

Soldiers of the Soil

How Uncle Sam's Twenty-Billion-Dollar Crop Was Planted and Reaped.

By Frank O. Carpenter.



In Many Sections the Men Did the Plowing.



A Speech from the Front in North France.

How Much of the Big Wheat Crop Was Sown.

Copyright, 1918, by Frank O. Carpenter. WASHINGTON, D. C.—By the time this letter is published Uncle Sam's army of farmers will have harvested more than 800,000,000 bushels of wheat, 1,400,000,000 bushels of oats and 300,000,000 bushels of barley and rye. It will have dug from the ground something like a half billion bushels of potatoes and will be gathering a corn crop of more than 2,000,000,000 bushels. At the same time we shall be picking cotton to the amount of more than 15,000,000 bales, and shall have yet to harvest an apple crop of 200,000,000 bushels. In addition to all this we shall be curing tobacco weighing something like 1,000,000,000 pounds, and shall be storing away in barns and stacks far worth more than \$1,000,000,000. Our whole farm crop of this year, 1918, in quantity and value will be greater than any gathered by any nation, and it will have come from more acres than ever cultivated before. Our old lands have been intensively tilled, and in addition something like 25,000,000 acres of new ground has been put under the plow. Bunch this new territory together and it will make a state almost as big as either Ohio, Kentucky or Virginia.

As to the value of the farm crops of 1918 the Secretary of Agriculture has estimated that it will aggregate more than \$21,000,000,000, or more than 45 times as much as all the gold that has been taken out of this big, round earth since Columbus discovered America. At \$2 a bushel the wheat crop will sell for more than \$1,600,000,000; and the cotton at 24 cents a pound will bring more than \$2,000,000,000; and the hundred million tons of hay will be worth something like \$15 a ton, or enough to give \$30 to every family in the United States and leave some to spare. If all the crops that we shall get from our farms at this writing are valued at the prices reduced to dollars, and the mighty sum divided evenly among us, every man, woman and child in the United States would have more than \$200 and every family \$1000. And all this would come from the farms.

This statement gives some idea of what the farmers have been doing in the darkest labor times of our history. To use a common expression of the day, it is a record of what they have accomplished the impossible, and that against odds as great if not greater than those prevailing on the battlefields of Europe. The letter is to show something of how the work is being done during the war.

done and the prospects of its continuance during the war. In the first place, let us look at the conditions when the crops were put in. There was a great shortage of farmhands. For more than 20 years this class of labor has been growing less and less. The country boys have been going to the city and there has been a steady emigration of families from the farms to the towns. This exodus has greatly increased since the war broke out in Europe. Our munition plants are tilling the soil found that they could get three or four times as much for leaving the farms for the factories. At the same time the farm labor supply was further cut down by the aliens living in the United States who were called to Germany, Italy, Greece, the Balkans and other places to take part in the war. Canada got many of our best men, and thousands of American farm boys crossed the ocean to fight with the British and French. Then came our own entrance into the struggle, and the farm boys rushed to enlist. They volunteered more rapidly than those of almost any other occupation and comparatively few of them filed for exemption. Some farm districts had so many enlistments that the draft there was not needed, and of the 782,000 men registered from the farms only 12 per cent filed claims for exemption. At the same time, our big industrial plants making war goods sent their agents over the country bidding for farm labor, and the farmers able to plant in the fall were able to get more and more of their best hands. Nevertheless, in one way or another the crops were planted. The old men and boys did what they could, and machinery was enlisted to make up the loss. In some sections farm tractors were employed by the hundreds, and one man with a tractor was able to plow as much as four men, each using two horses, had plowed before. Some tractors were used in the same way as three drills to one tractor, so that one man was able to put in as much grain as three men with 12 horses had been able to do in the past. In certain districts the girls drove the tractors and the boys did more than their share of all kinds of work. Many of the tractors were used in the same way as other 30-odd million acres of new land was brought into use.

Similar methods were used for cultivating the crops, and then came the harvesting, which is still going on. This is a different proposition. The harvesting of our wheat crop has always strained the supply of farm labor. The chief bread basket of the country lies in a tier of states beginning with Oklahoma and running northward through Kansas, Nebraska and the Dakotas, branched off to include Minnesota and a part of Iowa. This harvest is governed by climatic conditions. It starts in the South and rolls northward in regular waves so that the army of harvesters can start with the first ripening wheat at the far south and keep on cutting toward the north as the golden grain is ready for reaping. The harvest starts about June 10. It moves north week by week, until at the first of September they are gathering the grain in Minnesota and the Dakotas on the edge of Canada about 1000 miles away from where the crop began to ripen. From the latter point the wheat waves roll on into Canada, going further north as the climate grows colder. In the past there was a nomadic reaping population which took care of this harvest. It was composed of migratory laborers, who came from various sources, and moved northward with the wheat. It was brought together by the high wages and steady work and the knowledge that this work would continue during the harvest throughout the tier of states. In 1917 the country had the advantage of the most of this army of men, but when the wheat harvest started the men were not there. They had been swallowed up by the enlistments and drafts for the war, and also by the war industrial plants, whose wages and work were better than the best the farmers could offer.

The situation was serious. The Food Administration here at Washington demanded the wheat, and there was a chance that the war might be lost by the lack of this food supply. The great Government departments had reported as to the crop and also as to the lack of labor, and it was known that a new industrial army must be created or the wheat would rot in the fields. The matter was given over to the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Labor, and the two have so combined their forces that they have created a new army to take the place of the old. In this the Department of Agriculture led at the start. It already had its organic agents in every state and county, and it had a body of state farm help supply specialists who were sending in regular reports as to crop conditions. It was through this machinery that the labor supply was created. The first work was the sending out of a four-minute speech to every county agent. This man was ordered to call

the business and professional men of his region together to hear a war message from the Administration. They met in the towns, and the message was read. It went somewhat as follows: "Men, we are at war! The Government demands food, and it demands that every one of us do his part in saving the wheat crop, which is now ready for cutting. This is so important that every other enterprise and business should be stopped, until the wheat has been saved. According to the estimates sent me from Washington 6000 harvest hands are needed for this district alone, and this town is called upon to furnish 800. We have necessary to stop every bank, store, factory and church while the work is going on."

This message went into every wheat district and every large town. The response was immediate. Preachers, lawyers, bankers, merchants and mechanics dropped their usual employment and went out to the farms. The state of Kansas got 80,000 such men, and 10,000 of that number came from Kansas City across the Missouri line. In Topeka there were 43 labor unions and 41 of them took all of their men to the wheat fields to aid in harvesting the grain. It was wonderful the good work that these soft-fleshed, velvet-handed men of the city did. Some of them, engaged in the professions, realized that they could not stand the hot sun during the long hours from sunrise to sunset, but they arranged to do what they could. They came out to work in the mornings, and in some cases in the afternoons and worked until dark. Three or four professional men would tell a farmer that if he would cut his wheat they would be there in the evening to shock it. One harvester, for instance, ran his reapers and binders all day and at 4 in the afternoon an automobile or so, each containing a few lawyers or bankers, would arrive. They would put the sheaves into the shocks, and by rushing the work would accomplish twice as much as the ordinary force. Instances of this nature were common throughout the wheat belt, and the men who worked were of every class and condition. I heard of one banker, who had a salary of \$10,000 a year. He does not boast of that, but he has been going around showing the blisters on his hands from his work in the harvest field and the little wage check he got there at the rate of \$4 a day. Many of these men were paid by the hour. The work of the harvest fields is now largely done by the hour, the farmers paying 45 or 50 cents for each hour worked. In this way the ten-hour-a-day controversy does not arise, and the men are paid for the time they work.

After the wheat harvest began the Department of Labor had a director-general stationed in the West who took charge of the labor supply. This man had daily reports as to the harvest conditions of every district, and he sent bodies of men on telegraphic notice to the localities and to the exact farms where they were needed. The agents throughout the country would telegraph him the time their wheat would be ready to cut and the extra men needed. The director of the labor department would at once ship the men, and the business was so organized that almost every farm had all it could use. In fact, the harvesting of the crop was a fine example of modern efficiency organization; and it was carried on with but little friction, notwithstanding the enormous territory covered and that the laborers had to be moved from place to place.

By the time this letter is published a large part of this labor will be gathered in the corn crop. Some of the corn will be cut by machinery, but a vast deal of it will be husked from the stalk as it stands in the field. The men who do this are experts at the work. They have wagons especially prepared for the purpose, one wall of the bed of the wagon being built as a guard board high up so as to catch the ears when thrown in. Each husker takes two rows at a time, his wagon going along with him. A good man can husk 30 bushels per day, and instances of 100 bushels are not uncommon. There is a record of one man husking 145 bushels a day and putting the corn in the crib. These huskers work so that there is no waste effort. It takes just three motions to get every ear of corn into the wagon. First the man grabs the ear, second he pulls down the husk, and third breaks the ear off and throws it into the wagon. The ears fly from the stalks at the rate of one a second, and you can hear the thud, thud, thud of them striking the guard board, as regularly as the second hand of a clock goes round the dial. The corn of this year will be more than 3,000,000,000 bushels, and a vast deal of it will be cropped in this way.

The departments of Agriculture and Labor are rapidly mobilizing the farm work of the country. The Department of Agriculture makes no bones of saying that every loafer must be put to work in the fields. I have before me a bulletin recently issued by that department. It calls for more hands on the farm, saying that the loafers are aiding the enemy and that they should be made to go to work or to jail. This bulletin was issued by Secretary Houston in the midst of the wheat harvest. It is worthy of being kept in force all the year round. It reads as follows: "Work or fight." "The Government makes that mandate upon every man within the draft age."

"Self-respect makes it mandatory upon every man of every age."

"If perchance, there are any idlers and loafers continuing to lead lives of uselessness in your town, despite war needs for manpower, you can do a great deal to cause them to change their course. You can make a complaint to the Sheriff or chief of police or any officer, charging them with vagrancy. If the vagrancy laws are not being strictly and unrelentingly enforced in your community yours is one of the very few places in the United States where those laws are not being enforced. You may help to see that they are enforced. You can see that loafers in your section get a job or go to jail. Every loafer put to work releases a man who may help on the farm."

"Farmers need hands. Soldiers must have food. Farmers cannot produce food unless they have help. The loafer is aiding the enemy whether he means to do so or not. The man so dead of spirit as not to realize his patriotic obligation might be forced to see that they are enforced. You can see that loafers in your section get a job or go to jail. Every loafer put to work releases a man who may help on the farm."

The Government has done a great deal to increase the farm labor by bringing boys and women into the service. I am told that the farmer-ettes are making good, and that they are saving the day in many communities. Many have done enormous work in the gathering of the fruit crop, and their systematic organization scattered through the farm district has been of great value.

The boys of the country have been organized by the Labor Department into what are known as the boys' training reserve. Secretary Houston says that we have something like 2,000,000 boys between the ages of 15 and 19, who are not engaged in productive work; and whose services might be utilized for a large part of the year. So far something like a quarter of a million boys have been mobilized in this working reserve and they have been doing farm work here and there all over the country. Many of them are city boys who have gone out to the farms, and some of the best of the workers have been the sons of rich men who had never done farm work before. Take a typical case from Chicago. Seventy boys were taken from one of the private schools there and put out on 70 farms to work during the summer with the army. His job as a patriotic proposition, and was paid wages according to the work he was able to do. Of the 70, 48 made good and every one of them was asked to return next year to the farm on which he has been working this summer. The farmers were afraid to use city boys at the start, but they have found that they are fully the equals of their own boys at home.

In many of the states, camps for the training of boys for farm labor have been established in connection with the agricultural colleges. In some of these the boys live in tents. They wear uniforms and have their regular military drills in connection with the work. There is one camp in Pennsylvania which had at one time 1300 reserve boys in training. There were 40 other liberty camps throughout the state in charge of experts. Most of the New England districts have done much as to mobilizing boys of more and more value as long as the war continues.

The school will settle down the first of the week to a daily course in some kind of war service. If possible a phagnum moss will be sent to the school and real service rendered by the students. Several other plans have been suggested but none definitely decided upon, although next week will see final arrangements completed.

HIGH SCHOOL CLASSES AND SOCIETIES ORGANIZE FOR TERM

Work of Coming Months Is Outlined in Each School and Preparations Made to Continue War Activities as Much as Studies Will Permit.

Rousing Assembly Held at Washington.

Important Announcements Are Made to Students by Principals—More Service Stars Sought.

BY MILDRED WEEKS. Brimming with patriotism and regular school "pep" was the first assembly held in the Washington school this morning. There were several surprises in the way of a long line of graduates, members of the June '18 class, who lent an anti-bellum appearance to the assembly, and the unexpected appearance of last year's yell leader, Harold Mann, who arrived in time to lead the school in a timber-splitting "Washington." After the regular singing by the school the June '18ers arose and sang their class song.

Several important announcements were made by Mr. Hudman concerning the newly organized sewing class and the camp-cooking course, and Mr. Ingram, leader of the Boys' Glee Club, Girls' Chorus, orchestra and band, spoke for a few minutes, urging membership and support of these organizations. Although the service flag hanging upon the stage bears 480 stars, this number does not represent entirely the Washington boys in service, as many names have not been obtained by the school. In order to obtain the names of those who are not now represented by a star, Mr. Hudman asked that every one who knows of other names to turn them in so that the exact number of Washington men serving can be recorded. The Washington service flag should contain over 800 stars. Mr. Herdman also spoke of a letter received from one of the former Washington boys, George Miller. The Miller twins are in the stretcher-bearing corps of the ambulance service and are stationed not far from Rheims. It is thought the letter spoke of 17 other former Washington boys who were near this place.

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Swinging again into action, the Girls' League took its first step in the term career in the meeting held Thursday morning for organization and election of officers. The competition for officers this term was exciting and the race for election keen and close-run. The winning candidates are: President, Mildred Weeks; secretary-treasurer, Dorothy Phillips, and editor, Marie Duback. The meeting was presided over by Alma Schaff, past president of the league, who, in appreciation of the valuable and earnest service she has rendered the organization, was presented at the close of the meeting with a bouquet of roses and a note of thanks from the girls of the school. A problem has presented itself in the registration of the senior class. Rooms 10 and 11 had been assigned to the seniors, but as there are not enough members in the class to fill both rooms and too many to occupy one room, the class has been divided equally between the two rooms. As this leaves only a few students in each of the two rooms, the senior registration rooms present a bare appearance and the class is somewhat divided. The question was taken up in the class meeting Tuesday and it is hoped that arrangements can be made to register the whole class in one room.

OFFICERS OF DEBATING SOCIETY AT WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL.



Top, Left to Right—Grace Pich, Assistant Secretary; Margaret Alexander, Treasurer; Alice Peeper, Critic. Center, Left to Right—Nona Becker, Vice-President; Anae Roberts, Editor. Bottom—Velma Couture, Secretary.

services that are being made. War work will be done on a large scale by the girls, as all regular meetings will be devoted to some sort of service, except one Friday of each month, which will be reserved for a business meeting and programme, which were formerly held each week. Having cooperated with the moss division of the Red Cross surgical dressing department, arrangements have been made to have phagnum moss sent to the school where it will be gone over, picked and cleaned by the club in some room reserved for that purpose.

Although all other class activities have been given up, the January '19 class has decided not to abolish the class play this term, and at the class

meeting, held Tuesday, arrangements were begun to secure a play immediately and start rehearsals as soon as possible. Several plays are now under consideration and one will probably be chosen soon and tryouts held.

Special classes in sewing and camp cooking have been organized for students who wish to take this work in

addition to their regular course. The sewing classes cover two periods and may be attended either third or fourth period, or both the third and fourth periods. The camp-cooking classes are being organized for boys who wish to take this opportunity to gain training. The classes have proved so successful in the past that they are being organized again for the purpose of war training.

"My Liberty Bond and I" is the subject of the essay contest that is occupying the attention of the Washington students. Every student in school, whether a member of an English class or not, will be required to enter the contest.

In an assembly for the boys, held Tuesday morning, the luncheon question was discussed and the matter disposed of by a vote of 10-0 in favor of the campus. As a whole, volunteered to be responsible for keeping the school grounds clean and waived aside any rulings on the matter. Football practice is in full swing, the boys having returned out for the first time last Tuesday. The girls of the basketball team held a meeting Tuesday afternoon and set next Tuesday as the date of election. About 50 girls were present. Approximately \$60 was handled by the book exchange this term and several hundred books exchanged. Miss Ethel Wakeman, of the English department, returned the early part of the week after spending the summer in the East.

Naval Cadet Addresses Jefferson Students.

Pledge to Flag Opens Sessions of Pupils in First General Assembly. W. H. Boyer Presides.

BY SAM STROEBCKER. "I pledge allegiance to my flag and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." By reciting these famous words in concert, the students of Jefferson High School officially opened their first general assembly of the new term. W. H. Boyer then presided over the musical part of the assembly. Hopkin Jenkins, principal, introduced Russell Koller to the student body. Russell graduated in the class of February, '16, and has just completed his training in the navy.

LEMON JUICE TAKES OFF TAN

Girls! Make bleaching lotion if skin is sunburned, tanned or freckled.

Squeeze the juice of two lemons into a bottle containing three ounces of Orchard White, shake well, and you have a quartier pint of the best freckle, sunburn and tan lotion and complexion beautifier at very, very small cost. Your grocer has the lemons and any drug store or toilet counter will supply three ounces of Orchard White for a few cents. Massage this sweetly fragrant lotion into the face, neck, arms and hands each day and see how freckles, sunburn, windburn and tan disappear and how clear, soft and white the skin becomes. Test! It is harmless—Adv.