

7-1-1930

Comment

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Recommended Citation

Briggs, John E. "Comment." *The Palimpsest* 11 (1930), 316-320.

Available at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/palimpsest/vol11/iss7/7>

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Comment by the Editor

THE NATURE OF AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is more than an occupation. Historically it is a stage in the progress of economic evolution. Typical of a simple civilization, the production of food by tilling the soil and raising live stock persists as a basic industry.

Agriculture is more than an industry. It is a mode of living. Rural life is essentially different from urban life the world over. Folks live in the country: people in cities.

Agriculture is more than a means and a mode of life. It is a profession as well. Some people think that farming is unskilled employment for yokels who have neither the wit nor the ambition to get out of the furrow and into the highway of commerce. But scientific farming does not depend upon new land, favorable seasons, and natural selection. Successful agriculture requires the broadest knowledge, the keenest intelligence, the soundest judgment, and the most versatile ability. It is no El Dorado for amateurs.

MASTER FARMERS OF AMERICA

Convinced that farming is conducted as efficiently as manufacturing, banking, or any other business,

Clifford V. Gregory, editor of the *Prairie Farmer*, in 1925 awarded the honorary title of Master Farmer to twenty-three men who fulfilled the qualifications for that high distinction. The next year *Wallaces' Farmer* and other agricultural journals adopted the idea, and the establishment of standards for successful farming became a movement. In the course of five years over five hundred Master Farmers have been selected in twenty-eight States. Sixty-one of them live in Iowa.

Agricultural mastery is not measured in profits alone. Efficient management, intellectual progress, home life, and community service are more important factors, judging by the *Wallaces' Farmer* score card, which is an adaptation of the motto "Good Farming — Clear Thinking — Right Living". The movement is a study of the methods, achievements, spirit, and character of the ablest farmers in America. "To dignify agriculture by recognizing and dramatizing its successes; to encourage farmers to take pride in their calling; to encourage farm boys and girls by showing them that outstanding success is possible in agriculture as in other occupations, not only the success that is measured in money, but what is more important, the success that comes from an upright and useful life in family and community" — that is the avowed purpose of the Master Farmer movement. Honor to the distinguished farmers who produce crops and live stock profitably, who manage their business efficiently, and who convert their prof-

its into better homes and happier living for themselves and their community.

THE TYPICAL MASTER FARMER

According to Oliver S. Hamer, who has studied the attainments of nearly four hundred Master Farmers, the composite of them all was born in a midwestern farm home fifty-two years ago, attended a one-room country school, and went to high school one year. Before he was twenty, this typical Master Farmer decided to follow the occupation of his father because of his home training and love for farm life. For six years he worked as a hired man and renter. When he was twenty-three, he had a capital of \$400, and later inherited \$1200. Since then he has prospered. The farm on which he has lived for more than twenty years was purchased in 1910 and, together with improvements and live stock, is now worth \$42,000. From this farm of 277 acres he derives a net income of \$3200 a year, which is 8.7 per cent on his investment. The income of the average American farmer is only \$883 from a farm of 145 acres.

The Master Farmer has constantly increased the fertility of his land until the yield of corn and wheat is more than ninety per cent above the general average and fifty per cent greater than he first obtained on the same farm. Most of the grain he produces is fed to live stock, for he raises 116 hogs every year, has a dairy herd of 45 head of tuber-