



111. Abandoned farmstead in the Berkshires, typical of many back-country parts of New England



112. Abandoned school-house in the Berkshire country, showing the decadence of country life in New England

## GOING BACK TO THE OLD FARM

THE STORY OF A COLLEGE PROFESSOR WHO COULD NOT RESIST THE CHARM OF HIS BOYHOOD HOME—HOW HE IS RECLAIMING A NEW ENGLAND FARM AND WINNING A LIVING FROM THE SOIL WHICH HIS ANCESTORS TILLED—NO. VIII IN SERIES, "HOW TO MAKE A LIVING FROM THE LAND"

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WHAT is to be the future of the rural parts of New England? The country districts have been depopulated. The old-time farming has practically perished. Are there possibilities of a profitable revival of farming?

Among the many lads that went out of New England to the West was Jeremiah Sanborn. He was born on a farm on the hills of Gilman-ton, well up in New Hampshire. His father was more than the usual farmer. He was studious and contemplative. He read the standard works on agriculture. He knew some of the best European literature of the subject. He believed that some of the waste waters could be put to use, and he constructed an irrigation system which is in use to this day,—one of the very first in all the eastern country. The son inherited many of these abilities, but more than to his father the outside world appealed to him. At twenty-six the son was in the state legislature. He became a member of the New Hampshire Board of Agriculture and later secretary of the Missouri State Board of Agriculture. He managed the farm at Dartmouth College. He joined the tide to the West. He became professor of agriculture in the University of Missouri, and then president of the Agricultural College of Utah. Today he is farming the old farm on the New Hampshire hills.

I asked him why he came back. "I visited the old home," he said, "and all at once the country appealed to me as wondrously beautiful. I had never known that it was beautiful before." What human history and what hope for education is expressed in this reply! What the boy might have learned at school and at home, he learned only by the experience of the contrast with the weary landscapes of the West. "Also I had had a dream in my boyhood of a great estate on these hills that should remain in the line of succession and constitute the founding of a family. This hope went with me to the West and grew stronger with the years. I am now working toward the realization of the dream."

Here I have expressed the spirit of the man. Mr. Sanborn is a philosopher. Farming appeals to him as a philosophy, not as a mere process. He has worked out a philosophy of the regeneration of these hills. He has been developing the plan on this farm for nine years. Each year gives additional proof of the wisdom of the system and brings him nearer the realization of its

perfecting. I am convinced that the system is a correct one for these conditions and limitations. If the venture fails, it will be in its details.

The prevailing conception for the regeneration of New England agriculture is "a little farm well tilled." Mr. Sanborn accepts this maxim, but believes that it applies only to special and local conditions. The practical possibilities of the small farm are soon reached. They are usually not large enough to satisfy the ambitions of an aspiring man. And the small farm is impossible back in the open country, where the need of regeneration is the greatest. By good tillage, Mr. Sanborn's neighbor makes much more money from an acre of potatoes than does the farmer in the West; but the farmer in the West has many acres. Cannot the large-area farming of the West be introduced into the old East, with good machinery, much land under the plow, and the development of opportunity for generalship in the handling of forces and of men? Mr. Sanborn thinks yes. His ideal is two thousand acres of land in New Hampshire; he now has one thousand nine hundred acres.

But this large-area farming for the East is not to be mere nature-farming,—not the mere mowing of grass and pasturing of stock. With the decadence of agricultural sentiment and the increasing scarcity of farm labor, it is the natural tendency to keep less land under the plow and more in sod. Nature is not liberal in New England. The soils are reluctant. Art must be added to nature. Tilling the land and feeding the plant are imperative. A resourceful rotation must be employed, as a fundamental consideration; and this rotation must contemplate half the area to be each year under tillage. Mr. Sanborn now has nearly four hundred acres under actual tillage rotation;

this year one hundred and sixty acres of it will be tilled; next year he will have reached the full proportion of one-half. This is heresy in the back country of New England, for heresy is ahead of the times.—But even this is not all; each acre under rotation is fertilized every year, not in the years of tillage only. Thereby the productivity of the land is always upward.

It requires courage to carry out a system like this on a large scale without capital. No one goes into a manufacturing enterprise without capital, yet it seems to be expected that every teacher in the agricultural colleges will tell any one how to succeed at once in farming with nothing to begin on. Mr. Sanborn is demonstrating that it will pay to put capital into farming. There is abundant capital awaiting investment; when the capitalist has faith that the young man from the college can produce four to five per cent on capital invested in farming, a new day will open for agriculture as well as for capital. Capitalized farming is coming. The student must learn fundamental principles rather than mere facts, must have contact with affairs, and must love the country for its own sake. The capitalist must learn patience, for, unlike a mill, a farm cannot be made in a day. The salary of



113. The picture that came to a college professor's mind and which he could not resist—the house where he was born



114. Reclaimed field, on the New Hampshire hills, handsome and productive

the manager will be what he earns,—perhaps one thousand dollars, perhaps five thousand: it will be figured in with the expenses of running the business. If the manager returns the interest on the investment, the salary may be what it will.

All this Mr. Sanborn is going to prove, if he lives. Nine years ago the productiveness of the estate was about one hundred and twelve tons of hay a year. Today it is the equivalent of eight hundred tons. In the meantime, all the work of reclamation has gone on,—for the land and the buildings had reached bottom. I speak of the production, not of the buildings. City men who go on farms usually expend their first energy in repairing buildings and fences: they farm for looks. One of the best fields I saw on Mr. Sanborn's farm was far in the rear, where no passer-by can see it. The land is now mostly repaired. Next will come the buildings. Mr. Sanborn does not believe in leaving tools unsheltered; but if there is money sufficient for only the land or for the shelter, the shelter must wait. The ideal way is to have capital enough for both: this the capitalist of the future will supply.

The rotation at Gilmanton runs eight years:

1. Maize and soy beans, cut together and placed in silo.
2. Oats and peas, made into hay and fed to cows.
3. Clover, fed out as hay.
4. Potatoes.
5. Hungarian grass, for hay, fed on the place.
- 6, 7. Timothy.
8. Pasture.

The "money crops"—those sold directly from the farm—are potatoes and timothy hay. Unless the hay nets thirteen dollars per ton at the farm, it is held for a better market or fed on the place. Hay usually finds ready market for ready cash in the cities of New England: city dwellers are many; country dwellers are few. The yield of potatoes in good years will now go one hundred and fifty bushels to the acre: it is expected that when the land is fully regenerated the yield will be two hundred bushels. The crop is usually sold direct from the field.

Aside from the money crops, milk is sold. The place now supports about two hundred head of cattle, of which one hundred and forty are in milk. Each cow brings a gross annual return of about seventy dollars. The milk is delivered at Pittsfield Station, four miles away, for shipment to Boston. The young stock and dry cows are turned to pasture on the mountain runs about ten miles away, and for this purpose there are about one thousand acres of land. On the average New England farm, five acres support one cow. With the aid of this rough pasture for the non-producing animals, Mr. Sanborn will be able to support one cow to each acre of hay and pasture. The grains are purchased. The East raises roughage. The West raises a large proportion of the concentrates. The Sanborn cattle are mostly Holstein grades, the quality being kept up by means of thoroughbred bulls.

The soil on these New Hampshire hills is granitic sand and loam. The region was scraped to the rock by the glaciers. Boulders were

dropped everywhere. These boulders are used for walls. It is a wonder that they are not used for buildings. When there are a greater number of efficient stone-masons not working at prohibitive wages, stone buildings will come into existence, greatly to the betterment of the country. This is not intended as a criticism of the present structures, for the farm-houses of northern New England are better than those of the West. I cannot say as much for the barns. The stone house is the natural product of these granite farms.

The Sanborn estate is the compound of many deserted homesteads. It is in the country of abandoned farms, deserted school-houses, and depleted farming. In several places I saw the remains of old hearthstones, now often far in the middle of fields by the taking up of the highways. Often on these New England hills one finds the stray rose-bush, the clump of tansy, or an ancient lilac, marking the site of an old homestead. At



115. Old-time irrigation ditch on the Sanborn estate—one of the first irrigation systems in the East. The man is Mr. Sanborn himself

one place, on the Sanborn farms, an old house-cellar was made the spot for the dumping of stones: the buildings and the yards are obliterated, the rambling stone fences are removed, and a great fine field, a half-mile long, stretches away down the hillside, as sleek and as productive as a field in Michigan or Iowa. Of family after family Mr. Sanborn told me the history: this boy had become a city doctor, that one had gone to Illinois to grow up with the country, another had gone to sea. The world has drawn on New England for its men. Some of them, like himself, had gone West to farm it, and in the middle West the first distinctive free-labor American agriculture was developed. With these larger western ideals, he has come back to assemble the deserted farms, to touch them into the breath of life, and to be a pioneer in an old land.

Much of the New Hampshire land has little market value. Mr. Sanborn buys most of it for ten dollars, or less, the acre. In five to ten years it becomes worth fifty dollars the acre. Much of it must be cleared of second-growth bushes and trees. This costs, say, twenty-five

dollars an acre if done all at once, or a quarter that sum if "stumped" and done gradually through a pasturage system. Untillable lands are made into permanent pasture. From many fields the stones must be removed. Many of these are filled into trenches, which then make excellent underground drains. This work is done at odd times, for men and teams must be utilized as well as the land cleared. Once reclaimed, the land is excellent. It yields less readily to treatment than the unctuous lands of the West, but it retains its new-found vitality much longer. Large farm machinery can be used with ease on these fields; and to the eye, lying in all directions and at all slopes, they will satisfy the most critical husbandman. Here is the adaptation of the ideas of the West to those of the East: extensive, for the areas are large; intensive, for half the area is always well tilled.

Nor is good tillage the only means of intensifying this farming. I have said that Mr. Sanborn fertilizes his entire rotation

area every year. This is true of the pasture year as well as of the others. Even the wild pasture-land is often fertilized. Of course, the barn manure is utilized to the utmost, but the chief reliance is on chemicals. By applying moderate quantities every year, he keeps the land steadily at work and avoids the loss that comes from using excessive amounts in certain years. By good tillage and the growing of leguminous crops, he produces more and more of his nitrogen on the farm. Of course, the continuous use of chemicals is counter to the old New England idea, for do not chemicals "burn out the land," merely "stimulate" it, and all that? The salvation of Mr. Sanborn's system, in this regard, is the crop rotation, whereby humus is constantly supplied; for it is humus that is "burned out." He showed me one field that had been treated with chemicals for twenty-eight years, without yard manure, and its crop of grass was all that could be desired. There are not

many such experiments as old as this in America.

New England abounds in waste water. Some day it will be utilized for household labor. I have said that Mr. Sanborn's father constructed an irrigation system. This system is still in use. It is simple. A stream was dammed. The pond could supply ice and raise fish. From the issuing stream ditches following the contours along the hillsides carry the water across the fields. By opening the sides of the ditch at intervals, with a spade or hoe, the water may be discharged at will on all the land that lies below it, whether the crop be grass, corn or potatoes. The initial expense is small, no skilled labor need be employed in construction, and the cost of maintenance is practically nothing. In two seasons out of five, the water insures a crop, and in four seasons out of five it augments the crop.

This large-area farming tends to solve the labor problem, for families are employed and settlements built up. When Mr. Sanborn took hold of this enterprise nine years ago, the little hill-top supported about five persons. Now he



116. The problem before the New Hampshire farmer. The stones are piled in walls and filled into ditches. Then the fields make good farm land. Such a field is an oasis in a desert of rocks, as the irrigated field of the West is an oasis in a desert of sage-brush

has fifty-five souls. All these persons feed directly or indirectly from the farm. The live stock is quadrupled. The crops are quintupled at least. Mr. Sanborn and his family have their living. The land is constantly increasing in value. In five years more it is calculated that the work of subjugation will be completed. The place should then employ twenty families, and these will average five persons each. The sympathetic reader will picture new social and economic problems as well as increased agricultural efficiency. Mr. Sanborn believes that the old sun-to-sun system of farm labor must go. The farm laborer must have a day of definite length. The day will be longer than that of the city day-laborer, for the farm laborer has many compensating advantages; yet the hours should be limited. Mr. Sanborn adopts a ten-hour day. Extra hours are paid for. Milking is done also by the piece; in this way the women of the laborers' families are able to add to the family income.

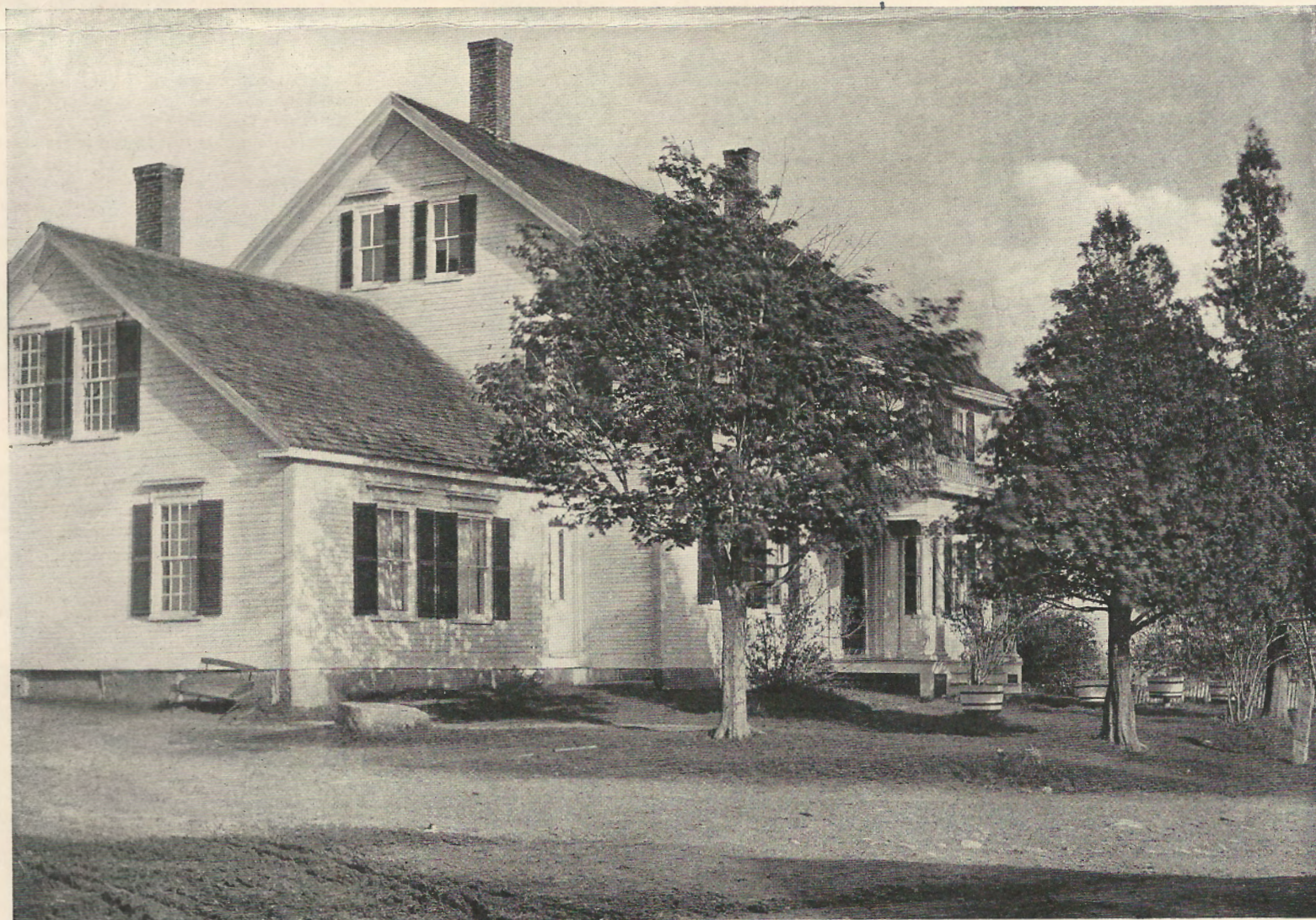
In 1769 the Sanborns settled on this land. The present owner is the fifth generation. The

burying-ground on the place contains the remains of heroes of the Revolution. Sentiment brought him back to this particular place rather than to any other spot in New England. It is four miles from a railroad, and that road is a branch line. Mr. Sanborn himself leads a full life, for he has intellectual resources and he is working at an important public problem. But the place is isolated. A telephone is now going in. This will connect him with the world. Good roads will come. He looks for the perfection of the auto-vehicle, so that it will be simple enough, practical enough and cheap enough to allow every farmer to have the equivalent of a trolley line at his door, enabling him to transport his family and his freight. Once all these things were dreams. Now some of them are solid realities, and others are almost within reach. If five generations have been connected with this land, why not the sixth? The son is now on the farm. And why is not a farm like this as good a business to hand down from father to son as a manufacturing or trading business? There is an honored society

composed of firms that have been in one business for a hundred years and more. There are very many farms that have been in the family for more than a century. Why is not the farm worthy? Mr. Sanborn will help to make it worthy.

### TO PROMOTE LIFE IN THE COUNTRY

THE American Seed Trade Association and the Travelers' Protective Association, at their respective annual conventions this year, passed resolutions suggesting measures for increasing the population of the country and toward putting a check on the rapid growth of cities. The resolutions suggest that school gardens should be established in connection with all public schools and that manual training school farms should be maintained by country, city, state and national governments in sufficient numbers to afford to every boy the opportunity to learn how to earn his living from the land.



117. The homestead to which Professor Sanborn returned

A solid, substantial, plain house, typical of the better farms of New Hampshire. From this house there is a wide view of valley and mountains



ELLET CARR,  
died Oct. 9, 1812,  
aged 69 years  
AND HANNAH,  
his Wife died  
Nov. 10, 1825,  
aged 84 years

