BIOGRAPHY

NATURE RAMBLINGS by Frank Thone

Poor Richard: Farmer

➤ WE HEAR MUCH about the wise words and pioneering deeds of men like George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Patrick Henry, in the field of early American agriculture. That is natural enough: Washington and Jefferson were owners and managers of big farms, and Henry was a country lawyer, often retained by farmers to do some of their worrying for them.

But we find Benjamin Franklin, city born and city bred, who went to the "big town" and made good as a businessman, nevertheless giving a good deal of highly intelligent attention to farm matters. Dr. Carl R. Woodward devotes a chapter to that less-known aspect of Franklin's life, in a recent symposium-book, *Meet Dr. Franklin*.

The first thing Dr. Woodward discovered about Franklin and farming was that, contrary to a long-accepted belief, Franklin never actually ran a farm. The belief is based on a letter about some very practical work done in field management on a farm in New Jersey, supposed to have been written by Franklin. It turns out that the writer (and owner of the farm in question) was Charles Read, a cousin of Franklin's wife.

However, despite the lack of any record of farm land ownership in New Jersey, Franklin did own a farm in Pennsylvania, not far outside Philadelphia. However, he never lived on it, and it is not at all certain that he ever did much about it. At any rate, this venture was no great success.

It was as a farm leader, as an agricultural publicist, that Franklin shone, rather than as an actual farmer. Dr. Woodward shows that he was a strong advocate of American corn as a paying crop, recommending it to prospective emigrants during his stays in England and Scotland. In this he differed from Washington and Jefferson, who thought rather ill of corn as a soil-wasting crop.

He was at one with them, however, in his eagerness to introduce into American agriculture the best of what he could find abroad. He sent home choice seed of oats, barley, turnips, cabbage, peas, rhubarb, kale and other plants. He was a strong advocate of legumes for green manuring, and is credited with a spectacular demonstration of the value of liming soils. Once he went to a great deal of trouble to send some cuttings of Rhenish grapes to an acquaintance in Connecticut, just because he wanted to see viticulture thrive there as well as in Pennsylvania.

Poor Richard may not have had much of a farm himself, but he undeniably did a great deal for American farming.

Science News Letter, September 30, 1944

● Just Off the Press ●

ELEMENTARY STATISTICS WITH GENERAL APPLICATIONS — Morris Myers Blair — *Holt,* 690 p., illus., $3.50.

OURSELVES UNBORN: An Embryologist's Essay on Man—George W. Corner—*Yale Univ. Press,* 188 p., illus., $3. The Terry Lectures.

THE READER OVER YOUR SHOULDER: A Handbook for Writers of English Prose—Robert Graves—*Macmillan,* 446 p., $3.

RIFLES AND MACHINE GUNS OF THE WORLD'S ARMIES—Melvin Maynard Johnson—*Infantry Journal,* 406 p., illus., paper, 25c. Fighting Forces Series.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL ADJUSTMENTS OF REGULARLY PROMOTED AND NON-PROMOTED PUPILS — Adolph A. Sandin — *Teachers College*—Columbia Univ., 142 p., illus., $2.15.

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY — Kimball Young — *Crofts,* 578 p., $4.

THEY HOP AND CRAWL—Percy A. Morris—*Cattell,* 253 p., illus., $3.50.

THE WAR IN MAPS: An Atlas of the New York Times Maps—Francis Brown—*Oxford,* 167 p., illus., $2.

WE CANNOT ESCAPE HISTORY—John T. Whitaker—*Infantry Journal,* 345 p., paper, 25c. Fighting Forces Series.

INVENTION

New Method for Trapping Test Bullets Is Patented

➤ A NOVEL trap for flying bullets is offered by Irving R. Gilson of Liverpool, N. Y., for patent 2,356,992. It is intended to replace the sand traps commonly used as bullet stops where test firing is conducted.

Sand, the inventor points out, is a messy and unsatisfactory material to use for this purpose: it fills the air with silica flour that is a menace to workers' health, and also materially lowers the value of the spent bullets as scrap.

The new device consists of a long tube, into which jets of water are shot at an angle, forming a bubble-filled cushion the length of the pipe. When the bullets are fired into this they are slowed down and stopped without damage to themselves. The discharged water can be pumped back for re-use.

Science News Letter, September 30, 1944