

From:

*I'll Take my Stand: The  
South and the Agrarian  
Tradition.*

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## THE HIND TIT

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### I

WHEN we remember the high expectations held universally by the founders of the American Union for a more perfect order of society, and then consider the state of life in this country today, it is bound to appear to reasonable people that somehow the experiment has proved abortive, and that in some way a great commonwealth has gone wrong.

There are those among us who defend and rejoice in this miscarriage, saying we are more prosperous. They tell us—and we are ready to believe—that collectively we are possessed of enormous wealth and that this in itself is compensation for whatever has been lost. But when we, as individuals, set out to find and enjoy this wealth, it becomes elusive and its goods escape us. We then reflect, no matter how great it may be collectively, if individually we do not profit by it, we have lost by the exchange. This becomes more apparent with the realization that, as its benefits elude us, the labors and pains of its acquisition multiply.

To be caught unwittingly in this unhappy condition is calamitous; but to make obeisance before it, after learning how barren is its rule, is to be eunuched. For those who are Southern farmers this is a particularly bitter fact to con-

sider. We have been taught by Jefferson's struggles with Hamilton, by Calhoun's with Webster, and in the woods at Shiloh or along the ravines of Fort Donelson where the long hunter's rifle spoke defiance to the more accelerated Springfields, that the triumph of industry, commerce, trade, brings misfortune to those who live on the land.

Since 1865 an agrarian Union has been changed into an industrial empire bent on conquest of the earth's goods and ports to sell them in. This means warfare, a struggle over markets, leading, in the end, to actual military conflict between nations. But, in the meantime, the terrific effort to manufacture ammunition—that is, wealth—so that imperialism may prevail, has brought upon the social body a more deadly conflict, one which promises to deprive it, not of life, but of living; take the concept of liberty from the political consciousness; and turn the pursuit of happiness into a nervous running-around which is without the logic, even, of a dog chasing its tail.

This conflict is between the unnatural progeny of inventive genius and men. It is a war to the death between technology and the ordinary human functions of living. The rights to these human functions are the natural rights of man, and they are threatened now, in the twentieth, not in the eighteenth, century for the first time. Unless man asserts and defends them he is doomed, to use a chemical analogy, to hop about like sodium on water, burning up in his own energy.

But since a power machine is ultimately dependent upon human control, the issue presents an awful spectacle: men, run mad by their inventions, supplanting themselves with

inanimate objects. This is, to follow the matter to its conclusion, a moral and spiritual suicide, foretelling an actual physical destruction.

The escape is not in socialism, in communism, or in sovietism-the three final stages industrialism must take. These change merely the manner and speed of the suicide; they do not alter its nature. Indeed, even now the Republican government and the Russian Soviet Council pursue identical policies toward the farmer. The Council arbitrarily raises the value of its currency and forces the peasant to take it in exchange for his wheat. This is a slightly legalized confiscation, and the peasants have met it by refusing to grow surplus wheat. The Republicans take a more indirect way-they raise the tariff. Of the two policies, that of the Russian Soviet is the more admirable. It frankly proposes to make of its farmers a race of helots.

We have been slobbered upon by those who have chewed the mad root's poison, a poison which penetrates to the spirit and rots the soul. And the time is not far off when the citizens of this one-time Republic will be crying, "What can I do to be saved?" If the farmers have been completely enslaved by that time, the echo to their question will be their only answer. If they have managed to remain independent, the answer lies in a return to a society where agriculture is practiced by most of the people. It is in fact impossible for any culture to be sound and healthy without a proper respect and proper regard for the soil, no matter how many urban dwellers think that their victuals come from groceries and delicatessens and their milk from tin cans. This ignorance does not release them from a final

dependence upon the farm and that most incorrigible of beings, the farmer. Nor is this ignorance made any more secure by Mr. Haldane's prognostication that the farm's ancient life will become extinct as soon as science rubs the bottle a few more times. The trouble is that already science has rubbed the bottle too many times. Forgetting in its hasty greed to put the stopper in, it has let the genius out.

But the resumption by the farmer of his place of power in the present order is considered remote. Just what political pressure he will be able to bring upon the Republicans to better his lot is, at the moment, unknown. Accepting the most pessimistic view, the continued supremacy of this imperialism and his continued dependency upon it, his natural enemy, the wealth-warrior who stands upon the bridge of high tariff and demands tribute, he is left to decide upon immediate private tactics. How is the man who is still living on the land, and who lives there because he prefers its life to any other, going to defend himself against this industrial imperialism and its destructive technology ?

One common answer is heard on every hand: Industrialize the farm; be progressive; drop old-fashioned ways and adopt scientific methods. These slogans are powerfully persuasive and should be, but are not, regarded with the most deliberate circumspection, for under the guise of strengthening the farmer in his way of life they are advising him to abandon it and become absorbed. Such admonition coming from the quarters of the enemy is encouraging to the landowner in one sense only: it assures him he has something left to steal. Through its philosophy of Progress it is

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mitting a mortal sin to persuade farmers that they can grow wealthy by adopting its methods. A farm is not a place to grow wealthy; it is a place to grow corn.

It is telling him that he can bring the city way of living to the country and that he will like it when it gets there. His sons and daughters, thoroughly indoctrinated with these ideas at state normals, return and further upset his equilibrium by demanding the things they grew to like in town. They urge him to make the experiment, with threats of an early departure from his hearth and board. Under such pressure it is no wonder that the distraught countryman, pulled at from all sides, contemplates a thing he by nature is loath to attempt . . . experimentation.

If it were an idle experiment, there would be no harm in such an indulgence; but it is not idle. It has a price and, like everything else in the industrial world, the price is too dear. In exchange for the bric-a-brac culture of progress he stands to lose his land, and losing that, his independence, for the vagaries of its idealism assume concrete form in urging him to over-produce his money crop, mortgage his land, and send his daughters to town to clerk in ten-cent stores, that he may buy the products of the Power Age and keep its machines turning. That is the nigger in the woodpile . . . keep the machines turning!

How impossible it is for him to keep pace with the procession is seen in the mounting mortgages taken by banks, insurance companies, and the hydra-headed loan companies which have sprung up since the World War. In spite of these acknowledged facts, the Bureau of Agriculture, the State Experimental Stations, farm papers, and county

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agents, all with the best possible intentions, advise him to get a little more progressive, that is, a little more productive. After advising this, they turn around and tell him he must curtail his planting. They also tell him that he (meaning his family) deserves motor-cars, picture shows, chain-store dresses for the women-folks, and all the articles in Sears-Roebuck catalogues. By telling him how great is his deserving, they prepare the way to deprive him of his natural deserts.

He must close his ears to these heresies that accumulate about his head, for they roll from the tongues of false prophets. He should know that prophets do not come from cities, promising riches and store clothes. They have always come from the wilderness, stinking of goats and running with lice and telling of a different sort of treasure, one a corporation head would not understand. Until such a one comes, it is best for him to keep to his ancient ways and leave the homilies of the tumble-bellied prophets to the city man who understands such things, for on the day when he attempts to follow the whitewash metaphysics of Progress, he will be worse off than the craftsman got to be when he threw his tools away. If that day ever comes, and there are strong indications that it may, the world will see a new Lazarus, but one so miserable that no dog will lend sympathy enough to lick the fly dung from his sores. Lazarus at least groveled at the foot of the rich man's table, but the new Lazarus will not have this distinction. One cannot sit at the board of an insurance company, nor hear the workings of its gargantuan appetite whetting itself on its own digestive processes.

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He must close his ears because an agrarian culture and industrial warfare are sustained through the workings of two different economies. Nothing less than confusion can follow the attempt of one economy to react to the laws of another. The progressive-farmer ideal is a contradiction in terms. A stalk of cotton grows. It does not progress. In 50,000 years it may evolve into something different but for us and our four score and ten, it grows.

This error is also seen in the works of those highly respectable historians who, pointing to the census returns and the mounting wealth of the industrial states during the early decades of the nineteenth century, declared that the Southern culture was then already doomed, and that the Civil War merely hastened its demise. This view holds that industrialism is *manifest destiny*, that it would have supplanted agriculture in the South even if the Confederacy had maintained its withdrawal from the already disrupted Union. It strangely argues that the victorious planter and the small yeoman farmer would have abandoned what they had waged a desperate war to preserve from others; and what, in spite of defeat, survived in its essential features until the second decade of the twentieth century; and what still possesses sufficient strength to make a desperate fight for its inherited way of life.

If an abundance of those things which a people considers the goods and the riches of the earth defines wealth, then it follows that that particular culture is wealthy in proportion to the production and distribution of just those things and no others; and it does not depend upon what another people may consider the goods and riches, no matter how

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greatly those things have multiplied for them, nor how many individuals they have to possess them. What industrialism counts as the goods and riches of the earth the agrarian South does not, nor ever did.

It is true that the planting aristocracy bought freely from England and the North. It is also true that the Cotton Kingdom was hastened into being by the invention of the cotton gin, an apparatus of the Machine Age; but because of this, it did not assume the habits and conduct of a factory town. Stocks and bonds and cities did not constitute wealth to the planter. Broad acres and increasing slaves, all tangible evidence of possession, were the great desiderata of his labors; and regardless of their price fluctuation on the world market, if they were paid for, their value remained constant in the planting states.

But the farming South, the yeoman South, that great body of free men, had hardly anything to do with the capitalists and their merchandise. In the upland country, the pine barrens, in the hills and mountains, and interspersed between the large plantations or lying on their fringe, and in the bad-road districts wherever they lay, communication with the main arteries of trade was so difficult that the plain people were forced into a state of self-sufficiency. And those who could reach the main turnpikes or the rivers and those who owned a few slaves in the planting districts, when they sold their cotton in New Orleans, were even less dependent than the planters, for they kept their looms going and fed their stock home-grown feed. Even the planters were beginning to say in the middle 'fifties that horses do not fatten on bought corn.



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By 1860 these broad, as yet somewhat flexible, outlines marked the structural formation of the Confederacy: belonging to the planting body, in round numbers, 3,000,000; slaves and free negroes, 4,000,000; townsmen, 1,000,000; plain people, including those who owned a few slaves, 4,000,000. By 1830 the lower South, leavened by Tennessee and Kentucky, became dominant in the agrarian stronghold below the line; and the lower South at this time was largely the plain people. From them the planter class was made.

After 1860 there would have been no fundamental economic rivalry between the yeoman farmer and the great landowner. The struggle before that time had been to determine who would rule, and the planters who emerged had done so because they were the more vigorous, the more intelligent, the more fortunate—the strong men of their particular culture. Jackson, demanding for the talented obscure the chance to grow rich and distinguished, expressed their demands politically. Jacksonian Democracy was, therefore, no Democracy; and although it claimed to be sired by Jefferson, his self-sufficient republic of freeholders did not contemplate any such leadership. “Down here, men like me and General Jackson and Colonel Davy Crockett always demands our rights; and if we don’t git ‘em, somebody else is mighty liable to git Hell” is not the assertion of one contented to live easily and at peace on a fifty-acre steading. Cotton had changed the connotation of the demand.

In a society which recognizes the supremacy of nature and man’s frailty each individual enjoys or subdues nature

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according to his capacity and desires, and those who accumulate great estates deserve whatever reward attends them, for they have striven mightily. This is the common way a ruling class establishes itself. The South, and particularly the plain people, has never recovered from the embarrassment it suffered when this class was destroyed before the cultural lines became hard and fast.

The Whig Party was evidence of the painful readjustment between the static East and the dynamic West, and it pointed to the metamorphosis of the two into Calhoun's Feudal Aristocracy. It is significant that when the Western states were changing their constitutions to deliver universal suffrage into the hands of the farmer and artisan, Dew from Virginia and Harper from South Carolina were publishing tracts defending the strictest sort of society.

The force of Jackson's character introduced tragedy into the drama. His fight with Calhoun divided the house with an internecine struggle and so confused the agrarian states that they were unable to stand united before the irrepresible conflict. Calhoun, a philosopher as well as a logician, could see beyond his times the conclusion to the premises; but Jackson and Clay, men of action, one a soldier, the other a politician, could only act the parts their periods gave them. It was impossible for them, living pleasantly on their country estates, to foresee the impending dominion of technology.

The story of these strong men and their negro slaves has been told and mistold; but the farming South has had few to tell of its virtues, and it has left fewer written records to tell its story. Oblivion has almost covered it in a generation.

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The planters whom it looked to in the days of its strength to defend their common life have busied themselves after the migration to the towns with a defense of their own part in the story, ignoring or referring to the yeomanry as the pore white trash.

Travellers have remembered the bedbugs, greasy food, rough cribs found in some places, and all those disagreeable elements which in the midst of the fatigues and worries of travel over-emphasize the virtue of clean sheets and native food. Fresh linen has too often been mistaken for culture by people who scrub all the oil from their skins in the articles of the plumbing industry.

The most unique example of a garbled interpretation is found in the journals of one Olmstead, who traveled through the South in the early 'fifties. In the hill country he called to a young ploughman to inquire the way, and when not one, but several, ambled over and seemed willing to talk as long as he cared to linger, his time-ordered attitude was shocked at their lazy indifference to their work. Others who were mixed in their geography, who thought, for example, that New York lay to the south of Tennessee, amazed him. Although he could never know it, it was the tragedy of these people that they ever learned where New York lay, for such knowledge has taken them from a place where they knew little geography but knew it well, to places where they see much and know nothing.

This will be the most difficult task industrialism has undertaken, and on this rock its effort to urbanize the farm will probably split-to convince the farmer that it is time, not space, which has value. It will be difficult because the

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farmer knows that he cannot control time, whereas he can wrestle with space, or at least with that particular part which is his orbit. He can stop, set, chew, and talk, for, unable to subdue nature, it is no great matter whether he gets a little more or a little less that year from her limitless store. He has the choice of pleasant conversation, the excitement of hunting, fishing, hearing the hounds run, or of the possibility of accumulating greater spoils. Olmstead's young ploughmen did well to stop and talk with the "quair strangy"; ask "whare he's bin"; "whare he's aimin' to go"; and "air he bin to see his kin in Texas?" for by so doing they exchanged an uncertain physical satisfaction for a certain mental pleasure.

But those records which have been left, some few in writing, some through the patronage of journalists like Olmstead, through folk-games, songs, and ballads, particularly in the bad-road districts, and scattered more generally than is supposed upon the farms of the South, make it clear just how Southern life, and that part of it which was the plain people, was crystallizing when the war came.

One of these records comes from C. C. Henderson's *Story of Murfreesboro*. Martin Van Buren, when he was Chief Executive, made a speech from the court-house balcony. Everybody who could travel was there, for no Southern man ever missed, or misunderstood, a speech. Among those who had come to town that day was one Abner L., a squatter living on a large farm near the town. The landowner had promised Abner that he would introduce him to the President. After the speaking the planter moved through the crowd to keep his promise. This gentleman

understood thoroughly the honor he was about to receive. In a becoming, if somewhat nervous, manner he received the hand of the New-Yorker, squeezed it damply, then turned and presented Abner. Unlike the planter, Abner stepped up with perfect composure, pressed His Excellency's hand deliberately down, and said in a calm, even tone:

"Mr. Buren, the next time you come down here I want you to come out my way and ra'r around some with us boys."

This man worked a little truck patch on somebody else's land; hunted at night for pelts; fished in Stone's River; and ra'ed around when he was a mind to. He possessed nature as little as possible, but he enjoyed it a great deal, so well that he felt the President might be satisfied with what hospitality he had to offer. Whenever a society has at its base people so contented with their lot, it may not be perfect ideally, but it is the best politicians will ever effect and maintain.

When Confederate defeat destroyed the planter as a class, it upset the balance of the whole. The yeomanry, who had had little to do with the money crop before, moved down from the hills and bought for a song the planter's dismembered plantations. As this was done, it only prepared the way to undermine the Southern culture, for the destruction of the rulers did not mean its destruction. The plain man brought from his isolation his ways and habits, and the impoverished state which had fallen upon the country after war and reconstruction forced him to rely upon home manufactures. In the great exodus to Texas in 1873 all the

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emigrants wore homespun. It looked as if conditions were preparing to produce another set of rulers.

Unfortunately, the plain man did a thing which prevented this. When he took over the planter's land, he took over the worst of his habits, the furnishing system. Whereas with the planter it had been the factor of the great ports, with him it became the merchant of the county towns, the villages, and even the crossroads. The high price of cotton was responsible for this. When the prices broke in **1870**, the small farmer was faced with a new experience: his reliance upon a money economy made him responsible to its laws. So long as they paid him well for his labors, it was profitable; but he learned that there was no assurance that this would continue. Something he could not understand was beginning to control his life. He could only hope for better days, and in the meantime mortgage next year's crop. Because it was the money crop, the merchant forced him to grow only cotton and buy the feed for his stock. This caused over-production, a drop in prices, more mortgages, and still greater over-production.

Such conditions broke many, and for the first time in the Cotton Kingdom, white tenantry developed. This was a definite social loss. With an entirely different race to serve the rich men as in slavery, the small white man could feel no very strong social inequality, and those who lived in isolation none at all. Now, economic dependence brought about social lines drawn, not upon a comparative use and enjoyment of nature, but upon a possession of cash.

This turned the plain man, for he had lost his independence, into something he had never been before, the pore

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white, the hookwormed illiterate. Formerly, no matter how wealthy or how powerful a neighbor might grow, or how many slaves he might own, the small farmer who lived next to his plantation was still a free man so long as he paid his taxes and provided his family with food, clothes and shelter. He was economically and politically independent.

The uses of fertilizers, making for a quicker maturity, spread cotton culture northward and into Texas. Railroads ended the isolation of those places which bad roads had cut off from the markets, and the plain people who remained at home were brought into the money economy. The Cotton Kingdom before **1860** was supported by black backs. It now changed its nature. The small white farmer, from raising **12** per cent gradually worked and picked the greatest part of the crop. This spread of cotton meant the spread of a false set of economics.

He had been misled, and he was to wander farther afield under false doctrine. His former leaders, the generals and colonels and lawyer-statesmen, moved into the towns and cities and entered the industrial world. This move deprived them of any right to lead or rule the farmer, for no longer would his problems and theirs be the same. Nevertheless, for a long time after the war, from habit and affection, and because of the menace of the free negro, they still followed the counsel of these men. The time came when they realized their betrayal, for railroad and corporation presidents as they spoke of chivalry and pure womanhood did not put sow-belly in the pantry, nor meal in the barrel. This protest expressed itself politically through Private John Allen from

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Mississippi, Tom Watson in Georgia, and Bob Taylor in Tennessee, and farmer candidates everywhere.

But he had listened too long. He himself began to think more and more of money, and his inability to take much of it from the industrial scheme produced a feeling of moral defeat. His ambitious sons, instead of becoming the leaders of the farm communities, went North and West and to the growing Southern cities to make their fortunes, and as they left he did not protest. Those who remained, caught by the furnishing system, could not rise to lead. They were bound hand and foot—so firmly bound that the high price of cotton during the World War led them deeper into the money economy instead of freeing them.

As a result, up to the entrance of the United States into this war the farmer was trying unconsciously to live by two antithetical economies. In spite of his dual existence he managed to secure many good things from the soil, for his life was still largely ordered after his agrarian inheritance. The next, the fatal step, is to become a progressive farmer, for then he must reverse this dualism and think first of a money economy, last of a farmer's life. The new emphasis puts him in a critical condition; the precedence of the money economy means the end of farming as a way of life.

## II

On a certain Saturday, a group of countrymen squatted and lay about the Rutherford County court-house yard, three-quarters of a century after Abner L. extended his invitation to Van Buren. One remarked to the others that



“as soon as a farmer begins to keep books, he’ll go broke shore as hell.”

Let us take him as a type and consider the life of his household before and after he made an effort to industrialize it. Let us set his holdings at two hundred acres, more or less—a hundred in cultivation, sixty in woods and pasture, and forty in waste land, too rocky for cultivation but offering some pasturage. A smaller acreage would scarcely justify a tractor. And that is a very grave consideration for a man who lives on thirty or fifty acres. If the pressure becomes too great, he will be forced to sell out and leave, or remain as a tenant or hand on the large farm made up of units such as his. This example is taken, of course, with the knowledge that the problem on any two hundred acres is never the same: the richness of the soil, its qualities, the neighborhood, the distance from market, the climate, water, and a thousand such things make the life on every farm distinctly individual.

The house is a dog-run with an ell running to the rear, the kitchen and dining-room being in the ell, if the family does not eat in the kitchen; and the sleeping-rooms in the main part of the house. The dog-run is a two- or four-crib construction with an open space between, the whole covered by one roof. The run or trot gets its name from the hounds passing through from the front to the rear. It may or may not have a floor, according to the taste or pride of the occupant. This farmer will have it floored, because his grandfather, as he prospered, closed in the dog-run with doors, making it into a hall; added porches front and rear, weather-boarded the logs, and ceiled the two half-story

rooms. His grandfather belonged to that large number of sturdy freemen who owned from three to five hundred acres of land and perhaps a slave or two in better days. But owning a few slaves did not make him a planter. He and his sons worked alongside them in the fields. Of farmers so situated in the South there was one to every twelve and one-tenth of free population.

There is a brick walk running from the porch to a horse block, lined on either side with hardy buttercups. From the block a road marked off by tall cedars goes out to the pike gate, two hundred yards away. The yard is kept grazed down by sheep, and occasionally the stock is turned in, when the pastures are burned in a drought. The house needs paint, but the trees are whitewashed around the base of the trunks to keep insects off and to give a neat appearance to the yard.

Over the front doorway is a horseshoe, turned the right way to bring luck to all who may pass beneath its lintel. The hall is almost bare, but scrubbed clean. At the back is a small stairway leading to the half-story. This is where the boys sleep, in their bachelorhood definitely removed from the girls. To the left is the principal room of the house. The farmer and his wife sleep there in a four-poster, badly in need of doing over; and here the youngest chillum sleep on pallets made up on the floor.

The large rock fireplace is the center of the room. The home-made hickory chairs are gathered in a semicircle about it, while on the extreme left of the arc is a rough hand-made rocker with a sheep-skin bottom, shiny from use, and its arms smooth from the polishing of flesh, re-

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served always for "mammy," the tough leather-skinned mother of the farmer. Here she sets and rocks and smokes near enough for the draught to draw the smoke up the chimney. On the mantel, at one end, is dry leaf tobacco, filling the room with its sharp, pungent odor. A pair of dog-irons rests on the hearth, pushed against the back log and holding up the ends of the sticks which have burnt in two and fallen among the hot ashes. The fire is kept burning through the month of May to insure good crops, no matter how mild and warm its days turn out to be. The top rock slab is smoked in the middle where for generations the wind has blown suddenly down the chimney, driving heavy gusts to flatten against the mantel and spread out into the room. A quilting-frame is drawn into the ceiling, ready to be lowered into the laps of the women-folks when the occasion demands, although it is gradually falling into disuse. Beneath it, spreading out from the center of the floor, a rag rug covers the wide pine boards which, in turn, cover the rough-hewn puncheons that sufficed during the pioneer days. From this room, or rather, from the hearth of this room, the life of the dwelling moves.

If this is the heart of the house, the kitchen is its busiest part. The old, open fireplace has been closed in since the war, and an iron range has taken its place. This much machinery has added to the order of the establishment's life without disrupting it. Here all the food is prepared, and the canning and preserving necessary to sustain the family during the winter is done.

The cooking is a complicated art, requiring mastery over all its parts to burden the table with victuals that can be

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relished. Each meal is a victory over nature, a suitable union between the general principles of cookery and the accident of preparation. The fire must be kept at the right temperature (without a thermometer), or the bread won't rise too much lard, or too little, will spoil the pastry; and since the test of all cooking is the seasoning, which can never be reduced to exact rules but is partly intuitive, too many pinches of salt may ruin the dish. The farmer's wife learns to satisfy the tastes of her particular family, but she can never set two meals on the table exactly alike. She never overcomes nature; her victories are partial, but very satisfying, for she knows her limitations.

The kitchen leads out to the back ell-shaped porch. Upon its banister, or, if there is no banister, upon the wash-table a bucket of water and its gourd, a tin pan, soap, and towel wait to serve the morning toilet. The towel will hang on a folding rack fixed to the wall. This rack may also serve long strings of red peppers drying in the air. A bell-post rises up near the kitchen to ring the boys in from the fields at dinner-time. In the back, behind the kitchen, is the smokehouse and several outhouses. Iron kettles for washing tilt. to one side in the ashes of an old fire, some distance away. An ash-hopper made from a hollow log, no longer in use, lies up against the buggy-house, having gone the Gay of the kitchen fireplace. The lye for soap and hominy-making is now bought in town.

Convenient to the kitchen is the woodpile, made of different-sized sticks, some for the stove, split and cut to the right length, and some for the fireplaces, back logs and front sticks. The wood has been cut in the early fall, just

as the sap begins to go down, not too early and not too late, but just at the right time, so that the outer surface will be dry and will catch quick, while the inside remains sappy and hard, burning slowly. It takes a great deal of study and intelligence to keep the fires going steadily.

Before dawn the roosters and the farmer feel the tremendous silence, chilling and filling the gap between night and day. He gets up, makes the fires, and rings the rising bell. He could arouse the family with his voice, but it has been the custom to ring the bell; so every morning it sounds out, taking its place among the other bells in the neighborhood. Each, according to his nature, gets up and prepares for the day: the wife has long been in the kitchen when the boys go to the barn; some of the girls help her, while the farmer plans the morning work and calls out directions.

One or two of the girls set out with their milk-pails to the barn, where the cows have been kept overnight. There is a very elaborate process to go through with in milking. First, the cow must be fed to occupy her attention; next, the milker kneels or sits on a bucket and washes the bag which will have gotten manure on it during the night (she kneels to the right, as this is the strategic side; the cow's foot is somehow freer on the left). After the bag is clean, the milking begins. There is always a variation- to this ritual. When the calf is young, the cow holds back her milk for it; so the calf is allowed to suck a little at first, some from each teat, loosening the milk with uniformity, and then is pulled off and put in a stall until his time comes. There is one way to pull a calf off, and only one. He must be held by the ears and the tail at the same time, for only

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in this manner is he easily controlled. The ears alone, or the tail alone, is not enough.

This done, the milking begins. The left hand holds the pail, while the right does the work, or it may be the reverse. The hand hits the bag tenderly, grabs the teat, and closes the fingers about it, not altogether, but in echelon. The calf is then let out for his share. If he is young and there are several cows, it will be all that is left, for careful milkers do not strip the cow until the calf is weaned. The strippings are those short little squirts which announce the end, and they are all cream.

The milk is next brought back to the house, strained, and put in the well to cool. This requires a very careful hand, because if it happens to spill, the well is ruined. The next step is to pour up the old milk and let it turn—that is, sour—for churning. Some will be set aside to for the mammy whose teeth are no longer equal to tougher nourishment. What she does not eat is given to the young chickens or to the pigs.

After breakfast the farmer's wife, or one of the girls, does the churning. This process takes a variable length of time. If the milk is kept a long time before it is poured up, the butter is long in coming. Sometimes witches get in the churn and throw a spell over it. In that case a nickel is dropped in to break the charm. The butter, when it does come, collects in small, yellow clods on top. These clods are separated from the butter-milk and put in a bowl where the rest of the water is worked out. It is then salted, molded, and stamped with some pretty little design. After this is done, it is set in the well or the spring to cool for the table.

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The process has been long, to some extent tedious, but profitable, because insomuch as it has taken time and care and intelligence, by that much does it have a meaning.

Industrialism gives an electric refrigerator, bottled milk, and dairy butter. It takes a few minutes to remove it from the ice to the table, while the agrarian process has taken several hours and is spread out over two or three days. Industrialism saves time, but what is to be done with this time? The milkmaid can't go to the movies, read the signboards, and go play bridge all the time. In the moderate circumstances of this family, deprived of her place in the home economy, she will be exiled to the town to clerk all day. If the income of the family can afford it, she remains idle, and therefore miserable.

The whole process has been given in detail as an example of what goes on in every part of an agrarian life. The boys, coming in to breakfast, have performed in the same way. Every morning the stock must be fed, but there is always variety. They never shuck the same ears of corn, nor do they find the mules in the small part of the stall, nor the hogs in the same attitudes, waiting to be slopped. The buckets of milk did not move regularly from cow to consumer as raw material moves through a factory. The routine was broken by other phenomena. Breakfast intervened. One morning the cow might kick the pail over, or the milkmaid might stumble over a dog, or the cow come up with a torn udder. It is not the only task she performs, just as feeding the stock is not the only task done by the boys. The day of each member of the family is filled with a mighty variety.

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After the morning work is over, the family gathers about the breakfast table. Thanks are returned and the meal is served, one of the daughters or the mother waiting on the table; and then, without undue haste, the men go to the fields and the women about their dishes. If it is spring, the women can be of great help in the garden. Very likely the cut-worms will be after the young corn. The cut-worm does not like heat. If some one gets into the garden before the sun gets hot, the worm can be found under a clod near the top of the ground and mashed. In another hour he will have gone far below the surface. It is imperative to go at the right time, for of all the thousands of insects and varmints on the land, he has the distinction of his own habits. By learning these habits, and not those of some other pest, can he be overcome.

Before going to the fields the farmer consults the signs. If the smoke from the chimney is blown to the ground, there will be rain. Lightning in the north early in the night means rain before morning. If there is enough blue in the sky to make the Dutchman a pair of breeches, the weather will turn fair. Lightning in the south is a sign of drought. If the moon lies on its back, it is holding water; if it is tilted so that the water can run out, the season will be dry. Charms, signs, and omens are folk attempts to understand and predict natural phenomena. They are just as useful and necessary to an agrarian economy as the same attempts which come from the chemist's laboratory in an industrial society, and far wiser, because they understand their inadequacy, while the hypotheses of science do not.

According to these signs the work is hard or leisurely.



If the fish are biting, the boys might knock off a day and go fishing, or hunting. Their father has not begun to keep books, so their time is their own.

At eleven o'clock the dinner bell rings. The ploughmen take out and come to the house. So regular is this ritual that a mule on the farm of Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's quartermaster used to square his feet in the furrow and answer the bell with a long, loud bray. Nor was anybody ever able to make him, by beating or pleading, plough a step farther. The teams are watered and put into their stalls, where so many ears of corn are shucked into the troughs, and a section of hay is thrown into the racks.

If the corn is low in the crib, the boys are likely to shuck carefully, keeping their eyes open for the king snake. This snake is worth ten cats as a ratter, and careful, economical farmers always throw one in their cribs if one is to be found. But not only as a ratter is he valuable. He makes war on all poisonous snakes and drives them from his presence. His invincibility is believed to be due to his knowledge of snake grass, an antidote for poison; for after bouts in which he has been bitten by venomous snakes, he has been seen to wiggle toward this grass and chew it. There is only one time of the year when he is to be avoided. He goes blind in August; and, feeling his defenseless condition, he will leg you—that is, charge and wrap his strong body about your leg, squeezing and bruising it.

The midday meal, like all the meals in the country, has a great deal of form. It is, in the first place, unhurried. Diners accustomed to the mad, bolting pace of cafeterias will grow nervous at the slow performance of a country

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table. To be late is a very grave matter, since it is not served until everybody is present. But only some accident, or unusual occurrence, will detain any member of the family, for dinner is a social event of the first importance. The family are together with their experiences of the morning to relate; and merriment rises up from the hot, steaming vegetables, all set about the table, small hills around the mountains of meat at the ends, a heaping plate of fried chicken, a turkey, a plate of guineas, or a one-year ham spiced, and if company is there, baked in wine. A plate of bread is at each end of the table; a bowl of chitterlings has been set at the father's elbow; and pigs' feet for those that like them.

And they eat with eighteenth-century appetites. There is no puny piddling with the victuals, and fancy tin-can salads do not litter the table. The only salad to be seen on a country table is sallet, or turnip greens, or if further explanation is necessary, the tops of turnips cut off and cooked with a luscious piece of fat meat. It has the appearance of spinach. but, unlike this insipid slime, sallet has character, like the life of the farmer at the head of the table. The most important part of this dish is its juice, the pot licker, a rich green liquid, indescribable except as a pot-licker green. Mixed with corn bread, it has no equal. Particularly is it fine for teething babies. If the baby is weaned in the dark of the moon and fed a little pot licker, he will pass through the second summer without great trouble. This will not relieve the pain of cutting. To do that a young rabbit must be killed, its head skinned, and the raw flesh rubbed on the gums. If this

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fails, tie a spray of alderberries around its neck, or hang a mole's foot. But sallet will do everything but cut the pain.

His table, if the seasons allow, is always bountiful. The abundance of nature, its heaping dishes, its bulging-breasted fowls, deep-yellow butter and creamy milk, fat beans and juicy corn, and its potatoes flavored like pecans, fill his dining-room with the satisfaction of well-being, because he has not yet come to look upon his produce at so many cents a pound, or his corn at so much a dozen. If nature gives bountifully to his labor, he may enjoy largely.

The dishes of food are peculiarly relished. Each dish has particular meaning to the consumer, for everybody has had something to do with the long and intricate procession from the ground to the table. Somebody planted the beans and worked them. Somebody else staked them and watched them grow, felt anxious during the early spring drought, gave silent thanksgiving when a deep-beating rain soaked into the crusty soil, for the leaves would no longer take the yellow shrivel. A townsman can never understand the significance of rain, nor why an agrarian will study the signs with so much care and often with so much pain, for to him it has no immediate connection. The worst it can do him is to interrupt a picnic, and the best to beat from the asphalt of its streets and its tall buildings for a few moments the enervating heat peculiar to such places. The fullness of meaning that rain and the elements extend to the farmer is all contained in a mess of beans, a plate of potatoes, or a dish of sallet. When the garden first comes in, this meaning is explicit. If the yield has been large and rich, it will be openly and pridefully commented upon; if the garden has

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burned and it has lost its succulence to the sun, some will remark that sorrier beans have been seen, while others, more resentful of nature's invincible and inscrutable ways, will answer that better, also, have been seen. But aside from some such conservative expression, in its formal tone masking a violent passion, no other comment will be made. And as the enjoyment of the garden's produce becomes more regular, this particular meaning which the dishes at a country table has for its diners settles into the subconscious and becomes implicit in the conduct of the household.

The description of this particular board is by no means general. Just as no two farms are managed alike, so no two tables will be set alike. It is better than most, and slightly changed from ante-bellum days. It is more stable, as it has had a century in which to harden its form. But this form, troubled by the dualism, is less strict than it would have been if nothing had happened to disturb the direction of its growth. This farmer, being a Tennessean, perhaps has some advantage over other Southwesterners except Kentuckians of a tradition less shaken during the hard years. Tennessee has never been given over to any one money crop. It has looked upon its land to sustain its culture, and from the beginning has diversified according to its needs. Serving as a furnishing state to the cotton regions, when these regions were overturned, it naturally stood the shock better than they. In consequence the table will be more formal, its meals better, than in those places where the small upland farmer moved down upon the segments of the broken plantations. He can never have the same respect for the sow-belly and

corn-meal furnished him by the merchant, and actually a large body of these farmers in Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, South Carolina, and West Tennessee did not vary a great deal this diet, as he could for the vegetables and meat brought to the table by his own hand.

After the midday meal is over the family takes a rest; then the men go back to the fields and the women to those things yet to be done, mending clothes, darning, knitting, canning, preserving, washing or ironing or sewing. By sundown they are gathered about the supper table, and afterward set before the fire if it is winter, or upon the porch in warmer weather. One of the boys will get out his guitar and play "ballets" handed down from father to son, some which have originated in the new country, some which have been brought over from the Old World and changed to fit the new locale. Boys from the neighborhood drop in to court, and they will jine in, or drive away with the gals in hug-back buggies. If they are from another neighborhood, they are sure to be rocked or shot at on the way over or on the way home.

If the gathering is large enough, as it is likely to be when crops are laid by, it will turn into a play-party.<sup>1</sup> Most of these games practiced by the plain people have maintained the traditions brought from England and Scotland, while the townsmen lost their knowledge of them in a generation. For example, "The Hog Drovers" is a version of the English folk-game, "The Three Sailors." The Southern country, being largely inland, could only speculate upon the

**1.** The play-parties were to be found in operation much later in Mississippi and Arkansas than in Tennessee.

habits of sailors, but they knew all about the hog drovers. Every year droves of razorbacks, with their eyelids sewed together to hinder them from wandering off into the woods, were driven ten or eleven miles a day toward the Eastern markets. They would be stopped at private farms along the route, where pens had been put up to receive them, to feed. The drovers, nomadic and as careless as sailors, could not be made to keep promises. Parents, therefore, were careful of their daughters.

The game comes from, and is a copy of, the life of the people. A boy seats himself upon a chair in the middle of the room with a gal in his lap. He is the head of the house, and she is his daughter. The other gals are seated around the walls, waiting their turns; while the boys, representing the hog drovers, enter two abreast in a sort of a jig, singing the first stanza:

“Hog drovers, hog drovers, hog, drovers we air,  
A-courtin yore darter so sweet and so fair,  
Can we git lodgin' here, oh, here,  
Can we git er-lodgin' here?”

They stop in front of the old man, and he answers:

“Oh, this is my darter that sets by my lap,  
And none o' you pig-stealers can git her from pap,  
And you can't git lodgin' here, oh, here,  
And you can't git er-lodgin' here.”

The boys then jig about the chair, singing:

“A good-lookin' darter, but ugly  
We'll travel on further and sit on the shelf,  
And we don't want lodgin' here, oh, here,  
And we don't want er-lodgin' here.”

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They jig around the room, then return. The old man relents. Possibly it has as its genesis a struggle between greed and the safety of his daughter's virtue:

**“Oh, this is my darter that sets by my lap,  
And Mr. So-and-so can git her from pap  
If he'll put another one here, oh, here,  
If he'll put another one here.”**

The boy who is named jigs to one of the gals, brings her to the old man, takes his darter to the rear of the line, and the game starts over. After every couple has been paired off, they promenade all and seek buggies or any quiet place suitable for courting. <sup>1</sup>

This and other games, “Fly in the Buttermilk,” “Shoot the Buffalo,” “Under the Juniper Tree,” will fill an evening and break the order of their lives often enough to dispel monotony, making holidays a pleasure; and not so frequent nor so organized that they become a business, which means that games have become self-conscious, thus defeating the purpose of all playing. As they play they do not constantly remind one another that they are having a good time. They have it.

Besides these play-parties people pleased themselves in other ways. There were ice-cream socials, old-time singings, like the Sacred Harp gatherings, political picnics and barbecues, and barn dances. All of these gatherings which bring the neighborhood together in a social way are unlike the “society” of industrialism. Behind it some ulterior purpose always lurks. It becomes another province of Big Business and is invaded by hordes of people who, unable

**LA complete version and account of the Hog-Drovers game song will be found in A. P. Hudson's Specimens of Mississippi Folklore.**

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to sell themselves in the sterner marts, hope to catch their prey in his relaxed moments and over the tea tables make connections which properly belong to the office. This practice prostitutes society, for individuals can mingle socially from no motive except to enjoy one another's company.

The songs of the Sacred Harp, like negro spirituals are without accompaniment. The tune is pitched by the leader in the neighborhood schoolhouse under the shadows of oil-lamps. There is a grand meeting at the county seat once a year, and here the neighborhoods sing against each other and in unison under one general leader, who always remembers to turn the meeting over to each district leader for one song. This is a privilege jealously looked after; and if anyone is by chance overlooked, he will rise and make himself known. These songs of the Sacred Harp are songs of an agrarian people, and they will bind the folk-ways which will everywhere else go down before canned music and canned pleasure.

At the square dances, unlike round dancing, the stage is set for each individual to show the particularity of his art. Each couple is "out" in turn, swinging every other couple separately, ending up at "home" when the whole line swings "partners," then "corners." In this way a very fine balance is reached between group and individual action. Everybody is a part of the dance all the time, but a very particular part some of the time. There are no wall-flowers no duty dances, no agonizing over popularity, and the scores of such things which detract from free enjoyment at the round dancing. "First lady out" means that she



must step, cheat, and swing and show her superiority over the ladies who will follow; and likewise with the gentlemen. And the prompter, the one who calls the “figgers” (which happens still to be the proper English pronunciation of figure), is an artist and wit whose disappearance will leave the world much the poorer. Such calls as

**“Swing the gal you love best;  
Now cheat and swing.”**

**“Partners to, yore places  
Like mules to the traces.”**

and from Mississippi,

**“Women swing hard, men swing harder,  
Swing that gal with the buckskin garter.”**

are metaphors and imperatives with full connotation for the dancers, and in an agrarian society will be as applicable a hundred years hence. But so will the fiddlers’ tunes, “Leather Breeches,” “Rats in the Meal Barrel,” “Frog Mouth,” “Guinea in the Pea Patch,” “Arkansas Traveler” “Cotton-eyed Joe,” “No Supper Tonight,” “Hell Amongst the Yearlings,” “Got a Chaw of Tobaccy from a Nigger” “All My Candy’s Gone,” and “Katy, Bar the Door.” With a list of such dances as a skeleton, if all other records were lost, some future scholar could reconstruct with a common historical accuracy the culture of this people.

Before the farmer decided to keep books, the structure of his neighborhood culture had not been moved, and his sons and daughters, and he and the old woman, were a part of these things. Even mammy, if the rheumaticks had not frozen her jints, would put on her hickory-staved bonnet,

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a fresh-starched apron, and mount the waggin with the rest and drive to the singing and lift her cracked voice as the leader "h'isted" the tune, or at the barbecue pat her feet in time with the whining fiddle and think of better days when she and her old man balanced to "Cairo ladies, show yoreself," or "Jenny, the Flower of Kildare," until the sweat poured from her strong back, gluing the gray linen dress to her shoulders and ballooning it in places with air caught in the swing.

### III

The Agrarian South, therefore, whose culture was impoverished but not destroyed by the war and its aftermath, should dread industrialism like a pizen snake. For the South long since finished its pioneering. It can only do violence to its provincial life when it allows itself to be forced into the aggressive state of mind of an earlier period. To such an end does bookkeeping lead. It is the numbering of a farm's resources-its stacks of fodder, bushels of corn, bales of cotton, its stock and implements, and the hundreds of things which make up its economy. And as the only reason to number them is to turn them into cash-that is, into weapons for warfare-the agrarian South is bound to go when the first page is turned and the first mark crosses the ledger.

The good-road programs drive like a flying wedge and split the heart of this provincialism-which prefers religion to science, handcrafts to technology, the inertia of the fields to the acceleration of industry, and leisure to nervous prostration. Like most demagoguery, it has been advertised as

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a great benefit to the farmer. Let us see just what the roads have done and who they benefit? They certainly can be of no use to the farmer who cannot afford to buy a truck. He finds them a decided drawback. The heavy automobile traffic makes it hazardous for him even to appear on the main highways. But if he has the temerity to try them, they prove most unsatisfactory. Besides being a shock to his mules' feet, it is difficult for the team to stand up on the road's hard, slick surface.

The large farmers and planting corporations who can afford to buy trucks are able to carry their produce to market with less wear and tear than if they drove over rougher dirt pikes. But this is a dubious benefit, for the question is not between trucks on good or bad roads but between teams on passable roads and trucks on arterial highways.

But in any case the farmer receives few direct profits. Asphalt companies, motor-car companies, oil and cement companies, engineers, contractors, bus lines, truck lines and politicians-not the farmer-receive the great benefits' and the profits from good roads. But the farmer pays the bills. The states and counties float bonds and attend to the upkeep on the highways and byways, and when these states are predominantly agricultural, it is the people living on the land who mortgage their labor and the security of their property so that these super-corporations may increase incomes which are now so large that they must organize foundations to give them away.

But the great drain comes after the roads are built. Automobile salesmen, radio salesmen, and every other kind of

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salesman descends to take away the farmer's money. The railroad had no such universal sweep into a family's privacy. It was confined to a certain track and was constrained by its organization within boundaries which were rigid enough to become absorbed, rather than absorb. But good roads brought the motorcar and made of every individual an engineer or conductor, requiring a constant, and in some instances a daily, need for cash. The psychological pressure of such things, and mounting taxes, induce the farmer to forsake old ways and buy a ledger.

The great drain continues. The first thing he does is to trade his mules for a tractor. He has had to add a cash payment to boot, but that seems reasonable. He forgets; however, that a piece of machinery, like his mules, must wear out and be replaced; but the tractor cannot reproduce itself. He must lay aside a large sum of money against the day of replacement, whereas formerly he had only to send his brood mare to some jack for service.

The next thing it does, it throws his boys out of a job, with the possible exception of one who will remain and run it. This begins the home-breaking. Time is money now, not property, and the boys can't hang about the place draining it of its substance, even if they are willing to. They must go out somewhere and get a job. If they are lucky, some filling station will let them sell gas, or some garage teach them a mechanic's job. But the time is coming when these places will have a surfeit of farmer boys.

He next buys a truck. The gals wanted a car, but he was obdurate on that point, so he lost them. They went to town to visit kin, then gradually drifted there to marry or get a

job. The time comes when the old woman succumbs to high-pressure sales talk and forces him to buy a car on the installment plan. By that time he is so far gone that one thing more seems no great matter.

He then has three vehicles which must be fed from the oil companies, several notes at the bank bearing interest, and payments, as regular as clock strokes, to be made on the car.

He finds his payment for gasoline, motor oil, and power for his tractor is tremendously higher than the few cents coal oil used to cost him. Formerly he bought it by the lampful; he now buys it by the barrelful. In fact, he no longer uses coal oil for lighting. He has installed a, Delco-plant. Besides giving illumination it pumps his water, turns the churn, washes the clothes, heats the iron to press them, and cooks the victuals. If his daughters had not already moved away, he would have had to send them, for Delco has taken their place in the rural economy. The farmer's wife now becomes a drudge. As the mainstay of the structure she was content to bear the greatest burden, but now she grows restive. She has changed from a creator in a fixed culture to an assistant to machines. Her condition is miserable because her burdens are almost as great without the compensation of the highest place in the old scheme. Her services cannot be recompensed with gold, and gold has become the only currency.

Gradually the farmer becomes more careless of his garden. Each year he cuts down on the meat-the curing takes too much time. He may finally kill only a hog or two, and, under the necessity of paying interest, sell all his cows but one.

He has concentrated on the money crop, and as bought fertilizers and war-time prices have brought cotton to Tennessee, he chooses cotton. This sinks him deeper into the money economy. He must buy highly productive, and also highly priced, seed, and artificial fertilizers. He used to haul manure from the barns, but this is too slow and too unscientific now. But the outlay of money is not ended. There are fertilizer-distributors, cultivators, and improved ploughs of all kinds, with a value arbitrarily inflated by the tariff. He is now as completely on the money basis as a farmer can ever get, and each day he buys more and more from the town and makes less and less on the farm.

Being in the race for wealth, he begins to learn that a farmer can only make war successfully by beating his ploughshare into a sharp-cutting weapon. He cannot match the plough against the wheel. When he bought the various machines which roll where the mules stood and shivered the flies from their backs, he was told that he might regulate, or get ahead of, nature. He finds to his sorrow that he is still unable to control the elements. When it fails to rain and his fields are burning, he has no God to pray to to make it rain. Science can put the crops in, but it can't bring them out of the ground. Hails may still cut them down in June; winds may damage them; and a rainy season can let the grass take them. Droughts still may freeze and crack the soil. Dry weather does not greatly injure cotton, but if this farmer had happened to become a dairyman, his withered pastures and dry springs would have made him suffer.

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The pests and insects are still with him. He may partially control them by poison: the army worm-possible; the boll weevil-evade by putting in early; flea-impossible! Neither can he control the tariff, nor a complete crop failure, nor a drop in prices. Since he cannot control these variables, his crop is not predictable; therefore his income is uncertain. But debt, the price of machinery, repairs, merchandise are all certain and must be met, if not by his crops, then by his land.

It is true that labor-evicting machines will give a greater crop yield, but a greater yield does not necessarily 'mean a greater profit. It means over-production and its twin; price deflation. Those who insist on the progressive-farmer ideal realize this, and for a long time the Federal Bureau of Agriculture and other agencies have insisted that he diversify his crops. In many instances this has brought relief, but it is not permanent. The diversification' is always the money crop. The farmer is no better off when he has two or three money crops, if they are all over-produced, than he is with one. He has three crops, instead of one, to worry with.

There are farmers who manage to remain in the race, but they are few who actually make fortunes. When the land is very rich, the direction good, and the economy frugal, this is possible. Those places situated close to cities and towns may be turned very profitably into dairy, or poultry, farms; or a few acres may be turned advantageously into trucking. But where there is one like these there are thousands of others, one-horse, two-horse, or four-horse

men, who suffer from these progressives who have made good.

Another way of growing rich on the land is to develop a new seed. Les Bedezer<sup>1</sup> is an example of this. A few make enormous returns on their outlay; others hear of their success, study the methods, and slowly make the effort to do likewise. By the time their crop is ready for the market there is too great an abundance, a fall in price, and the distress it always brings with it. Such farmers are enemies to the agricultural body. The horse-cropper, in attempting to follow their ways, puts his entire acreage in this crop, buying his feed elsewhere on credit at exorbitant interest. In Alabama 20 per cent is the usual demand. When the time comes to settle up, if he makes any money, it goes for luxuries instead of discharging his debt. He is always optimistic and hopes that next year will be as good, and on this wish he gives a lien on his land, which under such circumstances means a sale.

But even for those who succeed the disadvantage is too great, and for the less fortunate who enter the conflict without the advantages of science, it is overwhelming. At the outset there is the great burden of direct and indirect taxation. Because land cannot be hidden away in strong boxes it bears the greatest part of the national, state, and county expenses. According to Governor Lowden, a considered authority on taxation and the farmer's problems, real property, which is largely farmlands or property dependent upon farming produce, bears 60 per cent of the

<sup>1</sup> A Japanese Clover, splendid as a land builder, excellent for pasture or hay.



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taxation and receives 10 per cent of the income. Since Wilson's administration gave way to Harding's normalcy, taxes have been increased on land four times and decreased on great wealth four times, making a ratio of sixteen to one against the farmer. The tariff, which he has borne a century, grows heavier rather than lighter, and apparently the Republicans have every intention of further increasing it.

The factory can close down to meet over-production and feed the market with its stock on hand; but the farmer is unable to do this because of the perishable quality attached to everything but cotton, tobacco and sugar; and when he sells these crops, he is an individual competing with large organizations.

Thanks to applied science, the factory can concentrate stupendous power in one place and fabricate its commodities serially; that is, a hundred yards of cloth can be reproduced exactly as a previous hundred yards, or a hundred Ford cars with the same uniform strokes, but the product of the farm cannot be so reproduced. There can be but approximate, and very general, organization to agriculture. Certain seasons require certain kinds of work: there is a breaking season, a planting season, a cultivating season, a laying-by time, and a marketing time. This very loose organization is determined by nature, not by man, and points to the fundamental difference between the factory and the soil. When the farmer doubles his crop, he doubles his seed, his fertilizer, his work, his anxiety . . . all his costs, while the industrial product reduces in inverse ratio its costs and labor as it multiplies. Industrialism is multiplication. Agrarianism is addition and subtraction. The one

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by attempting to reach infinity must become self-destructive; the other by fixing arbitrarily its limits upon nature will stand. An agrarian stepping across his limits will be lost.

When the farmer, realizing where all this is leading him, makes the attempt to find his ancient bearings, he discovers his provincialism rapidly disintegrating. The Sacred Harp gatherings, and to a less extent the political picnics and barbecues, have so far withstood the onslaught; but the country church languishes, the square dance disappears, and camp meetings are held, but they have lost their vitality. Self-consciousness has crept into the meetings, inhibiting the brothers and sisters and stifling in their bosoms the desire to shout. When shouting ceases and the mourner's bench is filled up by the curious from the rear, the camp meeting may count its days, for they are numbered.

He finds that there is a vast propaganda teaching him, but particularly his children, to despise the life he has led and would like to lead again. It has in its organization public schools, high schools, the normals, and even the most reputable universities, the press, salesmen, and all the agents of industrialism. It has set out to uplift him. It tells him that his ancestors were not cultured because they did not appreciate the fine arts; that they were illiterate because their speech was Old English; and that the South will now come to glory, to "cultural" glory, by a denial of its ancestry.

This is the biggest hoax that has ever been foisted upon a people. It is nothing but demoniacally clever high-pressure sales talk to unload the over-producing merchandize of in-

## T H E   H I N D   T I T

dustrialism on the South. New England began it with her carrying trade. The shrewd Yankee skippers realized that if they could persuade prospective buyers that the bric-a-brac which they had brought from the Orient and elsewhere was "culture," their cargoes would fetch a fancier price. This brought about the overthrow of their own theocracy by 1830; but so long as the South had the planters for defenders the peddlers made no great headway. But now, in the hands of the industrialists everywhere, it is making very great headway.

And unless the agricultural South, like this farmer, wakes up to the fact that he is swapping his culture for machine-made bric-a-brac, there will be an absentee-landlordism far worse than that which afflicted the continent at the breakdown of mediaeval society. When the nobility flocked to the court of Louis XIV, leaving the tenants the burden of land without the compensation of local government, conditions were bad enough, precipitating the French Revolution. But, even so, the French nobility retained certain ties to their estates. They were descendants of men who had ruled there.

But what of this absentee-landlordism of capitalism? Mortgage companies, insurance companies, banks, and bonding-houses that are forced to take over the land of free men . . . what will be the social relationship? What can an abstract corporation like an insurance company, whose occupation is statistics and whose faro-bank can never lose, know of a farmer's life? What can their calculations do before droughts, floods, the boll weevil, hails, and rainy seasons? What will be the relationship between tenants who formerly owned the land and their abstract selves?

## I ' LL TAKE MY STAND

To avoid the dire consequences and to maintain a farming life in an industrial imperialism, there seems to be only one thing left for the farmer to do, and particularly for the small farmer. Until he and the agrarian West and all the conservative communities throughout the United States can unite on some common political action, he must deny himself the articles the industrialists offer for sale. It is not so impossible as it may seem at first, for, after all, the necessities they machine-facture were once manufactured on the land, and as for the bric-a-brac, let it rot on their hands. Do what we did after the war and the Reconstruction: return to our looms, our handcrafts, our reproducing stock. Throw out the radio and take down the fiddle from the wall. Forsake the movies for the play-parties and the square dances. And turn away from the liberal capons who fill the pulpits as preachers. Seek a priesthood that may manifest the will and intelligence to renounce science and search out the Word in the authorities.

So long as the industrialist remains in the saddle there must be a money crop to pay him taxes, but let it occupy second place. Any man who grows his own food, kills his own meat, takes wool from his lambs and cotton from his stalks and makes them into clothes, plants corn and hay for his stock, shoes them at the crossroads blacksmith shop, draws milk and butter from his cows, eggs from his pullets water from the ground, and fuel from the woodlot, can live in an industrial world without a great deai of 'cash. Let him diversify, but diversify so that he may live rather than that he may grow rich. In this way he will escape by far the heaviest form of taxation, and if the direct levies

grow too exorbitant, refuse to pay them. Make those who rule the country bear the burdens of government.

He will be told that this is not economical, that he can buy clothes for much less than he can weave them, and shoes for half the labor he will put into their creation. If the cash price paid for shoes were the only cost, it would be bad economy to make shoes at home. Unfortunately, the matter is not so simple: the fifteen-hundred-dollar tractor, the thousand-dollar truck, the cost of transportation to and from town, all the cost of indirect taxation, every part of the money economy, enters into the price of shoes. In comparison, the sum he hands over to the merchant is nothing more than a war tax.

So long as he lives in a divided world he is rendered impotent in the defense of his natural economy and inherited life. He has been turned into the runt pig in the sow's litter. Squeezed and tricked out of the best places at the side, he is forced to take the little hind tit for nourishment; and here, struggling between the sow's back legs, he has to work with every bit of his strength to keep it from being a dry hind one, and all because the suck of the others is so unreservedly gluttonous.

As for those countrymen who have not gone so deeply in the money economy, let them hold to their agrarian fragments and bind them together, for reconstructed fragments are better than a strange newness which does not belong. It is our own, and if we have to spit in the water-bucket to keep it our own, we had better do it.