TOWARD A GRASSLAND AGRICULTURE

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DESTRUCTION of grass has so long characterized land use in America, and the movement to restore grass is so recent, that it would be erroneous to state unqualifiedly that this country is adopting a grassland agriculture. It may never be practicable for America to adopt generally the grassland practices of Europe or New Zealand; and there is reason to question the economic feasibility of adopting such practices in certain parts of this country. But that America during the last few years has launched and is supporting movements tending definitely in the direction of a grassland agriculture is plain to every observer. The more I learn of the historical development of grassland agriculture the more I am disposed to feel that America is treading the same course as that followed by other countries a generation or more ago.

America today is definitely grass-minded. But America still lacks the profound grass consciousness which prompts Europeans to take advantage of favorable physical conditions, to grow more and better grass, and to utilize it to better advantage.

Grass-consciousness differs from grass-mindedness. The one may be and probably is an outgrowth of the other, but grass-consciousness is the more profound. Grass-mindedness inspires grass culture for specific purposes, as, for example, a corrective of soil erosion. Grass-consciousness, on the other hand, regards such specific uses of grass as incidental to its primary uses. It is grass itself that is important—grass as a farm crop which is worthy of as good land and as intelligent culture as any other crop. Grass is a crop around which to build profitable farm enterprises; it conserves the land, it benefits other crops grown in rotation with it; it is the basis of a type of farming in which the control of erosion, the protection of water-sheds and the improvement of pastures and ranges follow as matters of course. Thus, grass-consciousness recognizes and utilizes the intrinsic, greater value of grass without discounting but automatically providing for the full play of its incidental values. The culture of other crops fits into this grassland background and grassland agriculture emerges.

It is because America has not yet come fully to appreciate grass as a crop worthy of intensive cultivation and thoughtful management, that she must be regarded as only grass-minded. Speaking broadly, she still thinks of pasturés as primarily suited only to that land deemed too poor for other crops; she still thinks of pasture improvement as related only to that land now in pasture, with little regard to the possibility of having better pastures on better land, where

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3As used in this paper the term "grass" is inclusive of the true grasses and of the legumes usually found in meadows and pastures.