

VOL. XV, No. 2

BULLETIN

1919-20

OF THE

AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE, THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

# READING IN THE FARM HOME

BY WILLIAM L. GRAVES

Department of English, The Ohio State University

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY, COOPERATING WITH THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT  
OF AGRICULTURE

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE EXTENSION SERVICE, CLARK S. WHEELER, Director

FREE—Cooperative Agricultural Extension Work—Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914

*“Reading is an exploration of two worlds—  
the world outside us and the world within.”*

# READING IN THE FARM HOME

By WILLIAM L. GRAVES  
*Department of English*

I.—It may be asked, at the outset, whether there is any special need to encourage reading in the farm home. The answer is yes. There are many reasons why people in country homes should be urged to give a moderate amount of time to reading the best books and periodicals, some of which would, of course, apply equally well to dwellers in the city. Here are a few reasons:

*First.*—There is, even in this day, too little reading done. Not many years ago, plenty of farm homes contained nothing more in the way of books and papers than a life of Grant or Sherman, a volume of adventures in the Civil War, written by some soldier who had been a prisoner at Libby or Andersonville, a Bible concordance, a medical book, possibly a few cheap subscription books, bought more for their covers than for their contents, a farm paper, and a weekly newspaper. This collection served both the older members of the family and the growing children as well. While conditions are wonderfully improved, it is to be feared that too many farm homes are not much better provided with reading matter than were those of 30 years ago. The daily paper has replaced the weekly; there are one or two household magazines and a few popular novels; but a lively, intelligent boy or girl should be better off, so far as stimulating, entertaining, and profitable reading goes, than he or she can be unless some definite attention, and a little money, are devoted to supplying satisfaction for the mind and the imagination.

*Second.*—The knowledge and intelligence promoted by good reading in the home is a part of the general forward movement so noticeable nowadays in country life. While it is true that a man or a woman may be an intelligent person without an unusual acquaintance with books, it is none the less true that considering people in the mass, a reading community is almost always the most progressive community, and a reading farmer the most influential. The homes with libraries in them are the best homes; the worst homes never contain books. There is a direct connection between the reading habit and the general atmosphere of a home. Other desirable things usually go along with books. Where you find good books you will nearly always find music, that important feature in securing

the cheerfulness and brightness so necessary to a successful home atmosphere. When the members of a household have the benefit of the countless interesting ideas that come in to them from the best magazines and stories and articles on current history, conversation lifts itself above the annoying petty things that too often magnify themselves unduly, and dwells upon the topics of fresh interest that take people's minds off themselves and their worries, and turn their thoughts to things worth while. There is less complaining, less gossip, less talk of ill health in the homes where a current of fresh ideas has come in thru the introduction of pleasant and entertaining reading.

Country life has moved forward, or should have, beyond the little selfish round of daily affairs. Every intelligent farmer, young and old, wishes to be a leader in his community. It can be established with certainty that the majority of such leaders are the men in whose homes you will find the books and periodicals that connect them with the best thought of the day, that open to their children the broadest fields of enjoyment and profit to be found in literature, and that give to their households the most of culture and knowledge compatible with the necessarily arduous work of the farm.

*Third.*—The children need the best reading. This idea has been suggested in another paragraph. It ought to be evident that books make the home attractive to healthy, bright youngsters, eager to learn and to be occupied, in mind as well as in body. No normal child is going to live his life wholly in books, nor should he; but when he has exhausted the energies of his body, there should be at hand the things which occupy his mind in the right way. Books stimulate the educational ambition of children; they emphasize and enlarge the suggestions made to children in their schools. They do something else, where conditions are not wholly as they should be: they counteract possible bad community influences. Not all country towns and communities are wholesome. Healthy interests in the home are the best antidote for wrong outside influences, and certainly among these interests are music and books.

*Fourth.*—There is another reason for the cultivation of the reading habit among people—a reason whose application may seem a little remote, but which is a good reason all the same. It is that people are thus providing themselves for sickness or age a resource whose importance can scarcely be estimated. When an ordinarily active person is incapacitated by illness, or with the advance of years becomes unable longer to perform his usual tasks—those routine events which have so long filled the days and the abandon-

ing of which is for most elderly persons such a trying experience—he frequently finds himself utterly at a loss with no resource to fall back upon. The result is the development of unhappiness, querulousness, and gloom. But if an invalid or an aged man or woman has acquired the habit of reading, it offers just the resource to occupy the time pleasantly and helpfully, it saves one from constant complaining and from the feeling of neglect, it makes the long days seem shorter and brighter, and it keeps the mind from rust and decay.

II.—What is the farm reading to consist of?

1. It will be found, naturally, in periodicals, for one thing. In many progressive country homes, a certain sum of money is set apart for subscription to various papers and magazines. Most farmers and their wives feel that the daily newspaper, the farm journal, and the household magazine are prime essentials. You will find them everywhere. But to these there should be added, whenever it is financially possible, a good live church paper and a periodical primarily for the children in the family. Some suggestions for such things will be found further along in the bulletin. There is, however, a strong tendency nowadays for people to confine their reading entirely to periodicals, which, thru the predominance of fiction and the presence of many illustrations, attract an undue attention to themselves. But the finest, biggest, most valuable, and most permanent ideas of men are found, after all, in books. Therefore,

2. Buy books. No sudden big investment is necessary. Choice should be made with care, and a gradual accumulation should be accomplished. In this way the expense is made to seem less, and a slight investment occasionally may distribute the cost of the volumes over a considerable period of time, while a home library is being steadily created. The very sight, in any country home, of even a small, well-selected library, gives to the visitor an assurance of the intelligence and the attractiveness of family life there which is very impressive.

3. Do not buy many subscription books. Agents frequently induce people to spend money for cheap, badly written volumes, like those histories of the Spanish-American War, those lives of military or naval heroes, and those stories of the Johnstown flood and other great calamities which were common a few years ago. Just now the country is full of solicitors for publishing houses which are putting out alleged histories of the Great War, hastily compiled by hack writers, inaccurate and almost valueless. The

thing to do is to find out a really good story of the war years and events, one whose information will be trustworthy, one that constitutes a true history. Nothing better of the sort is available at present than the war history by Frank H. Simonds, the well-known writer whose articles are familiar to most readers thru their appearance in various daily and weekly newspapers.

4. Be cautious about purchasing sets of books. People rarely read all that any writer has written. Select favorite volumes, and buy those. Choose, especially in fiction, the stories that the members of the household will read more than once. Many persons always read a book before buying it, if it is available thru a library, for instance, so as to be sure it is a story worth reading over. Thus such a book becomes a permanent treasure. Nothing is more foolish than to fill shelves with great sets of books which nobody in the family reads.

III.—How can we encourage reading in village and rural communities?

1. Introduce the reading circle idea, if it is not already in operation. Thru this familiar scheme 12 or 15 persons in a village, or on the farms for which the town is a center, by contributing a small sum to a common fund, are enabled to buy as many books, of any sort desired, as there are members of the circle. These are passed about in order, under certain rules regarding time of possession, and thus volumes of passing interest, chiefly novels, are brought within the reach of many persons who would not want to buy all these books, but who yet wish to read them. The caution here is that careful choice should be made in selecting the books; but of course the tastes of different readers must be respected.

2. Encourage the formation and the enlarging of school libraries. This promotes chiefly the reading habits of children, tho there is no reason why public libraries of the sort should not be taken advantage of by older persons. Many township schools are now provided with fairly good collections of books, which should be supervised by an interested teacher, and enlarged and kept up to date by the addition of volumes of varied sorts. Contributions of books may be made from home libraries; and school entertainments may very well be directed toward providing funds for the purchase of volumes for the school collection.

3. Use the Traveling Library Department of the Ohio State Library. Farmers, artisans, professional and business people may borrow books to read at home by applying to the Superintendent of the Traveling Library Department, 199 East Gay Street, Co-

lumbus, Ohio. The Department publishes a circular of information, which is sent on request, setting forth the simple conditions under which books may be borrowed. These books include not merely fiction, but especially many valuable volumes on all phases of agriculture.

4. Take advantage of the assistance which may be given by the college libraries, particularly by the library of the Ohio State University, or by the English department of the institution. Members of the staffs of these departments will gladly help readers in the selection of books for their personal use, or in the choice of volumes for village or school libraries.

5. Make a habit of talking over with the younger members of the family things which have been read in the home. It is not hard to stimulate the interest of children in good magazines and books if their reading material is made the topic of conversation, and is directed toward the circumstances and happenings of their daily life. And let your acquaintances know that you yourself are a reader. People in a community may often be shamed out of their own illiteracy and indifference by the knowledge that they are letting their neighbors advance beyond them in information, culture, and intelligence.

#### IV.—Some specific suggestions for reading.

The purpose of this section of the bulletin is not to advertise particular books, magazines, authors, or publishers, but to supply some definite suggestions, expressing an individual opinion, for those who, in the presence of the bewildering mass of books and periodicals, find themselves at a loss what to select. The lists of books, particularly, must not be regarded as the writer's choice of "best books," nor as final lists in any way. They are simply aids to the person who is remote from libraries, publishing houses and well-stocked book stores. Some of the volumes mentioned are new, some are not; but in each instance a book has been named which the writer knows and which, in his judgment, has enough merit to make it worth the while of a reader.

Many periodicals are so well known as to need no characterization. Such magazines as the Century, Harper's Magazine, Scribner's Magazine, and the Atlantic Monthly have an established place among American readers who are willing to pay for a really high class periodical. In fiction and poetry, as well as in literature of a political and social nature, they offer the best to be had. In taste they are conservative rather than popular or radical.

Among the more popular illustrated magazines, The American Magazine may be recommended for a lively, wholesome quality, for timely articles, and for interesting illustration. The extremely popular Cosmopolitan, sometimes sensational in its atmosphere, retains among its contributors many of the best contemporary writers of short stories and novels. Collier's and The Saturday Evening Post are fine illustrated weeklies; the Literary Digest and Current Opinion sum up for hurried readers in a splendid way the happenings and the thought of the world; the National Geographic Magazine and the World Outlook, wonderfully illustrated with photographs, will show their readers the far regions of the earth, with their peoples and their customs. Of the household magazines, the Pictorial Review is an excellent example of a group comprising the Ladies' Home Journal, the Woman's Home Companion, Good Housekeeping, the Delineator, and others. In Country Life in America one may find the handsomest periodical of its kind, as well as the highest-priced. It is worth what it costs, however.

For younger readers, nothing better can be found than the three well-known periodicals with which thousands of young Americans have grown up, The Youth's Companion, published in Boston; St. Nicholas, in New York; and The American Boy, in Detroit. All of them are entertaining, wholesome, and well-edited.

In the book lists following, the names of volumes are given with those of the authors and the publishers. Prices are not listed, as at the present time these are frequently changed by publishers without notice. All books at present are higher in cost than they used to be, and will probably remain so for some time. Volumes starred may be secured not only under their original imprint, but also, identical in form tho more simply bound, in the Grosset and Dunlap, and the A. L. Burt editions, which sell for 75 cents a copy. These later imprints are desirable in every way, if one wishes to make a smaller purchasing investment.

The first list includes books of fiction from which selections might be made for a reading circle.

#### BOOKS OF FICTION

- \*The Turmoil—Booth Tarkington. Harper & Bros. Story of modern life in a great industrial city. Love and business main themes.
- The Magnificent Ambersons—Booth Tarkington. Harper & Bros. The career of an ambitious American family.
- \*Penrod, and Penrod and Sam—Booth Tarkington. Doubleday, Page & Co. Intensely amusing pictures of boy life in an American town. Nothing better of the sort.
- The Old Gray Homestead—Frances Parkinson Keyes. Houghton, Mifflin Company. An attractive story of simple life in a country home.



- A Daughter of the Land—Gene Stratton Porter. Doubleday, Page & Co. Fine, rapidly moving tale of a strong woman character, much humor, some pathos, many memorable figures.
- Mr. Britling Sees It Through—H. G. Wells. The Macmillan Company. One of the finest stories produced by the Great War, showing its effects upon various members of an English family.
- \*The Four Million, and Roads of Destiny—O. Henry. Doubleday, Page & Co. Fascinating short stories by a great satirist and humorist, of New York and of the West respectively.
- Home Fires in France, and The Day of Glory—Dorothy Canfield. Henry Holt & Co. Unusual and sympathetic pictures of realistic incident in France during the War. Different from ordinary war books.
- \*The Bent Twig—Dorothy Canfield. Henry Holt & Co. Fine study of American family life, and of the career of an interesting girl thru her school and college life and beyond.
- \*Mother, and Saturday's Child—Kathleen Norris. Doubleday, Page & Co. Sentiment, humor, lively incident. Extremely readable books.
- \*The Virginian—Owen Wister. The Macmillan Company. Probably the best presentation of western life, character, and happening. Good plot, finely written, splendid characterization.
- \*The Circular Staircase—Mary Roberts Rinehart. Bobbs-Merrill Company. Fine mystery story.
- The Amazing Interlude—Mary Roberts Rinehart. G. H. Doran Company. Thrilling tale of the War, love and adventure.
- The Rise of Silas Lapham—William Dean Howells. Houghton, Mifflin Company. Realistic study of an American selfmade man and his family. One of the best stories of American life.
- In Our Town—William Allen White. The Macmillan Company. Mingled humor and pathos in the presentation of American town life.
- \*Back Home, and Local Color—Irvin S. Cobb. G. H. Doran Company. Short stories and studies by a famous humorist and student of human nature.
- \*The Iron Trail—Rex Beach. Harper & Bros. Thrilling adventure in the far north.
- Many Inventions—Rudyard Kipling. Doubleday, Page & Co. Some of the best of Mr. Kipling's remarkable tales of England and India.
- Humoresque—Fannie Hurst. Harper & Bros. Stories of mingled laughter and tears by one of the most popular of contemporary magazine writers.
- Cheerful—By Request—Edna Ferber. Doubleday, Page & Co. A new volume of penetrating stories by another widely-read contributor to current magazines. Well worth while.
- \*The Sea-Wolf—Jack London. The Macmillan Company. A powerful novel of adventure, with a central character unforgettable in intensity.
- Broke of Covenden—J. C. Snaith. Small, Maynard & Co. An original and delightful English novel, a "tragi-comedy of men and acres."
- \*Little Sir Galahad—Phoebe Gray. Small, Maynard & Co. A story of the effect upon others of a young life lived courageously in pain; wholesome, not morbid or didactic.

- Tang of Life, and Sundown Slim—Henry H. Knibbs. Houghton, Mifflin Company. Breezy, lively romances of the outdoor west, full of swift adventure in a picturesque setting.
- Nan of Music Mountain—F. H. Spearman. Charles Scribner's Sons. A finely written romance of love and adventure in the west.
- Filling His Own Shoes—Henry C. Rowland. Houghton, Mifflin Company. A lively narrative of a man who learned to stand alone.
- The Peace of Roaring River—George Van Schaick. Small, Maynard & Co. A girl's fight for happiness against odds. Laid in the Canadian Northwest.

#### BOOKS FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

Here are a few titles of books which should please boys and girls anywhere from 12 to 16 or beyond:

- Captains Courageous—Rudyard Kipling. Century Company. A famous story of a boy who, thru an astonishing mishap, was changed from a spoiled baby into a manly, self-reliant lad.
- Men of Iron—Howard Pyle. Harper & Bros. Another tale, this time laid in the Middle Ages, of the struggle and success of a young lad. Fine pictures accompany the story.
- \*Treasure Island—R. L. Stevenson. Charles Scribner's Sons. One of the world's celebrated romances of adventure. Thrilling, but not unwholesome. Pirates, treasure, ships and the sea.
- \*The Adventures of Bobby Orde—Stewart E. White. Doubleday, Page & Co. A thoroly commendable everyday story of boy life in the country, by an American sportsman.
- Yellow Men and Gold—Gouverneur Morris. Dodd, Mead & Co. Another tale of the sea, of stirring adventure and romantic regions.
- For the Freedom of the Seas—R. H. Barbour. Daniel Appleton & Co. A rattling story of the navy in the Great War.
- The Young Timber-Cruisers—Hugh Poindexter. Small, Maynard & Co. A wholesome story of the Maine woods and the way two boys helped defeat the purposes of timber thieves. The book affords much knowledge of woodcraft.
- The Boy's Life of Theodore Roosevelt. Harper & Bros. Well-written, entertaining, inspiring.
- Wilderness Honey—F. R. Pollock. Century Company. A Youth's Companion story of life in the open, healthful in tone and readable in style.
- \*The Call of the Wild, and White Fang—Jack London. The Macmillan Company. Standard stories of animal life, which have become classics.
- \*Gold—Stewart E. White. Doubleday, Page & Co. The best picture ever given of the gold fever of '49, and of the men who attempted the quest for the treasure.
- Prester John—John Buchan. G. H. Doran Company. An enthralling story of adventure in the heart of Africa.
- Rusty Miller—Joslyn Gray. Charles Scribner's Sons. A lively, pleasing story of home and school life of an American girl.
- Pollyanna Grows Up—Eleanor Porter. Page Company. Everybody knows Pollyanna. She is worth knowing.

Understood Betsey—Dorothy Canfield. Henry Holt & Co. A fascinating tale, good for grownups, too, of a little girl who was made over by her life with sensible country folks, from a timid, half-sick child into a sturdy, self-reliant one. Unusually good.

The American Boy's Engineering Book—A. R. Bond. J. B. Lippincott Company.

Children are always deeply impressed by the illustrations which accompany what they read; pictures leave recollections which never fade, and which recur in after life with great vividness. When finely illustrated books are to be had, editions with pictures are to be preferred. Grimm's Fairy Tales, with color drawings by Arthur Rackham, Stevenson's Treasure Island, and Kidnapped, with wonderful color pictures by N. C. Wyeth, and all the stories of Howard Pyle, with his own drawings in black and white, are examples.

There are certain famous books to which children may well have access, even before the period when some parents might think the stories suitable. They will know these classics best if they discover them early; and books like the following ones ought to be in the possession of all households: David Copperfield; The Old Curiosity Shop; Jane Eyre; Kenilworth; The Heart of Midlothian; Adam Bede; The Mill on the Floss; The Woman in White; Lorna Doone; The Scarlet Letter; Mosses From an Old Manse; Ramona; Huckleberry Finn; Westward Ho; Hypatia.

No finer gift could be made to a child than the 10 volumes of The Children's Hour, a collection of stories, poems, outdoor articles, fairy tales, and the like, published by Houghton, Mifflin Company, of Boston. The books make a complete little library in themselves, and may be recommended heartily.

#### MISCELLANY OF INTERESTING BOOKS

A miscellaneous list of interesting books on various subjects may be of service to the general reader who is looking for volumes for his own entertainment (volumes not fictional in nature), or for books to be used as gifts to friends who read. Any of the ones named in the following list has distinct merit:

The Promised Land—Mary Antin. Houghton, Mifflin Company. A heart-moving story of an immigrant who became a loyal, enthusiastic American.

The Making of an American—Jacob Riis. The Macmillan Company. A narrative similar in theme to the one above.

What Men Live By—Richard C. Cabot. Houghton, Mifflin Company. An inspiring and helpful book for the thoughtful reader who is trying to find a philosophy of life.

What Can Literature Do for Me—C. Alphonso Smith. Doubleday, Page & Co. The title indicates the nature of this helpful book.

- Home Economics Movement—Isabel Bevier. Whitcomb & Barrows.
- Cost of Living, Cost of Food, Cost of Clothing, Cost of Shelter, Cost of Clean-ness—Ellen H. Richards. Whitcomb & Barrows.
- Household Management—Bertha M. Terrill. Library of Home Economics, Vol. VII.
- Household Economics—Helen Campbell. G. P. Putnam's Sons.
- Household Engineering—Christine Frederick.
- The Face of the Fields—Dallas L. Sharp. Houghton, Mifflin Company. De-lightful studies of the outdoors.
- Civilization—G. Duhamel. Century Company. Vivid, stirring sketches of bat-tle and hospital life, by an eminent French soldier and author.
- Ambassador Morgenthau's Story—Henry Morgenthau. Doubleday, Page & Co. One of the memorable books the War has produced, written by the United States Ambassador to Turkey.
- \*Adventures in Contentment, Adventures in Friendship, The Friendly Road, Great Possessions—all by David Grayson. Doubleday, Page & Co. Books which for their quiet, gentle, uplifting philosophy, their humor, their sympathetic understanding of human nature, have become famous the country over. They should be in every farm home.
- A Journey to Nature—J. P. Mowbray. Doubleday, Page & Co. Delightful studies of country life, written in fresh, original way.
- Green Trails and Upland Pastures—Walter P. Eaton. Doubleday, Page & Co. Essays with all the breath of mountain and forest in them, genuine, con-vincing experiences.
- \*The Idyl of Twin Fires—Walter P. Eaton. Doubleday, Page & Co. The story of a young man who bought an abandoned farm, worked it himself, made a home, discovered a wife, and learned what happiness is. Humorous, charming. Incidentally, almost a garden manual.
- General William Booth Enters Into Heaven, and Other Poems—Vachel Lind-say. The Macmillan Company. A new kind of poet, a real American, who will interest anybody with a love for humanity and the lives of plain people.
- The Home Book of Verse—Burton Stevenson. Henry Holt & Co. A great col-lection of the best poetry written in all times.
- War Verse—Edited by Frank Foxcroft. T. Y. Crowell Company. A first rate collection, from English periodicals.
- A Treasury of War Poetry—Edited by G. H. Clarke. Houghton, Mifflin Com-pany. Another very fine collection.
- American Poetry—Edited by Percy H. Boynton. Charles Scribner's Sons. This book will become a standard collection for American readers.
- A Student in Arms—Donald Hankey. E. P. Dutton & Co. Fine, thoughtful es-says on certain aspects of the War, by an unusually intelligent English soldier.
- Songs of Nature—Collected by John Burroughs. Doubleday, Page & Co. One of the best of all nature anthologies.
- Romantic America—Robert Haven Schauffler. Century Company. Fresh and interesting descriptions of some of the famous places of resort in this country, The Yellowstone, Mammoth Cave, New Orleans, The Grand Can-yon, and the like, with wonderful pictures. An especially fine book for the home or for a gift.