

CHAPTER VII

SITES

The sites of the colonies should be chosen with care. This will determine their success or failure. They should be near city markets, with cheap transportation both by water and rail. There should be colonies in the neighborhood of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Washington, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Chicago. There should be other colonies in Florida and North Carolina, Texas, Colorado, California, Washington, and Oregon. There should be one in every State.

Where possible the colonies should be near government forests and national parks for fuel, timber, hunting, and fishing. These communities might be located in Arizona and New Mexico for tubercular patients and convalescent soldiers. There is cheap land for truck-growing and oyster-fishing in Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas. In the government forests there should be forestry colonies to provide for the

homeless "lumber-jack" whose only possession is a blanket, and who moves from place to place with the itinerant timber-camps which are rapidly exhausting the timber-lands of the West and South.

The I. W. W. organization is a natural product of the conditions which prevail in the timber industry.

The colonies should be located on beautiful sites. For we can select the site for a farm colony as we cannot for town developments or garden suburbs. We have the entire country to choose from. The colonies should be on rivers, lakes, or the sea. The land selected should contain timber for fuel and lumber. The site should be chosen as a man selects a country estate.

An Unpeopled Continent.

It has been suggested that the soldier should be employed at the clearance of cut-over lands in Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and the Far West; that he should reclaim the swamps of Virginia, North Carolina, and Florida; that he should be employed on irrigation works in the Far West. Reclamation projects will open up more land, it is true. They will give

temporary employment to the soldier. But they will not produce the kind of life that the farm colony offers. There is no reason however, why such reclamation projects should not be confined to government land or land acquired in advance of its improvement by the government. Then it could be developed into a colony as it was brought into cultivation.

However, the reclamation of swamp and cut-over forest-lands is an economic waste. For there is enough good land in America not only for our 6,000,000 farmers; there is land for ten times that number. We have not begun to cultivate our land. There are only 33 people per square mile in the United States, as compared with six times that number in little Denmark. There are from six to twenty times as many in England, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Belgium. Belgium sends food to Germany, England, and France. The land is cultivated like a garden. And in this little state 671 people are found per square mile, as compared with one-twentieth that number in America.

Merely to add more land is merely to promote more speculation, create more landlords,

and contribute an unearned increment to a few people.

The State of New York, with the best markets in the world, has but 375,000 agriculturists within its limits. Along the Hudson from Albany to New York, along the Mohawk Valley, and in the Adirondacks are great stretches of land whose selling price is not to exceed from \$40 to \$60 an acre. This land is in a relatively good state of cultivation. Roads have been built. The land has been cleared. It is drained and fenced. It has had more than its present value put into it by the labor of generations of farmers.

The same is true of Massachusetts and the Connecticut Valley. The soil is not of the richest, but it can be brought back to fertility. Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida contain great stretches of cheap land. Every climate offers itself. The cost of living is low. And these lands would be far cheaper than reclaimed waste land on which from \$20 to \$50 an acre must be spent to make it ready for cultivation. The cost of stumping land alone is from \$40 to \$100 an acre.

The State of California contains 20,000,000 acres of land that is not under cultivation. There are great holdings ranging from 25,000 to 1,000,000 acres in extent. California, with its wonderful climate and with every attraction to out-of-door living, could absorb millions of people and still be far from densely peopled. Life is easy in California. There is an abundance of water-power. Almost every kind of farm-produce can be raised in prodigal quantities. Yet the State is largely held by land monopolists and speculators who will only release it at monopoly and prohibitive prices.¹

Varieties of Colonies.

There should be colonies for different types of farming. Some should be for large-scale

¹ "The California campaign," says the *New York Nation*, "has produced an interesting piece of propaganda on the part of the single-taxers in the last number of the *Great Adventure*. They emphasize their startling figures as to the land-holding of private corporations and firms with a map of one county, said to be 'a fair sample of the fifty-eight California counties,' which shows it to be owned chiefly by four companies. Three interests, it is stated, own more acres on the Pacific coast than there are in the German Empire, while one of the three had about as many men on horseback guarding their fourteen million acres from hunters, squatters, and tramps as there were in the United States

production, others should be primarily for dairying on which pedigreed cattle, hogs, and chickens will be raised. Still others should be for truck-gardening, for the raising of vegetables. Fruit-farms should be located in the regions best suited for fruit. There might be colonies for the raising of bulbs, for bee-culture and nursery-products.

There should be industries in the colonies, especially handicrafts and the production of those things that do not involve machine production. There are many persons of small means, teachers, professional persons, and artists who would find such a colony an attractive place of residence. The garden villages

cavalry before the present war. Land which, it is declared, could not be bought for \$200 an acre, is assessed for \$13.90. The State Commission on Land Colonization is quoted as saying: 'California has an immense area of fertile and unpeopled land. . . . Comparatively few settlers are coming here and many who came in recent years have left. Costly advertising and still more costly personal solicitations have not served to attract colonists. We have not found a single settler who, bringing with him only limited capital, has been able to pay for his land in the time agreed upon in his contract.' The pamphlet goes on to point out that the war, by raising prices all around, automatically increases the value of these undertaxed 'private empires,' and that every advance of our men on the European fronts makes it harder for any one to get a footing on the land at home." (Issue of October 25, 1918.)

of England have drawn many industries and persons of this class.

Texas is far from peopled. Its area is greater than that of Germany with her 67,000,000 people. It has easy water communications with the tropics, with Europe, with the Middle West. Yet in many counties in this State 60 per cent. and sometimes 80 per cent. of the farmers are tenants, working under conditions that are but little different from those of the tenantry-cursed countries of Europe.

According to the United States census over 200,000,000 acres, or one-quarter of our total agricultural acreage, is in great estates whose average size is in excess of 4,000 acres. Commonwealths like Texas, California, Montana, Idaho, and the Dakotas contain estates of 10,000, 100,000 and even 1,000,000 acres. Of the 800,000,000 acres in farms, over 400,000,000 acres are not under cultivation at all; while out of every 100 farms in the country 37 are operated by tenants, and in the Central and Western States the number of tenant-farmers rises to 50 per cent., 60 per cent., and even 80 per cent. of the total.

Why should America waste the labor and

the lives of her men in reclaiming miasmatic swamps and in stumping distant forests, when there is unused land in abundance in the settled and fertile parts of the country?

Developing the Estate.

The colony estates would be cultivated for one or two years under government experts. They would be planted and harvested by machinery and on a large-scale basis. This would probably be done by the would-be colonists, the soldiers, who would be paid a current rate of wage and a living for their labor. Possibly the farms would be cultivated on a co-operative basis. There would be no compulsion about this. The colonists could come and go as they pleased, for the organization would be like any other industry. During the winter months the men would build houses, barns, roads, and fences. They would subdivide the holdings. They would prepare the allotment for distribution. The farm would be a school of agriculture not unlike those maintained by our agricultural colleges, the men being taught new methods by the actual doing of farm-work. By this means the land would

be brought to a better state of cultivation. It would be properly fertilized. The best use to which it could be put would be established. Fruit-trees would be planted, land would be drained, forests cleaned of underbrush, and the estate put into shape for colonization. By this means, too, the expert would know the best uses to which the land could be put.

We may assume that a farm conducted in this way would pay the cost of such reclamation. It might yield a surplus which would be credited to the community fund. Certainly much valuable experience would be gained.