

crop. The great objection I have to the method being employed is that the land is given to the poor for nothing. It ought to be rented to them at a very low rate, and you would then find ten men engaged in the cultivation of the soil where one is doing it now. People don't want what they can get for nothing, and measures like this tend to the education of paupers."

#### THE HOMESTEAD ACT.

"It is a good deal like the homestead act," Secretary Morton went on. "That was one of the worst things for the farmers of this country that has ever happened to them. It encouraged pauperism and fraud. Before the homestead act was passed you could preempt a quarter section of land, and by paying a small price for it you could get a title to it. The result was that no one took the poor lands, and the man who was a farmer had to be thrifty and intelligent to succeed."

The homestead act gave the land for nothing, and many of those who took advantage of it were lazy, ignorant and thriftless. Some settled on lands for the mere purpose of selling them as soon as they had secured their titles. Others proved up their lands, paid the dollar and a quarter an acre which the government demanded, and then mortgaged them to the fullest extent and skipped out. After living on the land for a short time, they could get a title for a quarter section upon the payment of \$200. The money lenders were accustomed to loan at least \$700 upon a quarter section, and this gave the mortgager \$500 clear profit. Thousands of acres of land which was utterly worthless were proved up in order to get these mortgages. The owners left as soon as they had obtained the money and the eastern men who furnished the funds had no assets but a lot of sand hills to show for them. They paid the loan agent 2 per cent for making the loan and required no security. The agents worked for their commission and not for their employers, and the result is that there are thousands of mortgages in Kansas and Nebraska today which are not worth the paper on which they are written. I have traveled over much of that mortgaged land. I remember one farm in which a plow stood in the desert near a shabby shanty, and upon it the farmer had hung a card which read: "Take the Damn Plow Tool!" In another part of the sand hills, where the soil was miserably poor, I saw a shanty on wheels. I asked my driver who could possibly live there, and who would be fool enough to take up such land as that. He replied that all the land we could see had been entered and proved, and that that house was wheeled from place to place, and that one man after another had lived in it for a short time in order to swear that he had had a house on his land. As soon as they got any evidence of a future title they borrowed the \$200 from the agent, paid this to the government and then took \$500 for a mortgage on the quarter section representing \$700. I do not mean to say that many of those who took advantage of the homestead act were not honest men and good farmers, but the principle was bad and it encouraged pauperism and fraud. If, for instance, a rent could be charged for these lots equal to say, one-tenth of their annual taxes—a mere nominal price—the people would realize that

they were paying for them and they would not lose their self-respect.

#### MONEY IN FARMING.

"You say there is money in farming," Mr. Secretary," said I. "The general idea is that the farmers are going to ruin. They are rushing to the cities, and they are complaining all over the country. How is this?"

"It is not half as bad as it is painted," said the Secretary. "The farmers are making as much money as any other people in the United States. They don't make as much as they formerly did. No business is doing that. Why, we used to get ten per cent for money out west on gilt-edged security. I have paid twelve per cent myself, mortgaging the best of real estate to get it, and have made money out of it. You can not borrow all the money you want for six per cent. The people are now contented with small profits. It is the same in the mercantile business. The storekeepers used to growl when their profits were less than twenty-five per cent. They are now glad to get eight per cent. The truth is that the farmers' profits have fallen the least, and failures are proportionately less among them than among any other class of business men. Take this matter of mortgaged farms. These farmers are doing business on borrowed capital, and now and then one of them fails. The majority of merchants do their business the same way, and ninety per cent fail at some time in their lives. I believe the percentage of failures in the dry goods business is fully as high as ninety-seven per cent. The majority of the farmers succeed. They pay their expenses, and in the end own their farms."

#### FOREIGN MARKETS FOR THE FARMER.

"The trouble with many of our farmers," continued Secretary Morton, "is that they are too apt to put all their eggs into one basket. They do not diversify their crop, and the failure of a single staple causes the ruin of the whole section. There is a vast market for the American farmer in foreign lands which has not yet been touched. We must study the wants of the people abroad and raise food for them. This is the chief work of the Agricultural Department today. I am having our consuls and ministers all over the world investigate the markets for American goods, and it is surprising what a variety of valuable information they are sending in to us. We might send millions of dollars' worth of food products to England yearly. Take the matter of eggs. England is now importing more than \$18,000,000 worth every year. The little country of Belgium, crowded as it is, sells \$3,000,000 worth of eggs for British stomachs, and France gets \$7,000,000 a year out of the eggs which she supplies to John Bull. With our vast area, and our so-called starving farmers, we do not raise enough eggs for ourselves. We import them by the millions, and the cackling of tens of thousands of Canadian hens is heard daily over the eggs which they are laying for the United States. Eggs are beneath the notice of the average American farmer. His wife may, perhaps, get a bit of her pin money out of the chickens, but that is all."

"We import a great quantity of cabbages, and we buy fruit and nuts which we might raise ourselves, to the extent of millions of dollars a year. We are shipping more butter every year, but New Zealand and Australia are crowd-

ing us in this line. They are sending vast quantities to England, and selling it there for a shilling a pound. Within four years the consumption of butter in England has risen \$10,000,000, and the Australian export has increased nearly \$3,000,000 during this time. Many parts of our southern states are now raising dairy products, and in east Tennessee the chickens and the eggs last year brought in more money than all the wheat."

#### POINTS ON HOGS.

"How about meat, Mr. Secretary? Is not that market well cared for?" "No," replied Mr. Morton, "the meat market is not half worked. We ship great quantities to Europe, but we do not get the best prices. Take our bacon. It brings nine cents a pound in England. The Danish bacon sells for fourteen cents a pound, and the famous Wilshire bacon is worth eighteen cents a pound. Had we gotten the best prices our bacon would have been worth nearly ten million dollars more to us than it was last year. The English like a lean bacon, and packers there buy hogs according to the thickness of the fat upon their backs. A hog that has fat two and one-fourth inches thick brings a shilling more per twenty pounds of its weight than a hog whose fat on the back is three inches thick. The English want lean swine. They will not buy any hogs that weigh more than 240 pounds, as they know that bacon from such hogs is not in demand. Here our ambition is to raise fat hogs, and I have seen car loads of swine which will average 400 pounds in weight. Still we have a great trade in farm products with England. Full half of all our foreign exports go there. We send more than 100,000 tons of hay and more than 30,000 tons of cheese to Great Britain every year. We send only 2,000 tons of butter, and Denmark beats us in this article alone by 48,000 tons yearly."

#### MACHINE FARMERS.

"The trouble with us," the Secretary of Agriculture continued, "is that we are too luxurious in our methods. We have been making money so easily that we can't appreciate the change in conditions the world over, and we have not tried to adapt ourselves to them. Our farmers are machine farmers. They raise practically nothing that cannot be raised by machinery. Take the matter of wheat. The farmer now rides the plow as he breaks the soil. He rides as he harrows, and he plants his fields with a sulky drill. The crop comes up of itself and when it is ripe the farmer again takes a ride on a reaping machine with an umbrella over his head, and when he is finished the machine has cut and bound his grain. A steam engine does his thrashing, and a small part of the straw forms the fuel which makes the steam. All this is expensive, and if the wheat brings a low price, or there is a crop failure, the farmer runs behind. He does not watch the small leaks and he does not raise the little things which pay so well. Take the onion crop. Onions always bring a high price here, and it pays to raise them. We import vast quantities and the American farmer lets the outsiders have the profit. It is so all over the country. The farmer of the south sticks to his cotton and tobacco, and he of the north and west to his wheat and corn."

#### FARMERS' WIVES.

"What do you think of the way our