

OUR HOME TOWN.

A Department Devoted to Village Betterment.

RICHARD HAMILTON BYRD.

"My ideal of civilization is a very high one; but the approach to it is a New England town of some two thousand inhabitants, with no rich man and no poor man in it, all mingling in the same society, every child at the same school, no poorhouse, no beggar, opportunities equal, nobody too proud to stand aloof, nobody too humble to be shut out. That's New England as it was fifty years ago. . . . The civilization that lingers beautifully on the hillsides of New England, and nestles sweetly in the valleys of Vermont, the moment it approaches a crowd like Boston, or a million men gathered in one place like New York, rots. It can not stand the greater centers of modern civilization."—Wendell Phillips.

It is a well-known fact that the cities are rapidly sapping the strength of the village communities and the country towns by destroying local trade and undermining the local spirit. The very life of the country town depends upon the checking of this paralyzing force and the protection of local interests.

The only way this can be accomplished is by arousing local sentiment in favor of the improvement of local environment, the beautifying of home surroundings and the maintenance of LOCAL BUSINESS BY LOCAL TRADE.

To that end the editor of this department desires to keep in touch with the active members of Civic and Local Improvement Associations, and every one interested in the improvement and the protection of rural village life.

What is being done in your town to encourage small industries and for home employment? What is being done along the line of street improvement and the beautifying of private lawns and public parks?

Are your local merchants receiving the support of the local trade?

Experience, plans and suggestions will be welcomed by the editor of this department and so far as possible given place in these columns.

MAIL ORDER BUSINESS.

ENORMOUS STRUCTURES TO BE ERECTED BY MONTGOMERY WARD AND COMPANY AND OTHERS.

Suggests Question Whether Giant Catalogue Houses are Benefit or Detriment to the Farmer and the Country Generally.

Chicago is to have the greatest building the world ever constructed for commercial purposes. It will have a floor space of 50 acres—a good sized farm. It is to be 10 stories high, including the basement, and were it to be all stretched out on one floor it would cover 13 of the big city blocks in the windy city. It will be 900 feet in length and 270 feet wide and will be built of steel and concrete. The cost will be \$2,500,000. The present building occupied by Montgomery Ward and Company is a huge affair, but is stated to be entirely inadequate to the needs of this enormous mail order house, and so this new pile is to be constructed.

It seems to be the time of big commercial houses in the great centers of the country. Another big firm is to erect a building on Chicago avenue, which will contain a million square feet—200 feet by 800 feet; Sears, Roebuck and Company is a big Chicago business rival of the Montgomery Ward firm, and has just also been incorporated to do business in New York, with a capitalization of \$10,000,000, paying the State incorporation tax of \$20,000.

TO BE PROUD OF. These are fine projects, and at first thought may make one proud of American business institutions, but what is the real effect of the success of these gigantic commercial houses upon the country's prosperity? How does their business affect the country merchant, the country banker, the country town itself and in fact the country people who are the patrons of the great mail order houses. What creates the village, the town, the thriving city? What keeps it a live and bustling center rather than a dead congregation of a few houses with one or two miserable stores? It is the patronage and support, is it not, of the surrounding country houses. Towns are built up only when they have support from an agricultural territory. If agriculture is the surrounding industry, which is the case in nine out of ten instances. But conversely, the richness of the soil alone does not make the most valuable farms.

THE MARKET FOR PRODUCTS. There must be a good market for the farm product; if the farm is adjacent to a live growing town supporting active and well-to-do people, the market for the farmer's products will be active and the prices good. If the town be a dead one, he will have to turn elsewhere to dispose of his products, and perhaps incur heavy transportation charges in their shipment. This fact is set forth unmistakably in the last census figures which show that in a small area of the United States, the regions where factories abound—a district comprising but little over 10 per cent. of the United States—the value of the farm lands is over half that of all of the arable land in the entire country. The farms in these regions are located close to the factories, which afford a profitable home market



for all the agricultural products. So that the greatest factor in land value is the nearness to good markets. It becomes plain, therefore, that the better the home town can be made, the more valuable is the farm land tributary to it. In the purely agricultural sections, the average country town is located in the center of from 75 to 150 square miles of territory; that is the town is supported by the trade resulting from that area of farms. According to federal statistics the average farmer spends \$627 a year for supplies—clothing for his family, household utensils, food that he does not grow himself, farm implements, etc. Now it must be evident that if a plan were to be followed looking to the

greatest good for the greatest number, the farms of each agricultural area surrounding a town should support that town to their uttermost.

KEEP THE MONEY AT HOME.

Every dollar that the farmer spends in the town indirectly comes back to him in the way of benefits. The town grows, it supports better stores, more churches, better schools to which he can send his children, furnishes better near-at-hand markets for his products, and finally increases the very value of his farm land. As a good illustration, the Dry Goods Reporter assumes that such an agricultural town has a population of 1000, its support coming from the country tributary to it. The life of the town is its retail trade. If it secures the entire purchasing business of the farmers, it must of necessity grow rapidly. But Montgomery Ward and Co., Sears, Roebuck and Co., and others of the enormous mail order houses send out their great four or five pound catalogues describing everything under the sun. Suppose that, instead of spending his \$600 a year in his home town, each farmer in the community divers 50 per cent of his trade from his town and sends \$300 a year to the catalogue houses; it means that half of the business of the town is gone. On the basis of one hundred or one hundred and fifty square miles of territory to support the town, it can be estimated that there are five hundred farmers in the district. Three hundred dollars a year in trade from each of the farmers means that one hundred and fifty thousand dollars annually is taken from the home town.



GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH MOTHER EARTH.

In the course of ten years, this means one and one-half million dollars. Averaging the profit on this amount at twenty per cent, it means that in ten years' time three hundred thousand dollars profits are taken from the town.

Now, on the other hand, should the farmer, instead of sending away his money to the foreign place for goods he requires, give all his trade to the home town, its business would be immediately doubled, and with twice the employment for the people. Year after year, the profits made by the merchants would be retained in the town, would seek investment in starting new industries, and at the end of the ten-year period, instead of a town of one thousand, there would be a lively city of from two to three thousand, and every acre of farm land within the trade radius of the town would be enhanced in value from ten to twenty dollars.

ENRICHING THE BIG CITIES.

It can be plainly figured out that the individual farmer who would divert half his trade to Chicago, New York or some other foreign city, in the course of ten years would send away three thousand dollars. If it were possible that he could save ten per cent on this amount, in ten years' time he would save three hundred dollars. His only compensation would be a dead home town, poor schools, a poor home market, and no increase in the value of his real-estate holdings.

On the other hand, by giving his patronage to the home town, even though he must pay the merchant ten per cent more than the foreign town, the result would be like this: On an account of increase in farm values, one hundred and sixty acres of land worth ten dollars more per acre, sixteen hundred dollars; or, thirteen hundred dollars better off in ten years than if he gave half his patronage to the foreign concern. His home town is a lively one, all public improvements, all modern conveniences, high schools, to which he could send his children cheaply, good churches, good roads, and everything that can add to the comfort and happiness of its residents, and those who reside near it. Notwithstanding that the farmers' land is enhanced in value, his taxation will be but little greater, as the business inter-

ests of the town will pay the burden of taxation, and the amount of each tax-payer will be less in proportion to carry on government.

IS THE SAVING A REAL ONE?

While the country household, in looking over one of the big catalogues and sending an order for \$50 worth of goods, may be able to figure out an immediate saving of five or six dollars, even after they have paid the freight, there is no question as to the final outcome, if the practice is persisted in by all the people of any particular locality. The home town will suffer, the home market will fall to increase, if it does not decrease, as will also the value of the farm lands. Undoubtedly the catalogue houses can sell goods cheaper than the average country store, for they do a cash business,—you send on your cash with your order. There is no risk in the catalogue or mail order house business. Possibly if you arranged to do business on the same basis with your country merchant—you could get almost as favorable prices. But the country merchant is supposed to extend credit to every one; he has bad bills which he never collects and consequently must make a greater percentage of profit on the things he sells.

Every community which is imbued with the spirit of building up its own industries and of supporting its home town with local pride, is sure to be the most prosperous; there can be no gainsaying this fact.

THE HOME GARDEN.

The Story of the Boy and His Little Plot of Ground

At the age of five every boy is by instinct a gardener. If guided by opportunity, example and intelligent direction he will dig, plant and develop an interest in growing things; lacking these the call of mother nature leads to mud pies. Given a square yard of mellow ground, a tiny hoe and a handful of beans, a healthy five-year-old boy will have a combination that excels anything yet designed in "nature study."

From five to ten the world begins to dawn. He looks up and out; he sees and imitates, but does not reason. He should play without hindrance. If the square yard of ground be enlarged to a rod, the handful of beans to a collection of seeds (the kinds for sale in the grocery stores are best as these have brilliantly colored pictures on the packages) and the boy learns thereby what manner of a thing he is to expect, this square rod will be the play ground to a surprising extent.

He may not plant the kinds you expect or want him to plant, as his view point is different from yours. It is unwise to insist on any given plan. Let this garden be his own. If it has been entirely to carrots or cabbage let it remain carrots and cabbage, for they are more to him than your choice variety. It is unwise to expect careful pains-

taking effort and constant care from a boy of this age; encourage it but do not compel it. He can be taught by example all of the needs of plant growth but his hoeing and weeding may be superficial. If you ask him he will allow you to dig in his garden to loosen the soil deeper than his strength permits. It is wise to do this for there must be carrots and cabbage to harvest or there will be no play ground here next year.

If the boy of five has been allowed the run of a garden, if at eight he has a garden of his own, at ten he will love gardening and will have absorbed the amazing store of knowledge, and to him may be imparted at this age in a way and manner that will awaken the purest and best that is in him, the mystery of life.

A pumpkin plant on a compost heap, sending its vigorous shoots over the weeds, climbing where it cannot creep, fringing its snake like head through the garden fence, is a thing of wonder to the child, and is but taught to see it, and when its great green blossoms appear there is a still greater wonder unfolded.

Boys of twelve and fourteen may desert the garden for the ball field or the fishing rod, and it is well they should, for the serious time of life is coming soon and play days should be as many and long as school and home duties will permit. But a garden for a boy at this age may be a greater factor in his training for life than at any other, for by this time the "root of all evil" has entered his mind in order to procure money is essential in order to procure the many things a boy must have, and the garden, which to this time has been a recreation field, a place of wonderful possibilities in the way of good things to eat and pumpkins for jack-o'-lanterns, may be a most fertile field of revenue.

Whatever the crop the proceeds should be wholly his own, if he has produced the crop wholly by his own efforts. There is but one way that he can learn the value of money and that is by earning it. The wise use of money must also be learned but that is outside the sphere of gardening.

From address of Prof. Cranehead, Wis. Agr. College.

BE A HOMECROFTER

Learn by Doing. Work Together. Give every Man a Chance.

THE SLOGAN OF THE HOMECROFTERS IS

"Every Child in a Garden—Every Mother in a Homecroft, and Individual, Industrial Independence for Every Worker in a Home of his Own on the Land."

"A little croft we owned—a plot of corn, A garden stored with peas and mint and thyme, And flowers for scales, off on Sunday morn, Picked while the church bells rang their earliest chimes."—Wordsworth.

"The Citizen standing in the doorway of his home—contented on his threshold, his family gathered about his hearthstone, while the evening of a well spent day closes in scenes and sounds that are dearest—he shall save the Republic when the drum-tap is futile and the barracks are exhausted."—Henry W. Grady.

"The slums and tenements of the great cities are social dynamite, certain to explode sooner or later. The only safeguard against such dangers is to plant the multiplying millions of our fast increasing population in individual homes on the land—homecrofts, however small, owned by the occupant, where every worker and his family can enjoy individual industrial independence."—George H. Maxwell.



THE FIRST BOOK OF THE HOMECROFTERS

HAS JUST BEEN PUBLISHED AND AMONG ITS CONTENTS ARE THE FOLLOWING ARTICLES OF ABSORBING INTEREST

- The Brotherhood of Man
- Charity that is Everlasting
- The Secret of Nippon's Power
- Lesson of a Great Calamity
- The Sign of a Thought

This book is the first of a Series that will carry the Progress of the HOMECROFT MOVEMENT and inform all who wish to co-operate with it how they may do so through the formation of local Homecrofts' Circles, Clubs or Guilds to promote Town and Village Betterment, stimulate home civic pride and loyalty to home institutions, industries and trade, improve methods and facilities of education in the local public schools, and create new opportunities "At Home" that will go far to check the drift of trade and population to the cities.

The first Guild of the Homecrofters has been established at Watertown, Massachusetts. The Guildhall, Shops and Gardens are located at 143 Main Street, where the Garden School is now fully organized and over one hundred children are at work in the Gardens. The departments for training in Homecroft and Village Industries are being installed. The Weavers are already at work at the looms.

It is not designed to build here an isolated institution, but to make a model which can be duplicated in any town or village in the country.

Copies of "THE FIRST BOOK OF THE HOMECROFTERS" can be obtained by sending twelve two-cent stamps with your name and address. Carefully and promptly written to The Homecrofts' Guild of the Talisman 143, Main St., Watertown, Massachusetts.

There is New Hope and Inspiration for every Worker who wants a Home of his own on the Land in the CRED and PLATFORM OF THE HOMECROFTERS' which is as follows:

"Peace has her victories no less renowned than war."

EDUCATION GO-OPERATION OPPORTUNITY HOMECROFTS

We believe that the Patriotic Slogan of the Whole People of this Nation should be "Every Child in a Garden—Every Mother in a Homecroft—and Individual Industrial Independence for Every Worker in a Home of his Own on the Land," and that until he owns such a Home, the concentrated purpose and chief inspiration to labor in the life of every wage worker should be his determination to "Get an Acre and Live on it."

We believe that the Slums and Tenements and Congested Centers of population in the Cities are a savagely deteriorating social, moral and political influence, and that a great public movement should be organized, and the whole power of the nation and the states exerted for the betterment of all the conditions of Rural Life, and to create and uphold Centers of Social and Civic Life in Country and Suburban Towns and Villages, where Trade and Industry can be so firmly anchored that they cannot be drawn into the "commercial" Maelstrom that is now steadily sucking Industry and Humanity into the Vortex of the Great Cities.

We believe that every Citizen in this Country has an inherent and Fundamental Right to an Education which will train him to Earn a Living, and, if need be, to get his living straight from Mother Earth; and that he has the same right to the Opportunity to have the Work to Do which will afford him that living, and to earn not only a comfortable livelihood, but enough more to enable him to be a Homecrofter and to have a Home of his Own, with ground around it sufficient to yield him and his family a Living from the Land as the reward for his own labor.

We believe that the Public Domain is the most precious heritage of the people, and the surest safeguard the nation has against Social Disaster, Disturbance or Uproar, and that the Cause of Humanity and the Preservation of Social Stability and of our Free Institutions demand that the absorption of the public lands into speculative private ownership, without settlement, be forthwith stopped; and that the nation should create opportunities for Homecrofters by building irrigation and drainage works to reclaim land as fast as it is needed to give every man who wants a Home on the Land a chance to get it.

We believe that as a Nation, we should be less absorbed with Making

Money, and should pay more heed to raising up and training Men who will be Law-Abiding Citizens; that the welfare of our Workers is of more consequence than the mere accumulation of Wealth; and that Stability of National Character and of Social and Business Conditions is of greater importance to the people of this country as a whole than any other one question that is now before them; and we believe that the only way to Preserve such Stability, and to Permanently Maintain our National Prosperity, is to carry into immediate effect and operation the Platform of the Talisman, which is as follows:

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND HOMES ON THE LAND.

1. That children shall be taught gardening and homecroft in the public schools, and that Homecroft and Garden Training Schools shall be established by county, municipal, state, and national governments, where every boy and every man out of work who wants employment where he can gain that knowledge, can learn how to make a home and till the soil and get his living straight from the ground, and where every boy would be taught that his first aim in life should be to get a home of his own on the land.

BUILD HOMECROFTS AS NATIONAL SAFEGUARDS.

2. That the New Zealand system of Land Taxation and Land Purchase and Subdivision, and Advances to Settlers Act, shall be adopted in this country, to the end that land shall be subdivided into small holdings in the hands of those who will till it for a livelihood, and labor find occupation in the creation of homecrofts, which will be perpetual safeguards against the political evils and social discontent resulting from the overgrowth of cities and the sufferings of unemployed wage-earners.

PROTECTION FOR THE AMERICAN HOMECROFT.

3. That Rural Settlement shall be encouraged and the principle of Protection for the American Wageworker and his Home applied directly to the Home by the Exemption from Taxation of all improvements upon, and also of all personal property, not exceeding \$2,500 in value, used on and in connection with, every Homecroft or Rural Homestead of not more than ten acres in extent, which the owner occupies as a permanent home and cultivates with his own labor and so provides therefrom all or part of the support for a family.

ENLARGEMENT OF AREA AVAILABLE FOR HOMEMAKING.

4. That the National Government, as part of a comprehensive national policy of internal improvements for river control and regulation, and for the enlargement to the utmost possible extent of the area of the country available for agriculture and Homes on the Land, and for the protection of those Homes from either flood or drought, shall build not only levees and revetments where needed, and drainage works for the reclamation of swamp and overflowed lands, but shall also preserve existing forests, reforest denuded areas, plant new forests, and build the great reservoirs and other engineering works necessary to safeguard against overflow and save for beneficial use the flood waters that now run to waste.

RECLAMATION AND SETTLEMENT OF THE ARID LANDS.

5. That the National Government shall build the irrigation works necessary to bring water within reach of settlers on the arid lands, the cost of such works to be repaid to the government by such settlers in annual installments without interest, and that the construction of the great irrigation works necessary for the utilization of the waters of such large rivers as the Columbia, the Sacramento, the Colorado, the Rio Grande, and the Missouri, and their tributaries, shall proceed as rapidly as the lands reclaimed will be utilized in small farms by actual settlers and homemakers, who will repay the government the cost of construction of the irrigation works, and that the amount needed each year for the construction, as recommended by the Secretary of the Interior, shall be made available by Congress as a loan from the general treasury to the Reclamation Fund, and repaid from

lands reclaimed, as required by the National Irrigation Act.

SAVE THE PUBLIC LANDS FOR HOMEMAKERS.

6. That not another acre of the public lands shall ever hereafter be granted to any state or territory for any purpose whatsoever, or to any one other than an actual settler who has built his home on the land and lived on it for five years, and that no more land scrip of any kind shall ever be issued, and that the Desert Land Law and the Commutation Clause of the Homestead Law shall be made to conform to the recommendations of the Public Lands Commission appointed by President Roosevelt and of the Message of the President to Congress.

PLANT FORESTS AND CREATE FOREST PLANTATIONS.

7. That the Timber and Stone Law shall be repealed, and that all public timber lands shall be included in permanent Forest Reserves, the title to the land to be forever retained by the National Government, stumpage only of matured timber to be sold, and young timber to be preserved for future cutting, so that the forests will be perpetuated by right use; and that the National Government shall, by the reservation or purchase of existing forest lands, and the planting of new forests, create in every state National Forest Plantations, from which, through all the years to come, a sufficient supply of wood and timber can be annually harvested to supply the needs of the people of each state from the Forest Plantations in that state.

CONTROL AND USE OF WILD GRAZING LANDS.

8. That all unlocated public lands not otherwise reserved shall be reserved from location or entry under any law except the Homestead Law, and shall be embraced in Grazing Reserves under the control of the Secretary of Agriculture, who shall be empowered to issue Grazing Licenses to graze stock in said Grazing Reserves, but such licenses shall never be issued for a longer period than one year on agricultural lands or five years on grazing lands, and all lands classified as grazing lands shall be subject to reclassification at the end of every five years; that no leases of the public grazing lands shall ever be made by the National Government, and that the area of the homestead entry shall never under any circumstances be enlarged to exceed 160 acres.

RESERVE STATE LANDS FOR HOMESTEAD SETTLERS.

9. That the public land states shall administer the state lands under a system similar to and in harmony with the national public land system above outlined, and that each state shall enact a State Homestead Law for the settlement of lands owned by the state, and that state lands shall be disposed of only to actual settlers under such law, and that all state lands shall at all times remain open to Homestead Entry.

UNITED OWNERSHIP OF LAND AND WATER.

10. That it shall be the law of every state and of the United States, that beneficial use is the basis, the measure, and the limit of all rights to water, including riparian right, and that the right to the use of water for irrigation shall inhere in and be appurtenant to the land irrigated, so that the ownership of the land and the water shall be united, and no right to water as a speculative commodity ever be acquired, held or owned.

THE COMING PEOPLE.

"Outward changes, economical and political, more or less marked, are always going on in the forms and organizations of society. But to-day one can make a specially strong argument that great and radical changes are impending. No one can believe that existing conditions will continue in a world where all things move and change. Waste, extravagance, political corruption, fierce mercantile rivalries, colossal monopolization of wealth and of the industrial plants of the world, masses of dreary poverty—these are the natural subjects of a patriotic, patriotic and humane concern. Is not the old social and industrial machinery, the competitive or wage system, showing signs of breaking down beneath its load?"

"The question is just quite fair whether any system is just that permits individuals to roll up immense fortunes—the result of lucky speculations, or of the rise of land values about great cities, that permits other individuals to inherit almost unlimited money power, as men once inherited duchies and kingdoms, while millions of workingmen, with small wages, live close to the danger line of debt, or even of cold and starvation, and are liable to be thrown out of employment for months at a time."

"When in the face of natural wealth, never so abundant, and forces of production augmented indefinitely by science and invention, so many almost fail to reap any benefit from the resources which surely belong to the race, it must at least be confessed that our present system, both of production and of distribution, is not intelligently or humanely managed. Its results do not represent an ideal democracy, a brotherhood of man."—From "The Coming People", by Chas. F. Dole.

It behooves everyone who has eyes to see and ears to hear and a brain with which to think to study the tremendous social problems with which we are face to face to-day.

Whether they are settled right or wrong will affect every member of the community. No one can escape the evils that will result from a wrong settlement and everyone will be benefited by a right settlement.

Nothing is more important than that we should get started right. There is guidance and inspiration in every line of "THE COMING PEOPLE," by Chas. F. Dole.

In order to bring this book within the reach of all, a popular edition has just been issued by the Homecrofts' Guild of the Talisman which can be had for 25 cents, postage included. Remit by postal money order, express money order or postage stamps to "THE HOMECROFTERS, 143 Main St., Watertown, Mass."