. Fast Day. I and Ruthy (his wife) went to Mr. Harkness (his wife's father). James came home with us.
- 4th. I and Ruthy went to the Funeral of Mr. Edgarton. Buryed in Mason order. The day was pleasant. A great collection of People.

- 5th. I split staves, mortised posts. Ruthy went to Groton.
- 6th. I and Ruthy went to meeting 1/2 the day 1/2 went to funeral of Joel Willard's Child that was drowned.
- 7th. I made a Curb to the well. Went to town Meeting.
- 8th. I partly made a yolk and it storm'd."

Later on, in the summer, his work changed, and was that of a tiller of the soil about his business:

- " July 28th. I mow'd 1/2 the day, 1/2 plow'd hops. Abner mow'd all day.
- 29th. I plow'd and how'd hops 1/2 the day. I went and plow'd Abner's Corn. Abner helpt me 1/2 the day.
- 30th. I sow'd some turnips, it rain'd. I went to Davids (his brother).
- 31st. I helpt Father plow with my oxen and Vene helpt Drive.
- August 1st. I was haying. Abner helpt me 1/2 the day. I carted my N to Capt. Edgarton's.
- 2nd. I was plowing my stubble, it rain'd and Clowdy.
3. I went to meeting. Esq. Tom (the minister's son) red the Discourse.

And so it is a constant reiteration of plowing, mowing, raking, hoeing, all done by hand or with the slow-paced oxen. How many lessons in patience the farmer learned in those days, and what a dignified ease there was about it all! There were no complaints when the hay was all cut and the weather turned bad, but a calm acceptance. In October preparations for the winter were being made.

- "October 1 I began to draw and hew the timber for my hog-pen.
- 2nd. I drew and hew'd timber for the same Abner helpt me.