

New England Farmer 1856

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'That agriculture is unprofitable, compared with other business in Massachusetts, is the practical judgment of farmers generally, deny it as you may, gloss it over as you will; else why do so many of their sons desert the plow, hardly enough remain ing at home to take care of the good old fathers and mothers? Have they not seen their fathers and neighbors, hard-working and frugal, farmers till sixty years of age, still relatively poor, while their relatives and equals who have engaged in other pursuits are rich, clad in fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day, with leisure to enjoy life, with means to purchase its pleasures, and comforts, too? Why are farmers willing, even desirous, to have their sons quit the farm, and seek an easier and shorter road to fortune and happiness, than they have trod? The truth must be told, the 'desire a better life for their children than they have had, and sigh for the means to put them into a position to attain it. The inevitable conclusion to be drawn from this general desertion of agriculture is, that farming is unprofitable. The almighty dollar is the moving principle, the stepping stone to command the blessings of life, and not the avoidance-of hard work, but work that does not pay; the condition of eminent success in all the arts, is honest hard work, indomitable labor with the head and hands united. There is no other potent to success. Farming is the most delightful of all occupations, where it can be pursue for its unalloyed pleasure, and not for its dubious profits....Yes, a man can live in Massachusetts by farming, but only by economy and self-denial, unknown and unpracticed in other pursuits.

1856 YOUNG MEN. Whatever may be your choice of future occupation — whatever calling or profession you may select, there is certainly none more honorable than that of a farmer. The patriarch of the fields, as he sits beside his cottage door when his daily toil is over, feels an inward calm never known in the halls of pride. His labor yields him unpurchasable health and repose. I have observed with more grief and pain than I can express, the visible tokens which appear in all directions of a growing disposition to avoid agricultural pursuits, and to rush into some of the overcrowded professions, because a corrupt and debasing fashion has thrown around them the tinsel of imaginary respectability. Hence the farmer, instead of preparing his child to follow in the path of usefulness himself has trod, educates him for a sloth; labor is considered vulgar, to work is ungentle, the jack-plane is less respectable than the lawyer's green bag; the handles of the plow less dignified than the yard-stick. Unfortunate infatuation ! How melancholy is this delusion, which, unless it be checked by a wholesome reform in public opinion, will cover our country with wreck and ruin! This state of things is striking at the very foundation of our national greatness; it is up on agriculture that we mainly depend for our continued prosperity, and dark and evil will be the day when it falls into disrepute. What other pursuit offers so sure a guarantee of an honest independence, a comfortable support for a dependent family? Where else can we look but to the productions of the soil for safety of investment, and for ample return ? In commercial speculations all is chance and uncertainty, change and fluctuation, rise and fall. In the learned professions scarce one in

ten makes enough to meet his incidental expenses; how, then, are we to account for this fatal misdirection of public opinion?

The cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. They are the most independent, the most virtuous, and they are tied to their country, and wedded to its liberty and interests by the most lasting bonds. — Jefferson.

Last lines are edited from TJ's letter to John Jay 1785