

**NOTES ON FIELDS AND CATTLE FROM THE  
DIARY OF AN AMATEUR FARMER. TO WHICH  
IS APPENDED A PRIZE ESSAY ON TIME OF  
ENTRY ON FARMS, REPRINTED BY PERMISSION  
FROM THE JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL  
AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY OF ENGLAND**

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Notes on fields and cattle from the diary of an amateur farmer. To which is appended a prize essay on time of entry on farms, reprinted by permission from the Journal of the Royal agricultural society of England by W. Holt Beever

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**W. HOLT BEEVER**

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DIARY OF AN AMATEUR FARMER.

BY THE  
REV. W. HOLT BEEVER, M.A., OXON.

*Cur valde permittent Sabini  
Divitias operoseiores?*

LONDON:  
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*hrr*

2521  
1342  
1870

## PREFACE.

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THE following pages are but a transcript of occasional notes made during the few months' study requisite for the profitable conduct of a small farm which I hold, as at least a restorative adjunct on which to blow off spare steam after the day spent amidst the laborious duties and anxieties of scholastic life, illustrated by a few years' subsequent practical experience.

Once away from the University the wonted "constitutional" seems to lose its virtue, and before many weeks of the half-year are spent, I have always found that each neighbouring road seems to trail with Trigonometry; each fence is hung with Prosody.

Well adapted, then, are the ever-changing aspect and chequered vicissitudes of agricultural occupation to refresh the exhausted chalice of one's existence. That this little volume shall teach any except the tyro I do not hope or expect, for I pretend to no originality whatever. If it only gives one-thousandth part of the pleasure to such readers as may farm themselves as it has yielded me in the composi-

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tion, I shall esteem myself fortunate; and although I do not anticipate that I may further employ my pen upon these subjects, I shall be glad to have put a spoke in the wheel of a healthful pursuit, which, properly conducted, is profitable as pleasant, and has as many phases as the revolving year itself.

I undertake only to pilot the sucking agriculturist down channel: the occupation itself is so attractive, that by that time he will ordinarily have learnt enough to manage the remainder of the voyage.

Farming, at present, is assuredly at a premium. It is no longer left to the nest-egg of the village public-house—*pingui tentus omaso*—but is in manifest favour, from the Royal Lady whose “walk in the Home Park” is understood to mean an inspection of the Shorthorns, a trip for fresh eggs, and some petting of the Alderneys, down to the Yorkshire manufacturer of gigantic gains, and the agreeable authoress of that charming book, *Our Farm of Four Acres*. The spruce city banker has his compact estate, which he reaches daily on his hundred-guinea trotting cob; and in this district at least most provident labourers have their few fields and cows to help to rear the children.

Now-a-days, too, it has its problems, and properly viewed is to be reckoned as a leading science. What store the intelligent ruler at the Tuileries sets by agriculture as an advancing and distinguished industrial branch of occupation—the very core of a nation's well-being—his generous appreciation of the English

breeder—his model farms—his extended draining schemes—his repeated implement trials and stock exhibitions evidence. A formal fillip even the Emperor of the Celestials gives annually to agriculture, by taking a plough in his imperial hand and cutting a furrow with ceremonious solemnity: just as a neighbouring "nob" in England turns the first sod of his county railway. "In Japan," we are informed by Captain Osborne, "agriculture is the most honourable of pursuits, for did not the great conqueror remark, 'that it is the tillers of the ground that by their labours fill my kingdom with abundance.'"

At a discount it is but in a few places, as amidst a seafaring population—such as that interesting Sylt people of whom some notice has appeared lately, where the farm duties are attended to by the women; the landsmen being regarded as an inferior order of beings. They have the excuse that the waves are continually trenching upon their soil, notwithstanding the patient industry with which the poor creatures plant a mesh-work of protective clinging grasses along the sand-hills during the bleak autumn evenings as they keep an anxious look-out for the return from the treacherous deep of brother, lover, husband. To learn what agriculture did for Europe in the seventh century, started by the monks of St. Benedict, I refer my readers to the eloquent pages of White's *Eighteen Christian Centuries*. The exquisite beauty of the picture there drawn with such elaborate skill I would not mar by compression. A sentence only or two I

abstract, with the earnest recommendation to all who would enjoy a delicious treat that they hasten to the fountain head, the volume itself. "Robbery, pillage, murder, and every crime were considered far less derogatory to the dignity of free Frank or Burgundian than the slightest touch of the mattock or spade. How surprised then were the haughty countrymen and descendants of Clovis or Alboin to see the revered hands, from which they believed the highest blessings of heaven to flow, employed in the daily work of digging, planting, sowing, reaping, thrashing, grinding, and baking!

"'No person,' wrote the founder of their institution to the monks themselves, 'is ever more usefully employed than when working with his hands, or following the plough, providing food for the use of man.' And the effects of these exhortations were rapidly seen. Wherever a monastery was placed there were soon fertile fields all round it, and innumerable stacks of corn. Generally chosen with a view to agricultural pursuits, we find sites of abbeys at the present day which are the perfect ideal of a working farm: for long after the outburst of agricultural energy had expired among the monks of St. Benedict, the choice of situation and knowledge of different soils descended to the other ecclesiastical establishments, and skill in agriculture continued at all times a characteristic of the religious orders.

"At last, something venerable was thought to reside in the act of farming itself. It was so uni-