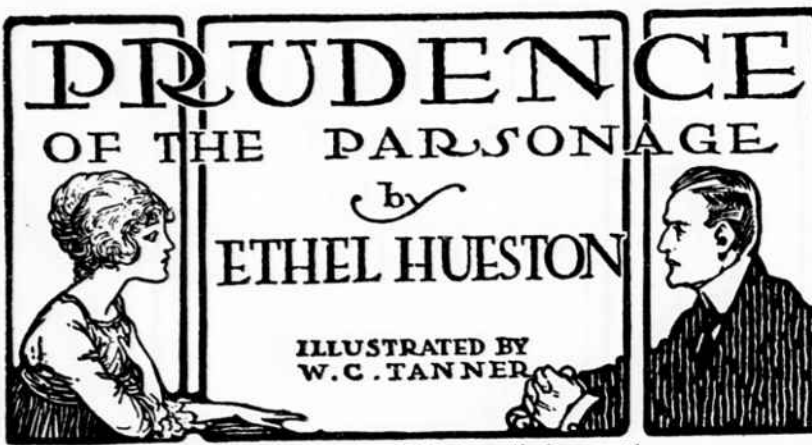




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MR. STARR, a widower Methodist minister, has been assigned to the congregation at Mount Mark, Iowa. He and his daughter, Prudence—she is nineteen, and the eldest of five girls—have come on ahead to get the new parsonage ready for the younger members of the family. Of course the whole town, especially the Methodists, is throbbing with curiosity about the newcomers. Mrs. Adams, a member of the Ladies' Aid society, hurried over to call on Prudence, and nosing around found the girl on her knees praying in the barn. So she began at once to "pump" the girl for all she was worth—it would be great stuff to tell the neighbors—and is still at it.

CHAPTER I—Continued.

But to return to the Ladies—the parsonage girls always capitalized the Ladies of their father's church—"One of us should go and help the dear child," said Mrs. Scott, the president of the Aid, when they assembled for their business meeting, "help her, and welcome her, and advise her."

"I was thinking of going over," said one, and another, and several others. "Oh, that will not do at all," said the president. "I think in a case like this the president herself should represent the society. Therefore, I will undertake this duty for you."

But this called forth a storm of protest and it became so clamorous that it was unofficially decided to draw cuts! Which was done, and in consequence of that drawing of cuts, Mrs. Adams now sat on the front porch of the old gray parsonage, cheered by the knowledge that every other Lady of the Aid was envying her!

"Now, just be real sociable and tell me all about yourself, and the others, too," urged Mrs. Adams. "I want to know all about every one of you. Tell me everything."

"There isn't much to tell," said Prudence, smiling. "There are five of us; I am the oldest—I am nineteen. Then comes Fairy, then the twins, and then the baby."

"Are the twins boys, or a boy and a girl?"

"Neither," said Prudence, "they are both girls."

"More girls!" gasped Mrs. Adams. "And the baby?"

"She is a girl, too." And Prudence laughed. "In short, we are all girls except father. He couldn't be, of course—or I suppose he would, for our family does seem to run to girls."

"Prudence is a very nice name for a minister's daughter," said Mrs. Adams suggestively.

"Yes—for some ministers' daughters," assented Prudence. "But is sadly unsuitable for me."

Mrs. Adams looked critically at this young daughter of the parsonage. Then her eyes wandered down to her clothes, and lingered, in silent questioning, on Prudence's dress. It was a very peculiar color. In fact, it was no color at all—no named color. Prudence's eyes had followed Mrs. Adams' glance, and she spoke frankly.

"I suppose you're wondering if this dress is any color? Well, I think it really is, but it isn't any of the regular shades. It is my own invention, but I've never named it. Fairy grew up and out and around, and one day when I was so nearly out of clothes I hardly felt I could attend church any more, she suggested that I cut an old one of hers down for me! At first I laughed, and then I was insulted. Fairy is three years younger than I, and before then she had got my hand-downs. But now the tables were turned. From that time on Fairy's clothes were cut down for me. I still feel bitter about it. Fairy is dark, and dark blues are becoming to her. She handed down this dress—it was dark blue then. But I was not wanting a dark blue, and I thought it would be less recognizable if I gave it a contrasting color. I chose lavender. I dyed it four times, and this was the result."

"Do the twins dress alike?" inquired Mrs. Adams, when she could control her voice.

"Yes—unfortunately for Connie. They do it on purpose to escape the handed-downs! They won't even have hair ribbons different. And the result is that poor Connie never gets one new thing except shoes. She says she cannot help thinking the Lord in her prayers that all of us outwear our shoes before we can outgrow them. Connie is only nine. Fairy is sixteen, and the twins are thirteen. They are a very clever lot of girls."

"And what are you going to do?" inquired Mrs. Adams, looking with real affection at the bright, sweet face. "You ought to go to school. You're just a girl yourself."

"I don't want to go to school," laughed Prudence. "Not any more. I like it, just taking care of father and

the girls—with Fairy to keep me balanced! I read, but I do not like to study. No, you'll have to get along with me just the way I am, Mrs. Adams. It's all I can do to keep things going now, without spending half the time dreaming of big things to do in the future."

"Don't you have dreams?" gasped Mrs. Adams. "Don't you have dreams of the future? Girls in books nowadays dream—"

"Yes, I dream," interrupted Prudence. "I dream lots—but it's mostly of what Fairy and others will do when I get them properly raised. You'll like the girls, Mrs. Adams, I know you will. They really are a gifted little bunch—except me. I'm just common little Prudence of the Parsonage—but the others—And Prudence flung out her hands dramatically."

CHAPTER II.

The Rest of the Family.

It was Saturday morning when the four young parsonage girls arrived in Mount Mark. The elderly Misses Avery, next door, looked out of their windows, pending their appearance on Main street, with interest and concern. They were Episcopalians themselves, and in all their long lives they had never so much as heard of a widower-rector with five daughters and no housekeeper. There was something blood-curdling in the bare idea.

The Misses Avery considered Prudence herself rather a sweet, silly little thing.

"You have some real nice people in the Methodist church," Miss Dora had told her. "I dare say you will find a few of them very likable."

"Oh, I will like them all," said Prudence quickly and seriously.

"Like them all," echoed Miss Dora. "Oh, impossible!"

"Not for us," said Prudence. "We are used to it, you know. When we visit them, and talk to them, and invite them to the parsonage, and entertain them with our best linen and silverware, and keep on getting friendlier and friendlier, and—first thing you know, we like them fine!"

So the Misses Avery concluded that Prudence was not entirely responsible. And they wondered, with something akin to an agony of fear, if the younger girls "had it, too!" and when Miss Alice cried excitedly, "Quick! Quick! They are coming!" they trooped to Miss Alice's window with a speed that would have done credit to the parsonage girls themselves.

First came the minister, whom they knew very well by this time, and considered quite respectable. He was lively, as was to be expected of a Methodist minister, and told jokes, and laughed at them! Now, a comical rector—oh, a very different matter—it wasn't done, that's all! At any rate, here came the Methodist minister, laughing, and on one side of him tripped a small, earnest-looking maiden, clasping his hand, and gazing alternately up into his face and down at the stylish cement sidewalk beneath her feet. On the other side was Fairy. The Misses Avery knew the girls by name already—having talked much with Prudence.

"Such a Fairy!" gasped Miss Millie, and the others echoed the gasp but wordlessly.

For Fairy was very nearly as tall as her father, built upon generous lines, rather commanding in appearance, a little splendid-looking. Even from their windows they could discern something distinctly Junonian in this sixteen-year-old girl, with the easy, elastic stride that matched her father's, and the graceful head, well carried. A young goddess—named Fairy!

Behind them, laughing and chattering, like three children, as they were—came the twins with Prudence, each with an arm around her waist. And Prudence was a very little taller than they. When they reached the fence that bordered the parsonage, the scene for a moment resembled a miniature riot. The smaller girls jumped and exclaimed, and clasped their hands. Fairy leaned over the fence, and stared intently at this, their parsonage home. Then the serious little girl scrambled under the fence, followed closely by the lithe-limbed twins. A pause, a very short one—and then Prudence, too, was wriggling beneath the fence.

"Hold the wire up for me, papa!" cried Fairy. "I'm too fat." And a second later she was running gracefully across the lawn toward the parsonage. The Methodist minister laughed boyishly, and placing his hands on the fence post, he vaulted lightly over, and reached the house with his daughters. Then the Misses Avery, school-teachers and elderly, looked at one another.

"Did you ever?" gasped the oldest Miss Avery, and the others slowly shook their heads.

Now, think! Did you ever see a rector jumping a three-wire fence, and running full speed across his front yard in pursuit of a flying family? It

may possibly have occurred—we have never seen it. Neither did they ever expect to. And if they had seen it, it is quite likely they would have joined the backsliders at that instant.

But without wasting much time on this gruesome thought, they hurried to a window commanding the best view of the parsonage, and raised it. Then they clustered behind the curtains, and watched and listened. There was plenty to hear! From the parsonage windows came the sound of scampering feet and banging doors. Once there was the unmistakable clatter of a chair overturned. With it all there was a constant chorus of "Oh, look!" "Oh! Oh!" "Oh, how sweet!" "Oh, papa!" "Oh, Prudence!" "Look, Larkie, look at this!"

Then the eldest Miss Avery closed the window overlooking the parsonage and confronted her sisters.

"We must just make the best of it," she said quietly.

But next door the gray old parsonage was full to overflowing with satisfaction and happiness and love. Every one has experienced the ecstatic, creepy sensation of sleeping in a brand-new home. The parsonage girls reveled in the memory of that first night for many days. "It may be haunted for all we know," cried Carol deliciously. "Just think, Connie, there may be seven ghosts camped on the head of your bed, waiting—"

When the family gathered for worship on that first Sabbath morning, Mr. Starr said, as he turned the leaves of his well-worn Bible, "I think it would be well for you to help with the morning worship now. When I finish reading the chapter, Connie, you will make the first prayer. Just pray for whatever you wish as you do at night for yourself. I will follow you."

Connie's eyes were wide with responsibility during the reading of the chapter.



"Quick! They Are Coming!"

ter, but when she began to speak her voice did not falter. Connie had nine years of good Methodist experience back of her!

"Our Father, who art in heaven, we bow ourselves before thy footstool in humility and reverence. Thou art our God, our Creator, our Savior. Bless us this day, and cause thy face to shine upon us. Blot out our transgressions, pardon our trespasses. Wash us, that we may be whiter than snow. Hide not thy face from the eyes of thy children, turn not upon us in wrath. Pity us, Lord, as we kneel here prostrate before thy majesty and glory. Let the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. And finally save us, an unbroken family around thy throne in heaven, for Jesus' sake. Amen."

This was followed by an electric silence. Prudence was biting her lips painfully, and counting by tens as fast as she could. Fairy was mentally going over the prayer, sentence by sentence, and attributing each petition to the individual member in the old church at Exminster to whom it belonged. The twins were a little amazed, and quite proud. Connie was an honor to the parsonage—but they were concerned lest they themselves should not do quite so well when their days came.

But in less than a moment the minister-father began his prayer. When he said "Amen," Prudence was on her feet and half-way upstairs before the others were fairly risen. Fairy stood gazing intently out of the window for a moment, and then went out to the barn to see if the horse was through eating. Mr. Starr walked gravely and soberly out the front door, and around the house. He ran into Fairy coming out the kitchen door, and they glanced quickly at each other.

"Hurry, papa," she whispered; "you can't hold in much longer! Neither can I!"

And together, choking with laughter, they hurried into the barn and gave full vent to their feelings.

Doesn't it seem that the happy-go-lucky houseful of parsonage girls will win the friendship of the Avery spinsters and tear away the barrier of snobbishness and reserve which hedges them in?

(TO BE CONTINUED)

WATSON SURVEYS FOOD SITUATION

COMMISSIONER PRESENTS EXHAUSTIVE INVESTIGATION OF SOUTH CAROLINA.

DISPATCHES FROM COLUMBIA

Doings and Happenings That Mark the Progress of South Carolina People, Gathered Around the State Capital.

Columbia. Comprehensive in its scope and somewhat alarming in its revelations is the exhaustive report prepared by Col. E. J. Watson, secretary of agriculture, commerce and industries, for Gov. Manning, to indicate the state of preparedness of South Carolina to meet war conditions. Fourteen inspectors have been driving under pressure since the request for the survey of the food and feed situation came from Gov. Manning April 28. Fifty-two cities and towns were included in the investigation, these being the principal market distributing points in the state. Six hundred and 48 wholesale and retail establishments, grist and flour plants and mixed feed mills were included in the stock taking. Every important point in the state was visited and about two-thirds of the commercial business in foods and feeds are represented. In the words of the author, the object of the report was:

"To ascertain the whereabouts and amount of stocks of corn, oats, mixed feeds, corn meal, grits, flour, hay, lard, sugar, beans, bacon, butter, cheese, eggs, beef, cabbage, Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes, onions, turnips, canned goods, canned milk, spring chickens, hens, live hogs, cottonseed meal and rice. The inquiry was directed to obtain the following information: (1) The number of stores with stocks of each commodity; (2) number without stock; (3) stock on hand at the time of the survey; (4) usual stock carried at this season of the year; (5) estimated amount of each commodity sold annually; (6) wholesale prices now and a year ago; (7) retail prices now and a year ago; (8) source of supplies; (9) percentage of stock of home growth; (10) length of time present stock will last; (11) length of time stock bought or contracted for will carry." It is emphasized that but two merchants in the state failed to co-operate in the stock census plan.

Stores Without Stock.

A feature of the report, calculated to give something of the serious aspect of the situation is the number of stores reported to be without stock of certain commodities. Out of a total of 633 stores, only 10 reported a present stock of corn. An even greater percentage were without oats. Approximately one-half had a stock of mixed feeds, with about two-thirds reporting a supply of corn meal. About 85 per cent reported a stock of flour and lard. Less than 5 per cent were supplied with hams.

The number of bushels of corn on hand now was reported to be 112,122 against 121,362 for the corresponding period last year and 123,485 bushels of oats against 138,688 last season. The supply of corn meal has been reduced by 40 per cent. Only 38,453 sacks of meal were reported against a total stock of 59,262 one year ago. The supply of flour is another item of more than common interest. The survey indicates a stock of 47,769 barrels against 58,787 last year, when conditions were by no means normal. The salt bacon situation is even more alarming. From the business houses of the survey, only 95,221 hundredweight of bacon was reported to be on hand against 296,145 hundredweight in May, 1916. The supply of ham is reduced approximately 20 per cent.

Prices obtaining are even more distressing. The average retail figure struck for flour from the total number of markets investigated was \$14.74 a barrel against \$7.48 one year ago; corn meal \$1.99 a sack against \$1.09, corn \$2.02 a bushel against \$1.07; lard 19 cents against 15 cents; sugar 12 cents against 8 cents.

Grain Acreage Abandoned.

Some of the most alarming conclusions deduced by Col. Watson are:

"That on March 1 of this year the stock of corn on the farms of the state was 13,100,000 bushels, against 17,904,000 at the same date of the preceding year. At the same date, of the home crop of oats still on the farms there were only 900,000 bushels against 1,496,000 bushels the preceding year at the same date."

"That the oat crop this year will be the shortest perhaps in several years."

Appointments to Naval Academy.

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Andrew J. Betha, lieutenant governor, addressed the graduates of the Mountville graded school, Laurens county, last week. Also Mr. Betha went to Neeses, where he delivered an address at a large picnic given, the occasion being the closing of the Neeses school. During the last two weeks Mr. Betha has visited a great many of the counties in the state. The farmers, he says, are working hard and crops are looking fine. He has returned to Columbia.

Food Supply For Only Few Weeks.

More discouraging than price altitudes of foods as revealed in the survey by Col. E. J. Watson, commissioner of agriculture, is the limited stock of staple food products now in store throughout the state. Census of the food and feeds in nearly 700 stores, wholesale houses, mills and food manufacturing plants indicates that the full stock would be consumed within three or four weeks. Estimated on the basis of average consumption, the full stock of corn would be dissipated in three weeks. Stores of available flour are calculated to last through one and one-half weeks, with the full stock of meal consumed within a fortnight.

A somewhat parallel situation exists as to meats and lard. Bacon on hand would carry through two and one-half weeks, hams three weeks, lard seven weeks and butter two weeks. A seven weeks' supply of sugar is estimated.

Canned goods have been purchased somewhat liberally and merchants are better stocked in this commodity than in other foods. The supply now on hand is estimated to be sufficient to carry the people 12 weeks.

Insurance Fund Shows Increase.

The insurance commissioner has turned over to the state treasurer on the first of each month for January, February, March, April and May the total sum of \$111,029.78. For the same period last year \$105,177.39 was turned in, showing an increase in collections of \$4,852.39.

Of the amount turned in this year \$62,441.36 is what is known as additional license fees, one-half of which goes to the state and one-half to the several counties for ordinary county purposes. The amounts which go to the several county treasurers are as follows:

Abbeville, \$447.44; Aiken, \$549.50; Anderson, \$1,641.62; Bamberg, \$357.17; Barnwell, \$487.84; Beaufort, \$254.67; Berkeley, \$67; Calhoun, \$207.87; Charleston, \$3,972.20; Cherokee, \$492.80; Chester, \$785.97; Chesterfield, \$45.90; Clarendon, \$451.78; Colleton, \$276.72; Darlington, \$911.80; Dillon, \$299.23; Dorchester, \$240.80; Edgefield, \$131.29; Fairfield, \$238.57; Florence, \$1,036.60; Georgetown, \$326.83; Greenville, \$1,936.27; Greenwood, \$1,085.99; Hampton, \$366.36; Horry, \$132.08; Jasper, \$31.08; Kershaw, \$373.29; Lancaster, \$487.72; Laurens, \$651.46; Lee, \$294.72; Lexington, \$313.36; McCormick, \$33.75; Marion, \$515.64; Marlboro, \$683.58; Newberry, \$519.32; Oconee, \$369.83; Orangeburg, \$926.03; Pickens, \$249.26; Richland, \$2,618.26; Saluda, \$185.15; Spartanburg, \$1,979.19; Sumter, \$1,174.33; Union, \$990.96; Williamsburg, \$368.66; York, \$1,165.65.

Highway Engineer For Cherokee.

The Cherokee county highway commission has arranged to have an engineer come to Gaffney within the next few days for the purpose of laying out a state highway between Grover, N. C., and the Spartanburg county line. The engineer will be sent by the state highway commission. The matter of selecting an engineer for the permanent work to be done by the commission was deferred until the next meeting. The bonds of the chairman and secretary of the commission have been accepted and filed and work on the roads will speedily begin.

To Train at Musketry School.

Maj. G. Heyward Mahon Jr., First Infantry, Greenville, and Maj. James W. Bradford, Second Infantry, Sumter, were designated by Adj. Gen. Moore for training in the school of musketry, Fort Sill, Okla. Both these field officers were chosen with the view of special fitness to become instructors in rifle, machine gun and grenade training. The school will conclude August 1.

War Prices on All Roughage.

War prices prevail in roughage markets in South Carolina and the marked scarcity of some of the foods is calculated to greatly intensify the demand later in the season. Peavines are quoted generally at \$20 a ton. Little alfalfa is available. This is selling from \$25 to \$30. Oat straw is quoted at \$10 in most places, with cottonseed hulls bringing \$20 generally. The supply is reported to be very low over the state.

Beef Cattle Scarce and High.

Beef cattle are exceedingly scarce in South Carolina markets. Those now selling are much better conditioned incident to the improved pasturage over the state. Prices range from 5 to 7 cents a pound. Hogs are slightly more plentiful. Prices for hogs are 9 and 10 cents and even 12 cents. Wide variance prevails in the markets for dressed meats.

Manufacture Potato Products.

A commission was issued for the incorporation of the Williams company of Greenville, the proposed capital stock of which is \$200,000. The company proposes to manufacture and sell products from sweet potatoes, with the right to purchase and own real estate.

Third Regiment Not Likely Now.

That a third regiment of the National Guard of South Carolina is not likely to be organized in the immediate future is indicated in a letter received by Gov. Manning from Brig. Gen. Mann, chief of the militia bureau, who is in charge of the National Guard units of the country. Gen. Mann's letter incloses a copy of a communication addressed by the secretary of war to the governor of Texas, advising that official determination of war department not to create other units until those in existence are fully recruited.

The units in South Carolina do not begin to approximate that condition.

"The secretary of war directs me to ask of you, as far as you are able to give it, similar support in the undertaking in which we are now engaged," writes Gen. Mann, that undertaking being the discouragement of formation of new units at the present time. The secretary of war points out that the organization of new units would mean a considerable financial burden to the state and announces the firm opposition of the department to the creation of new units until those now created are at full strength.

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GOVERNOR NAMES STATE COUNCIL

TWENTY-FOUR WELL KNOWN MEN TO WORK WITH NATIONAL BODY.

DAVID R. COKER CHAIRMAN

One Woman on List.—Many of Those Appointed Have Large Farming Interests.

Columbia.—Gov. Manning appointed a state council of defense to co-operate with the national council of defense. The personnel of the board is composed of 24 members, representative of the business, professional, agricultural and educational interests of the state. D. R. Coker, who has been giving his time and means unstintingly to the civic preparedness commission, of which he was chairman, is made chairman of the new board. One woman holds a place on the council, Miss Euphemia McClintock of Newberry, formerly president of the College for Women, since merged with Chicora. Many of those appointed have large farming interests. Several are lawyers. The banks also have large representations. J. W. Wassum of the Southern railway has been named and the editorial staffs of both the daily papers of Columbia and The News and Courier of Charleston are represented. Those appointed are:

D. R. Coker, chairman, Hartsville; W. M. Riggs, Clemson College; Miss E. E. McClintock, Newberry; J. E. Sline, Greenville; Cok E. M. Blythe, Greenville; William Elliott, Columbia; Robert Lathan, Charleston; A. T. McKissick, Greenwood; John G. Richmond, Liberty Hill; J. W. Wassum, Greenville; Robert McDougall, Columbia; Eugene R. Buckingham, Elkhart; Horace L. Tilghman, Marion; Christie Benet, Columbia; John T. Stevens, Kershaw; Dr. F. H. McLeod, Florence; John S. Reynolds, Columbia; Otto Kletner, Newberry; William Banks, Columbia; the Rev. John E. White, Anderson; Right Williamson, Darlington; J. Ross Hanahan, Charleston; William Godfrey, Cheraw; and Robert G. Hall, Abbeville.

Charleston May Get Hospital.

Charleston.—An announcement here that there probably will be located at Charleston a port hospital, accommodating 2,000 wounded men, created no little interest. An inspection of an available site at North Charleston was made by Maj. C. E. Kilbourne, chief of staff under Gen. Wood, and Lieut. Col. A. N. Stark, department surgeon, with R. G. Rhett and James O'Hear, representing North Charleston interests.

The army officers were highly pleased with the location shown them. Col. Stark stated that he had recommended the establishment of medical supply depots at Columbia and Atlanta. A receiving hospital probably will be established at each of the Atlantic ports, for the treatment of United States soldiers wounded in European war zones and Charleston is apparently destined to have a four unit plant, costing about \$200,000 and providing 2,000 beds for wounded soldiers, brought here aboard ship and treated until able to be removed to inland base hospitals.

Army Rifles For University.

Columbia.—Three hundred army rifles for the use of the University of South Carolina cadet corps have arrived, and put into service. The guns, sent by the war department, were started on the way some time ago. Brig. Gen. Henry T. Thompson, N. G. S. C., retired, who commands the training corps, announces that instructions in the manual of arms has begun.

To Can Vegetables.

Rock Hill.—The chamber of commerce is taking steps to start a small cannery here to handle the surplus produce grown in the gardens of Rock Hill and surrounding country. A. C. Patterson has agreed to take charge of the work and will can vegetables for a small fee, or will purchase outright from those desiring to sell.

Creamery Ready For Business.

Orangeburg.—The Orangeburg creamery opened for business Monday morning. During the past week an expert from the United States government was here installing the new machinery. The expert butter and ice cream maker has arrived. The creamery has the latest butter and ice cream machinery and is fully prepared for big business. Lawrence S. Wolfe, county farm demonstration agent, and D. D. Elliott, special dairy agent, have been hard at work securing farmers to furnish cream.

Plow Up Cotton and Plant Corn.

Bishopville.—Careful inquiry over practically the whole of Lee county shows a gratifying increase of acreage planted to foodstuffs. In a number of instances farmers have plowed up cotton and planted to corn and potatoes. In almost every case the amount of fertilizer used on corn has been heavily increased, in a number of cases the amount doubled. State Senator G. M. Stuckey has plowed up from five to 15 acres of cotton to the horse on 14 one-horse farms and planted to corn, potatoes and other food crops.

Boy Scouts to Plant Corn.

Orangeburg.—The Orangeburg Chamber of Commerce has inaugurated a movement in Orangeburg to raise corn. All of the Boy Scouts of Orangeburg have been invited to secure all the available plots of land in the city for