

OUR HOME TOWN.
A Department Devoted to Village Betterment.
RICHARD HAMILTON BYRD.

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, protection and upbuilding of rural village life.

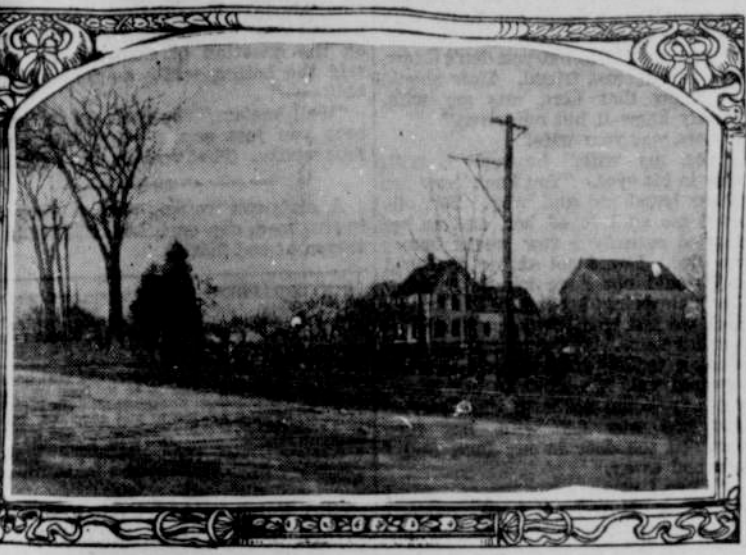
What is being done in your town to encourage small industries and for home employment? What is doing along the line of street improvement and the beautifying of private lawns, roadways and public parks? Are your local merchants receiving the support of the local trade? Experience, plans, suggestions and photographs will be welcomed by the editor of this department and so far as possible given place in these columns.

The Local Handicap.

The Prophet is without honor in his own country. So the village and small town are without confidence in their own resources. We get so familiar with the things about us that we are apt to underrate their value. It is often necessary for a total stranger to come along and show us the neglected opportunities that have been under our nose unmissed for years.

The writer while pursuing some industrial investigations had occasion to visit a thrifty little city in the Southwest. It is an old town that has literally been forced to the front by the pressure of development and northern energy. The place has five railroads, a population of 30,000 and a number of modern buildings. Still the natives

THE HOMECROFTERS' GILD.
To Enable People to Live in Their Own Homes and on a Piece of Their Own Land.
CHANCE FOR FACTORY WORKERS
"Every Child in a Garden and Every Mother in a Homecroft" is the Motto of the Organization—A Hundred Children at Work in the First School Garden at Watertown, Mass.
EDWARD T. HARTMAN
Secretary Massachusetts Civic League.
At Watertown, Massachusetts, there is being put under way what seems to be one of the most sane and practical



HOUSE AND BARN FOR HOMECROFT VILLAGE, Watertown, Mass.

have not yet fully realized the change—they still are doubtful and suspicious. About four years ago, before the tide of immigration and capital set in toward the Southwest, a stranger from the North drifted into this particular city. He was just "looking around" with no special purpose in view. A curbside real estate broker had on his list a tract of bottom land, timbered, but worthless on account of the annual floods. This land he had hawked about the street for 75c per acre, but found no takers among the home speculators. The tract was "no good." It was offered to this stranger for \$100 per acre. Would he look at it? Yes. He looked it over, examined every acre of it—came back to town and handed over \$10,000 for the worthless tract. Great was the joy of the natives who were lined up at the various bars, to drink to the health of the "sucker." But the sucker returned in about a month with another capitalist from the North and sold this worthless tract for \$30,000. But this was not all. Within ninety days the second sucker brought a third and sold him the timber alone for \$50,000. And then the local bankers and conservative capitalists kicked themselves for not thinking of it.

For years people have been leaving Arkansas and Missouri going west looking for opportunities. To-day strangers are taking their places and finding money on every bush. The new-comers are simply developing the resources which the natives failed to recognize.

This principle holds true of a majority of individuals in every community. We are too near to see the opportunities at our feet. We pass them over and leave them for someone to pick up.

The twentieth century for the United States at least will be a time of concentration rather than expansion. A century of rural development and home-building. As has been indicated the people must get back to the land, and industrial institutions to reach their best development must give the worker a chance for a home.

The Value of a Good Garden.

Many people fail to realize the great value of a thrifty, well-kept garden. Even an inferior one is much better than none. Vegetables are indispensable to a family, so far as health is concerned, to say nothing of the money saved by not having to buy so much flour and so many groceries.

It would seem that every man should manage to obtain a piece of ground and see that it becomes well fertilized and enriched and then put under a thorough state of cultivation before trying to plant the seeds. It only costs a little to buy enough seeds for quite a good-sized garden.

solutions of many of the problems of modern city life ever attempted in this country. It is in line with the best enterprises for solving the questions of housing, sanitation, education and morals. As such it should command the attention and co-operation of all constructive social workers.

The Homecrofters GILD offers garden work and craftsmanship as a substitute for the street corner, the cheap show and the saloon. And it offers in addition health, contentment and a substantial increase in income to the workers. The increase takes a practical form in the shape of health from work in the air, from fresh vegetables and fruits, from a clean environment and from absence of bad habits; from money saved from useless pastimes; from absence of doctors' bills and from a direct return in the way of commodities for use in the home or for sale.

The founder and main supporter of the movement is Mr. George H. Maxwell, editor of Maxwell's Tallyman and founder of the National Irrigation Movement. As a student of social conditions, Mr. Maxwell has concluded that college settlements and similar movements merely scratch the upper surface of the problem and fail utterly to get under it and crowd it out with a better condition. His creed 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."

MEANING OF HOMECROFT.

The word "Homecroft" has been coined by Mr. Maxwell to fit the thing he has in mind. The Scotch word "croft" means a very small piece of land farmed intensively by its occupant but not large enough to yield him a living and constitute him a farmer. The Homecrofter, therefore, under the conditions being developed, is a laboring man, clerk, skilled artisan or what not, who supplements his regular income by, and spends his spare time in, work on the land. His children may likewise be employed out of school hours and at other times when they would otherwise be on the street or forced into some one of the street trades to help maintain the home. For the children the advantages are obvious. Healthy exercise in the open air for a purpose, fresh vegetables and other products, and occupation, are substituted for spasmodic exercise under bad conditions, stale vegetables or none at all, and the gang.

It can be demonstrated that the ordinary factory worker on from one-half acre to an acre of land can earn actually more in the odd time given to his garden than he does from his regular work, taking it hour for hour. The other advantages are evident.

THE GILDHALL AND SHOPS.

As a foundation for the GILD the Wilson estate at 143 Main St. Water-

town, has been purchased and converted into a Gildhall and shops for handicraft work. The land around the house has practically all been appropriated to the use of a garden school and laid out in children's gardens. The director of the gardens is Miss Elizabeth S. Hill of Groton, who last year conducted the school gardens in Brookline and Groton. Over a hundred children are already at work and many more, almost two hundred in all, have applied for space. It is an interesting sight, and a poor commentary on our public school system, to see the wistful look of the children "not in it" as they watch the fortunate ones and inquire of the instructors as to how long they will have to wait. Many children not connected with the school watch the workers and play on the grounds, so that it has become a children's center for the town.

The opening of the garden school has aroused an interest among other private organizations in the neighborhood and the Women's Club of Watertown has established another garden school, also under Miss Hill's supervision, as is still another opened by the Women's Social Science Club of Newton, whose garden is on Jackson Road near Nonantum.

On the outer boundary of the town, the old Emerson Place has been purchased and set aside as a garden school for boys and even men who desire to do practical work. The plots in this garden are large enough to permit of practical experiments and to even supply quite a quantity of vegetables, which each gardener is allowed to appropriate to his own use. The only requirement is that each gardener provide his own tools and seed and pay sufficient attention to the instruction and to his work to keep his plot in fair condition and in harmony with the garden as a whole. There is in this garden plenty of space not taken and it offers a unique and valuable opportunity for any one desiring such work. The garden is supervised by a young man with practical experience in market gardening.

WEAVE BEAUTIFUL THINGS.

The weaving department, the only handicraft department as yet developed in the GILD, is supervised by Miss J. A. Turner, formerly with the experiment station for the blind in Cambridge. Miss Turner, assisted by her sister, has several looms already in working order and instruction has been taken up. The aim of the work in weaving, as it will be in other handicraft work, is not to have a weaving establishment for the production of goods, but to conduct a school in weaving and design where women in the community may learn to do work which may be carried on in their homes. This, as in the case of the croft work, will enable them to occupy spare time, which would be otherwise wasted or improperly spent, in congenial, healthy and remunerative employment. It is hoped and believed that such work will enable many women who have to supplement their income to do it in their homes and not be forced into factories and other unsatisfactory conditions. A system will be developed whereby looms will be supplied by and the product sold through the GILD. By this method expenses will be kept at a minimum and the highest profits accrue to the workers.

HOME LANDS IN SMALL PARCELS.

The more far-reaching and substantial feature of the movement is the acquisition and subdivision of land into small tracts for actual croft purpose as outlined above. This closely resembles the schemes developed in Hitchin, Port Sunlight, Bournville and

Looking Across Tract, Showing Growth of Barley Raised This Year.
Irrigation Canal Furnishing Water for Tract.



SCENES IN OUTSKIRTS OF PHOENIX, ARIZONA, SHOWING SITE FOR FIRST ARIZONA HOMECROFT VILLAGE.

elsewhere in England. It will not be out of place to outline the Bournville plan which is identical in many respects and has been carried out to an assured success. This model village was started in 1879 when Messrs. Cadbury Bros. removed their works from

Birmingham to a point four miles from the city and erected twenty-four houses for the workmen. Mr. George Cadbury, from long observation and experience, concluded that the only practical way to solve the problem was to take the factory worker out on the land where he might pursue the natural and healthy recreation of gardening. Says Mr. W. Alexander Harvey in his book on Bournville, "It was impossible for working men to be healthy and have healthy children, when after being confined all day in factories they spent their evenings in an institute, club room or public-house. If it were necessary for their health, as it undoubtedly was, that they should get



View in Orchard, Showing Trolley Line by Which Boston is Reached. In Forty-five Minutes.



LANDS AT WATERTOWN, MASS., THAT WILL BE SUBDIVIDED FOR HOMECROFT VILLAGE.

fresh air, it was equally to the advantage of their moral life that they should be brought into contact with nature. There was an advantage, too, in bringing the workman on to the land, for instead of his losing money in the amusements usually sought in the towns, he saved it in his garden produce—a great consideration where the poorer class of workman was concerned." And again, "The cultivation of the soil is certainly the best antidote to sedentary occupation of those working in large towns. A primitive instinct is induced, the full value of which seems hardly yet to have been realized. Many believe, indeed, that with its encouragement the abuse of the social club and the public-house will be materially lessened, and one of the greatest social evils of the time disappear. (The experience of Bournville certainly gives support to this conclusion, for nearly every household there spends his leisure in gardening, and there is not a single licensed house in the village.)"

SEVEN HUNDRED DOLLARS FOR A HOUSE.

The houses of Bournville were built with special reference to cheapness, artistic development, sanitation and convenience. At a cost of from \$700

to \$2500 each a much higher grade of home than the workers had been accustomed to was provided. Rents range from 4s. 6d. to 12s. per week, not including rates; and the death rate of nineteen per thousand in Birmingham has been reduced to six and nine-

tenths per thousand in Bournville. The garden features in Bournville are planned with much care, provision in most cases being made for some lawn, flowers, vegetables and fruits.

To return to the Homecrofters GILD, there is one distinctive advantage in Mr. Maxwell's plan, in that he aims to attach to each home one acre of land to make it a feature and not merely an incident in the life of the worker, and he has added the crafts work for women and for men in the winter. He already has under way plans for an experimental group of four houses under one roof, to be placed at the centre of a square so as to secure the greatest economy of space and place



View in Orchard, Showing Trolley Line by Which Boston is Reached. In Forty-five Minutes.

the worker in direct contact with his land. These plans are being prepared by Mr. Allen W. Jackson, the architect.

Something over fifty acres of land have already been purchased for subdivision, and improvement. This will be sold to workmen for homes for practically what it cost in large tracts, plus the cost of division and improvement. A special plan is to sell homes to industrious working men on a long time, on the monthly instalment plan, at a rate which will be no more than is usually paid in rent, but which will create a sinking fund that will pay the purchase price and in the meantime carry what will amount to an insurance policy covering the amount of the purchase price remaining due, so that if the purchaser should die, the property would go to his family without further payment.

FOLLOWS SUCCESSFUL ENGLISH PLAN.

The movement is not intended to be an isolated one as the shops and gardens are open to any one who will use them in the right way. Mr. Maxwell feels that isolation has been the cause of failure in such attempts and that the people of the community must themselves become a part of such a movement if it is to succeed. Here again the scheme resembles that of Bournville. There, though practically all the houses have been built by the management, only forty-one and two-tenths per cent. of the occupants work in the village. Eighteen and six-tenths per cent. work in villages within a mile and forty and two-tenths per cent. work in Birmingham. Fifty and seven-tenths per cent. of them are employed at indoor work in factories, thirteen and three-tenths per cent. are clerks and travellers, and thirty-six per cent. are skilled workers and professional men. By this arrangement a normal community life is maintained. The Homecroft GILD is being developed along the same lines.

OVERCOMING PHYSICAL DEGENERACY.

The GILD is not making the mistake of trying to make farmers pure and simple out of city workers. Such a hard and fast line between city and country will always lead to failure. Mr. Maxwell says: "Give the city worker a home in the suburbs, where he can have a garden and a poultry yard, and where his children can have sunshine and fresh air without stint, and you have largely done away with the terrible evils that are cursing the denizens of the congested quarters of our great cities—physical degeneracy, tuberculosis, and social, moral, and political dangers too numerous to be enumerated." Henry W. Grady described the antithesis when he said, "The citizen standing in the doorway of his home—contented on this threshold—his family gathered about his hearthstone—while the evening of a well-spent day closes in scenes and sounds that are dearest—the drum tap is futile and the barracks are exhausted."

The Homecroft GILD has other plans in immediate contemplation. Near

Phoenix, Arizona, a farm of one hundred and sixty acres has been turned into a homecroft village. The land is especially adapted to raising vegetables and is under one of the best water-rights in the region. Five-acre tracts are here given to each worker. The new government reservoir on Salt River and driven wells on the property, insure a permanent supply of water for irrigation and therefore unflinching crops.

These undertakings, while practical and constructive in every sense, are intended rather as models to show what can be done in any community in the country. Japan, with sixty-seven per cent. of her total population working in part or entirely on the land, has become a land of gardens where hopeless poverty is almost unknown and where tuberculosis is a negligible quantity. America can take care of its hopeless thousands in the same way, first by putting hope into them and then by putting them where they may attain it. It is to the promoters of our great industries that we must look for help in great part, but public sentiment and sympathy will move the promoters and reach the problem. The Homecrofters GILD promises a start which ought to weld together the country and the city into one indestructible whole and, supplemented by proper charity administration and sane vagrancy laws, remove entirely the possibility even of a "submerged tenth."

Parking for the Town.

The town parks, or the town or village square are the lungs of its citizens. If the town is growing, it is none too soon to start a movement to provide for the securing of ample town parking. The land is increasing; when the town has doubled and has become a small city, it will not be so easy to secure sites, readily accessible to the people, without paying an exorbitant price. Secure first the land; it is not important that a large amount of money should be at once expended upon its beautification, possibly it needs but little, since nature may have made it more beautiful than can man. It is not necessary that it should be transformed into carpet beds of flowers and trimly kept lawns. If it affords sunlight and a green relief of grass and trees for the eye, it becomes a civilizer and an equalizer, for the poor as well as the wealthy, a resting place where a man may forget, for the time, some of his struggles and his anxieties in a contemplation of what God has made.

The park should be kept, in fact, as natural as is consistent with its use as such. It is never too early, however, to secure its site, with a view to the building up of the community, when land values will necessarily increase.

Distribution of Immigrants the Solution.

If there were only some practicable way of distributing immigration more equally among all the ports of the country the congestion and segregation phases of this problem would be nearer solution. It can be accomplished in but a small degree, since it will only be done if answering an economic demand, as in the case of the Galveston-Bremen service. Wise and well organized effort to induce immigrants to pass through the large ports by finding and insuring them employment in the interior and by informing them of opportunities elsewhere, will do much to improve conditions. The self-interest of states, many of which maintain immigration agencies, might also be brought more generally into play to attract the industrious and ambitious new comers to their farms and smaller towns.

Improving School Grounds.

In Rochester, N. Y., the school authorities grade and sod the school yards, while the shrubbery and other planting is by private effort in conjunction with the school children. Ample land is furnished for decorative playground purposes, and most exemplary results have been obtained.

Wherever
anywhere in this country
there is
Any One
who has the
Spirit of True Patriotism
and
Genuine Love of Humanity
in his or her heart,
"The Coming People"
By CHARLES F. DOLE
should be the first book to be read

There is a multitude of thinking people who see the dangers the future holds for our country unless we reach a wise solution of the tremendous social problems that confront us.

The spirit in which we should approach the consideration of these problems is set forth in this remarkable book in a way that must be an inspiration to every truly humane and patriotic heart.

Let the spirit of common sense and optimism and fundamental economic and philosophical truth that pervades this book be taken as the underlying motive of the movement, and the Creed and Platform of the Homecrofters as the practical plan to work to, and the rest of the great social questions are certain to be rightly solved by application to them of the sound and humane principles that will guide the action of our people upon all great national questions.

One copy of "The Coming People" postage prepaid will be mailed to any address in the United States for twenty-five cents.

One copy of both "The Coming People" and "The First Book of the Homecrofters" and "Maxwell's Tallyman" monthly for the rest of the year 1908 will be mailed to any address in the United States for fifty cents.

Remit in postage stamps to The Homecrofters, 143 Main Street, Watertown, Mass.

THE HOMECROFT VS. THE TENEMENT.

By way of affording a practical object lesson in the "Homecroft" idea, George H. Maxwell has acquired fifty acres of ground at Watertown, Mass.—less than a thirty minutes by railroad or forty-five minutes by trolley from the center of Boston—which will be broken up into small "crofts" for city workers. There, it is to be presumed, will be illustrated, by degrees, all the different phases of betterment which characterize the homecroft as compared with the tenement-house idea. In its application to the life of the average American wage-earner, especially he whose weakly stomach comes from work in city shop or store or factory. Among such betterments, either already demonstrated or anticipated, are these:

1. Healthier home surroundings, air, sunlight, trees, a view, room for children to grow up without contact with the contaminating infauna of crowded city streets and tenements.
2. Diversity in employment and healthful recreation for the wage-earner himself, and wholesome opportunity for his wife and children to contribute to the family income, in the cultivation of an acre, more or less, of ground. This would enable him, especially, to keep his girls at home, instead of sending them to the factory or shop.
3. Reliable occupation and support for the wage-earner or himself, in case of a temporary loss of his regular employment. An acre of ground, intensively cultivated and irrigated, will support a family.
4. Opportunity to set up, in the homecroft, little handicrafts for the products of which there is a constant demand; such as special lines of weaving, knitting, rugmaking, cabinetmaking, basket weaving, turning in wood or bone, instrument making, manufacturers of leather, gloves, etc., etc. The distribution of power from electric wires, or the use of little gasoline engines, in village of homecrofts, may demonstrate that the concentration of thousands of workers in great factories is not, after all, in a great many lines of industry, a necessity for the attainment of the best results.
5. A growth of co-operation, which will give to the homecroft settlement all the advantages of the city in schools, libraries, hospitals, entertainment halls, water supply, electric lights, improved roads, etc.; while the cultivation of each separate acre or "croft" will be facilitated by the co-operative ownership of the numerous expensive pieces of farm machinery now to be found on the best large farms, but which could not be afforded by the individual crofter.
6. The fostering of a sturdy, independent individualism, to which nothing contributes so much as the ownership of a home and a consciousness that one can "make a living" regardless of any boss.

Concurrently with such betterments in the condition of the wage-earner, the general carrying out of the homecroft idea would relieve the congestion of population in cities, and greatly assist in their development along those lines which are a much better than mere bigness. A hundred thousand or a million people living on small tracts of land, within an hour's ride of a city would make far more business for the city, every desirable kind, than the same number closely packed in tenements.

The "Homecroft" experiment not to be limited to the settlement fostered by Mr. Maxwell near Boston. The idea combines with its suggestions of social betterments the probability of very satisfactory returns to the owners of vacant lands, near cities, who may be disposed to experiment with it.