

HENRY WARD BEECHER

A vast number of Iowa pioneers were from Indiana. One of those continued his subscription to the *Western Farmer and Gardener*, then published in Indianapolis. He brought with him at least the volume for 1846. There was a craving on the part of the Hoosiers and of those from Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, and even the New England states, for cultivated fruits. Nearly all brought their newspapers that would direct them into the transplanting to Iowa soil the fruits of their native states. We have in the Historical Department a few of those basic library resources.

The *Western Farmer and Gardener*, published in Indianapolis, Indiana, had a striking admixture of moral philosophy along with agriculture. That is not to be wondered at when it is recalled that its editor in chief was Henry Ward Beecher, then pastor of a Congregational church at Indianapolis.

Due to the singular resemblance of our recent depression to other depressions, we feel it is appropriate to give readers of the *ANNALS* a specimen of what Mr. Beecher published in 1846 in his farm paper. Whether it is from an exchange or is original, we have no means of knowing, but is worth reading for its classic common sense.

CAUSE OF AND CURE FOR HARD TIMES

By An Old Farmer of 1788

I profess myself to be an honest farmer, for I can say that no man can charge me with a dishonest action. I see with great grief that all the country is afflicted as well as myself. Every one is complaining, and telling his grievances, but I find they do not tell how their troubles came on them. I know it is common for people to throw the blame of their own misdeeds on others, or at least to excuse themselves of the charge. I am in great tribulation, but to keep up the character of an honest man, I cannot in conscience say that any one has brought my troubles on by myself. "Hard times—no money!" says every one. A short story of myself will show how it came to be hard times with me, and no money at the age of sixty-five, who had lived well these forty years.

My parents were poor, and they put me at twelve years of age to a farmer, with whom I lived till I was twenty-one. My master fitted me with two stout suits of homespun, and four pair of shoes. At twenty-one I married me a wife, a very good young woman she was. We took

a farm of forty akers [*sic*] on rent. By industry we gained fast. I paid my rent punctually and laid by money. In ten years I was able to buy myself a farm of sixty akers, on which I became my own tenant. I then in a manner grew rich, and soon added another sixty akers, with which I was contented. My estate increased beyond all account. I bought several akers of outland for my children, which amounted to seven when I was forty-five years of age.

About this time I married my eldest daughter to a clever young man, to whom I gave 100 akers of land. This daughter had been a working, a dutiful girl, and therefore I fitted her out well, and to her mind exactly; for I told her to take of the best of my wool and flax, and to spin herself gowns, coats, stockings, &c.; nay, I suffered her to buy some cotton to make into sheets; I was determined to do well by her.

At this time my farm gave me and my whole family support on the product of it, and left me one year with another, one hundred and fifty dollars, which was for salt, nails, &c. Nothing to wear, eat, or drink, was purchased anywhere, as my farm provided all. With this saving, I put my money to interest, bought cattle, fattened them, and made great profit.

In two years after my second daughter was courted. My wife says, "Come, you are now rich; you know Molly had nothing but what she spun, and no clothing has ever come into our house for any of us. She must be fitted out a little; she ought to fare as well as neighbor B.'s Betty." "Well, wife, it shall be as you think best, I have never been stingy, but it seems to me that what we spin would do." However, wife goes to town in a few days, and returns with a calico gown, a calimanco petticoat, a set of stone teacups, and half a dozen pewter spoons, things that were never seen in my house before. They cost but little—did not feel it—and I confess I was pleased to see them. Sally was as well fitted out as any girl in the parish.

In three years after my third daughter had a spark, and a wedding concluded upon. Wife again comes for the purse; but when she returned what did I see? A silk gown, silk for a hat, looking-glass, china tea gear, &c., and a hundred other things, with the empty purse. Then followed jealousy and quarrels. Molly ought to be outfitted as well as Betty. Good homespun and cotton fixtures were ruled as vulgar, and white feathers and silk must take their places; Sal's husband must speculate in stocks; backed endorsement; but *he* had all the fun of speculating, and I had all the misery of *paying*. Then grandpa must be the treasury department for all things needful. Nothing was heard but arrangements for journeys, balls, parties, and such like.

In about a year Bet's husband made a mistake, and signed somebody else's name to a check instead of his own. He was arrested and sent to jail, and I had to send half of my earnings to get him out. Sal's husband died, leaving a legacy of nine children, whom, with their mother, I've got to support. Bet's elder boy was framed for a doctor, took his degree, and sent his first six patients out of the world by improper treat-

ment, for which he had to fly the land, leaving his dear incumbrances *attaches* on my purse.

I could fill your paper with further particulars, but that might not be so agreeable to your readers. I will only say, in regard to hard times, let every man exercise the ability nature has given, in his prescribed sphere; let contentment reign within the breast, no envy reach its threshold. Regard not the apparent glitter of thy neighbor, nor aim at an equality beyond your comprehension; live more to please yourself, and less to please other people; be frugal, industrious and just; bring your ideas down to a level, nor let them be disturbed by bad example. So shall you avoid the mishaps I have experienced in family matters, and rejoice in old age over a life well spent, with just hopes for years hereafter.—*Western Farmer and Gardener*, December 16, 1846, Vol. II, No. 24, p. 380. Published at Indianapolis, Indiana. Henry Ward Beecher, editor; S. V. Noel, publisher and printer. (In the Newspaper Division of the Historical, Memorial and Art Department of Iowa.)

HARD TIMES

Complaints of hard times are heard in every quarter of the globe. Among us it is the general cry, yet we believe that when our condition is contrasted with that of our eastern brethren, save that of eastern traders, it affords nothing to complain of. Our citizens who have recently returned from a visit to their former homes represent the eastern states in a deplorable condition. Money is scarce every where, yet with us no shinplasters or the notes of picayune institutions are in circulation, while east of us in Ohio, in particular, shinplasters are all the go. By this method of supplying a circulating medium thousands of honest and industrious farmers and mechanics in the east are swindled out of their dues, while with us accounts stand against our creditor, or our pay is good. Then let us learn to bear well our misfortunes, reflecting that we are not the only people suffering, but on the other hand we should rejoice that we are among the most favored of the land. Times with us are good considering that we are under a Whig administration, therefore we should not pine, but rejoice that we are not under the dominion of Banks, and the swindling operations that flourish in their rear.—*Bloomington Herald*, Bloomington (Muscatine), Iowa, November 26, 1841. (In the Newspaper Division of the Historical, Memorial and Art Department of Iowa.)

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