STATEMENT

OF THE

SUPERINTENDENT

OF THE

IPSWICH POOR FARM.

Ipswich Poor Farm contains about 330 acres of land. It is estimated that there are about 70 acres of English mowing and tillage, 130 acres of pasture, and about 36 acres of woodland. The remainder is mostly marsh. Among the town's farms in Massachusetts, it ranks the third in size; and the natural soil of it is thought to be equal to that of any other farm in the state. Although for many years past but little has been done to enrich the soil, or in any way to improve the condition of the farm, still it continues to produce good crops. But this is no reason why something should not be done to bring it into a much higher state of fertility.

The facilities for doing this are not surpassed on any farm in New England. Nearly all the dyked marsh, from two to six feet in depth, is a bed of muck or peat, of fresh vegetable origin, and rich in its fertilizing qualities. It has been tested, and found to be of itself a most nourishing food for plants. But it is much improved by being composted with other manures; as it then ferments, destroying all the acids which it contains, and thus becomes a powerful fertilizer.

Mr. Appleton, a former superintendent upon this town's farm, experimented some with it, and he states, that, when composted with one third part of barn-yard manure, it answers an excellent purpose for a top-dressing on grass lands; and Mr. Caldwell, who has given it a pretty thorough trial for various crops, assures us that when composted in equal quantities with barn-yard manure it is eqnally as good for the production of a corn crop as unmixed manure of cattle; and I think that all who have observed his corn-fields, and compared them with others near to them, are fully satisfied of the truth of this statement. I have seen it ap-

plied to house-plants that were languishing, and it soon restored a most beautiful green color, and gave a fresh and vigorous start to their growth. It was for this purpose that Mr. Caldwell first used it, and discovered its fertilizing qualities.

Many people suppose this is like the peat of the outside marsh; but in this they are mistaken. That, as is well known, is light and spongy, and requires a long time to rot. This has the appearance of old barn-yard manure that has been rotted. As was very pertinently remarked by Mr. Caldwell, in digging into the dyked marsh one is reminded of an old barn-yard, into which have been throwu buts of corn-stalks and mulch, which have been mixed up with the droppings of cattle, and thoroughly rotted. The substances of which this muck is composed are so completely decayed, that, on being exposed but a short time to the action of the frost, and then being thawed and brought to the air, it soon crumbles to dust. One interesting thought arises from the fact of its being composed of fresh vegetable matter. During the time of its formation, the tide could not have flowed over it. Hence we infer that the earth must have settled, or the sea have risen.

This marsh is an almost inexhaustible mine of this fertilizing substance, and it can be obtained and prepared for use at a very small expense. The digging of this does not cost twenty-five cents a cord. It has to be hauled but a very short distance, and that can be done in the winter, when there is leisure time. Besides this, there is a considerable amount of mulch brought up nearly every year by the high tides. With such abundant sources and facilities for obtaining manure, the town's farm might be made a model farm, one that would be an honor, not only to the town of Ipswich, but to the state of Massachusetts. And, in doing this, the town need not run themselves in debt. All the outlays that it would be necessary to make would prove remunerative from year to year. But, to accomplish this, a far more liberal policy must be pursued than has been heretofore. For many years past, the farm has been bankrupt; and a general dissatisfaction has been felt throughout the town on account of its insolvency. But two years ago, a committee was chosen to sell the farm; and it might no doubt have been sold, at a sacrifice of one half its value.

It was often said by sensible men, that the farm can do no better than it has done; we have had good men for overseers and superintendents, and others can do no more than they have done. We admit that you may have had good men to fill those offices, men that were discreet in the management of their own affairs; and an individual might sometimes have been found upon this

board, who, if untrammelled by his associates, would have done much to have improved the condition of things; but they have not had the moral courage to lay out and pursue a uniform course of liberal policy in the management of this farm. There has seemed to be an unwillingness on the part of the majority of those who have had the management of this concern to make outlays for repairs or improvements, however necessary it might have been. Pursuing this course, things must of necessity have been running down.

As an example, we will briefly state a few facts in relation to the condition of things at the Ipswich poor farm two years ago. At that time, the people at the almshouse were travelling, on washing days, seven or eight miles to bring the water for the use of the house. The pump at the house was out of repair, and had not been used for a long time. The cistern pump in the paupers' kitchen was entirely worn out and useless. The drain from the sink in the other kitchen had become rotten, and fallen in, so that the sink water had flowed back into the cistern, and destroyed the water in that. Of necessity, therefore, most of the water used at the house had to be brought from the pump below the barn, a distance going and returning of about sixty rods. But this is but the first verse of the chapter. The corn-barn was settled on to the ground, and was so out of repair that the rats had free access to the corn; and, to speak within the bounds of truth, they destroyed more than thirty bushels during that year.

The condition of the barn-yard was no better. A person unacquainted with its condition, in attempting to pass through it, was in danger of being swamped in the deep miry holes that had been worn out in the course of time by the cattle. Here many a person unconscious of danger had been suddenly submerged in filth, and would have willingly paid a high premium for the insurance of his life. A stock of some forty cattle have usually been kept in this yard; and, during the wet season of the year, these deep miry holes had been worn out, in which cattle were often mired, and injured, and sometimes lost. If a cart were loaded in these places, no common team could draw it out. During the last two years, one hundred and thirty cart-loads of stone and gravel have been hauled into that yard; and more is yet needed. These are but a few cases among many that might be given to show the condition of things there at that time. These and many others have all been repaired, and put at least in much better order than they were then. With a knowledge of these facts, no one need wonder that the farm has not been remunerative.

It is a miserable policy that does not make outlays for repairs

or improvements, when a dollar will either save or gain two. If a man puts no money at interest, he cannot expect to receive interest. If a man refuses to *make investments* where a hundred per cent. profit might be realized, he cannot expect to receive the *benefit* of such investments. It is natural for people, when from neglect or mismanagement of their business it becomes unprofitable, to feel that they must curtail their expenses; and they withhold money from making outlays which with proper management would render their business lucrative. Now the man that pursues this course does not realize that his income is diminished in a far greater ratio than his expenses. We have a clear illustration of the results of this principle in the management of the Ipswich poor farm for many years past. And I appeal to the people of this town to decide whether this course of policy shall be pursued any longer. Have you not already seen enough of the shortcomings of your farm? Are you willing to go on, year after year, drawing large sums of money from your treasury to pay up the arrearages of this concern? Every one of you who is a tax-payer at least has an interest there at stake, and should take an active part in promoting that interest.

But let us for a few moments turn our thoughts to the particular branches of farming for which the Ipswich poor farm is best adapted. It is naturally a grass farm. The pastures that have never received any fertilizing from the hand of man afford abundant feed for cattle. Some of them, if not fed, would produce a large amount of hay.

STOCK.

The soil is naturally moist, and is not much affected by drought. Therefore there is not the liability of the feed being cut short in dry seasons that there is on soils of a different nature. This, of course, is favorable for the raising of stock. Although there are a few weeks in the early part of summer when the flies on this place are very troublesome to cattle, still they soon get over that trouble, and grow and fatten exceedingly well.

A considerable number of cattle might be fattened on this farm every year, and the growth of the remainder of the stock would be an item of no small account. If the cattle kept upon this place were of the best breed for beef, and a wise course were pursued in turning such as were fit at proper times, there is little doubt but that the growing and fattening of stock would be a source of considerable profit. When a creature has its growth, and is fit for the shambles, it should be sold, and let another take its place. If a yoke of oxen at six years old have their growth and are fat, there would be a loss in keeping them two or three years longer, or even one; for another yoke that are younger might be put in their place, the probable growth of which would be worth thirty dollars in a year. So we see that in keeping a yoke of

cattle three years after having their growth and being fit for beef, they would almost eat themselves up. A man keeping a large stock of cattle, and uniformly pursuing such a course, would find that in the course of time his cattle had eaten his farm up.

HAY.

We will now pass along to the hay fields. We find them admirably adapted to the growth of the hay crop. It is from this that a far greater amount of profit is to be realized than from any other branch of farming upon the town's farm.

From the unsurpassed facilities which that farm possesses of increasing to a very high degree the fertility of its soil, which is naturally rich and well adapted to grass, it might be made to produce as great an amount of hay as you can reasonably desire. Comparatively there is but a small amount of labor required in raising a crop of hay, in proportion to its value. In the course of a very few years, the fields that are now in English mowing and tillage might be made to yield, in a good grass season, one hundred and fifty tons of English hay.

FRUIT.

One other branch of farming, that should receive seme attention there, is fruit culture. Fruit trees grow and bear well upon that farm. A large number of trees might be set out along the fences on the northern sides of fields, where the soil is well adapted to the culture of fruit, and the growth of other crops would not be much encumbered by it. It is desirable that such places should be occupied by fruit trees. With proper care they would soon return their cost with interest.

A person intending to set out an orchard should first acquire some knowledge of fruit culture, or his labor may prove fruitless. There is an example of this on the town's farm. Some ten or twelve years ago, an orchard of about one hundred trees was set out upon the richest and best spot of land for grass that there is upon that farm. But the ground was flat and wet, and without deep draining trees could never flourish there. After several years, it was observed that they had scarcely grown at all, and they were grafted over again, in order to give a fresh start to their growth. But this did not have the desired effect. Nearly half of their number are now dead, and the most of the remainder are in a dying condition.

The three branches of farming to which I have in particular called your attention are in my opinion the principal ones from which much profit can be realized, under present circumstances; and I would recommend to those who may hereafter have the management of that farm, to direct their attention more particularly to those branches. There are other crops, to be sure, that will be raised, in preparing the ground for the hay crop. These should receive proper attention.

DAIRY.

You probably expect to hear something of dairy farming, especially as our subject is of a farm on which grass grows so luxuaiantly. Under present circumstances, I think there can be much more made from rais-

ing and fattening cattle than from a dairy. The first reason I give for this opinion is, that there is no place suitable for a dairy. The cellar is on the same floor as the kitchen, with only a single door between; and in the hot part of the season it is almost of the same temperature. You might almost as well set the milk in the attic, and attempt to make butter there, as in the cellar. There are several other reasons, that might be given, for not making this a dairy farm, under existing circumstances. But this is an insuperable one. It might be made a milk farm; but at the present there are objections to that.

We will now consider some of the advantages which the town's farm possesses. We have already spoken of the great advantage that it has for obtaining manure. Another is, that it is all at home. It is not, like many others, a fragmentary farm; but it all lies in one body; and the labor upon it is considerably facilitated by the nearness to the house of most of the mowing and tillage, and also of those pastures in which are pastured the cattle that are daily driven to and from them. Most of the mowing and tillage is within a quarter of a mile of the house. The cow pasture is within about that distance, and the ox pasture is within a less distance still. These advantages will be appreciated by those who have to travel a mile to their fields, and perhaps twice that distance for their teams. Another advantage of this farm is that of good water on all parts of it. All the pastures are well supplied with this. There are several springs in the mowing fields, and the wells at the house and barn afford abundance of excellent water.

I have now given you a brief statement of some of the interesting facts of the Ipswich poor farm. During the time that I have been superintendent there, I have often been surprised by meeting with worthy citizens from various parts of the town who have never been on that farm; and it has been amusing to hear their various opinions expressed concerning it. Some think it best to give up farming entirely upon it, and turn it all into pasturing. Others think it best to sell the grass standing, as the expenses of cutting it, and making and securing the hay, are so great. Others think it best to sell off half of the land. Others think it best to sell most of the land, and such buildings as will not be needed for the accommodation of the poor. Others think it best to sell the whole concern, and move the poor up to town, so that the Scripture may be fulfilled which saith, "The poor ye have always with you." Some of these opinions are no doubt correct; and there may have been such a state of things existing there as to justify others; but if there is any farm in Ipswich that can be carried on with profit, I am confident that this farm can. These are the circumstances that have led me to prepare this statement of facts. And if it has the effect to wake up the people of this town to take a more active interest in things relating to their poor farm, it will afford me abundant satisfaction for all my pains. For many years I had felt that there must have been something wrong in the management of this concern; and it was this that induced me to undertake the superintendence of it. During the time that I have superintended this farm, I have labored most assiduously for the improvement of it, and for the comfort and happiness of

the poor, as all can testify who have been with me; but I have often met with obstacles in my way. Notwithstanding, I have persevered in my undertaking to the best of my ability; and I have the satisfaction to know that the beginning which I have made, if continued, will soon raise this property above a discount. Some hundred cords of dyked marsh muck were thrown out last fall, and a very considerable part of that will be fit for use the coming spring; and, had not obstacles been thrown in my way, it might all have been fit for use. Besides, some twenty-five loads of mulch were hauled into the barn-yard and hog-pens, which will increase the amount of manure beyond what has ever been made on the place in any one year for a long time past. A very large amount can be used for top-dressing upon the mowing ground this spring. Now, if this course is followed up for a few years, your farm will be greatly increased in productiveness; and you will not need to draw yearly upon your treasury a thousand dollars, nor even one, to pay up its arrearages. This concern is in your own hands ynce a year, and it lies with you to say whether things shall relapse into their former condition, or move onward.

The selectmen of Ipswich once proposed to sell the town's farm to the commissioners who were appointed to select and purchase a place for the location of the state almshouse which is established at Tewksbury. But they did not listen to that proposal; and the place which they selected in preference to this shows the foolishness of their choice. It seems as if this town's farm possessed almost everything desirable to render it a fit place for an institution for state paupers. Its being so large and so compact; possessing so rich a soil, with inexhaustible sources for obtaining manure; its being isolated from any settlement, and situated so neat the sea shore, and along the Eastern Railroad; are all circumstances which tend to make it a fit and desirable place for the location of such an institution.

THE POOR.

I will not close my remarks without reference to the poor at the almshouse. Whatever may have been the circumstances that have brought this unfortunate class of people to their present condition, they still deserve our sympathy and our pity. Separated as they are from much of the social intercourse of their kindred and friends, their condition must be somewhat forlorn. Although, as respects their bodily comforts, they are far better provided for than many others, still this is not enough. They have other wants to be supplied. If we feel that these are all the obligations we owe to them, that if their animal wants are supplied our duty to them is performed, we should view them in no higher light than the beasts that perish. To be sure, there are some of them whose minds are so impaired that they are hardly capable of any mental enjoyment. But there are others who keenly feel any neglect or disregard in respect to their happiness. Much of the unhappiness of such consists in the thought that they are cut off in a great degree from the social enjoyment of their friends, and that neither their present nor future welfare is much regarded. Such especially need our warmest sympathies. To them kind and soothing words are like the oil of joy,

and afford them much consolation. When they receive the friendly visit of some kind friend, their hearts are made glad, and they are animated with new life. But these are not all the duties we owe to this unfortunate class of our fellow beings. Because they are objects of public charity, and are deprived of much of the social enjoyment of others, this is no reason why their spiritual wants should be neglected. None need religious teaching more than they; and none prize it higher, or receive it more gratefully.

And here it is with regret that I feel constrained to say of those who are the chosen spiritual teachers of the people of this town, whose duty it is to gather the outcasts of Israel, to heal the broken in heart, and to bind up their wounds, that they have been too neglectful of the spiritual welfare of these persons. From year to year, they have scarcely visited that house, to speak a word of consolation to those that are cast down, or to offer to them a morsel of the bread of life. But I am glad to state that they have not always been without religious instruction. A very worthy citizen, who is a religious teacher, officiated as their chaplain for more than a year during the time I have been their keeper. Apparently no people could have appreciated the privilege of religious instruction more than they. And we have reason to believe that his teachings have produced salutary results upon the minds of some, at least, of their number.

During the last two years, the average number of regular paupers at the almshouse has been about fourteen. At the present, four of them are insane, two of whom are confined to their rooms. Two are idiotic, one is blind, and two from the infirmities of age are unable to go about the house. Three are over eighty years of age, three between seventy-five and eighty; two are young, and the others are between forty-five and seventy years of age.

During this time, three have died, the respective ages of whom were 86, 84, and 92. And it is gratifying to say that they pass not away without much serious thoughtfulness and anxiety for their future well-being.

To those that remain, I gladly refer you, as the living witnesses of the part that I and my family have acted toward them, in respect to their comfort and happiness.

GILBERT CONANT.

J. F. Kimball, Printer, Lynn News Office.