

## CHAPTER XI

### LIFE AND LEISURE

Life and leisure will occupy a permanent place in the farm community. There have been peoples in the past that cared very little for the amassing of private wealth. The life of Greece, of Rome, of the cities of mediæval Italy, of the free towns of France, Germany, and the Netherlands, in the days of the guilds, had other ideals than the accumulation of property. The people lived very much in the open, they built temples, cathedrals, town halls, rather than mills, warehouses, and private palaces. They even built temples to trade.

Even though we discount the descriptions of the life of these people, there must have been a wide-spread interest in something other than wealth, or getting more and more land, or monopolizing more and more property. Otherwise, they would not have left us so much art, culture, literature, and beauty.

Even the worker was an artist, who took pride in his labor. He as well as the architect saw the plans.

Our industrial civilization has come to magnify labor at the expense of the laborer. The worker is a "hand." He is a number. A machinist presenting himself for employment in a Western city described himself as being "Nut No. 79." That was the extent of his mechanical operations. He affixed a nut to a part of a machine as it passed through his hands.

We have carried the same values into farming. It is not the joy of production, of nature, of getting as much as possible out of life; it is a desire to possess more land, to pay off a mortgage in order that our children may have more land. The ideal of an Iowa farmer has been described to be "to get more land, to raise more corn, to feed more hogs, to buy more land, to raise more corn, to feed more hogs," and so on *ad infinitum*.

#### **Economic Freedom.**

The farm colony should exalt the man and minimize the labor. Its object should be freedom for the worker, rather than accumulation

for old age. We would not struggle to accumulate as we do if our children were to face a world in which opportunities were full and free and adequate; in which there was no poverty except the poverty of those who would not work. Surely this is possible on a continent endowed as is ours, with every climate and with land enough to maintain at least six times, and possibly ten times, our present population in a reasonable degree of comfort.

In such a society men would work to live. They would produce what they need and not concern themselves about amassing more. We think of such a life as wasted, but there is no waste in a life spent in expressing itself. But there is waste, complete waste, in a life exhausted in the round of wealth-accumulation or property ownership, no matter what the quantity of wealth produced may be. This is true of the banker as it is of the drudge.

A new kind of society is possible if we want it hard enough, and visualize it as we have visualized the mechanics of a flying-machine. Labor-saving machinery can be widely used. We can control the processes of production



and distribution so that the worker will be safeguarded from exploitation. He will be protected in his labor and guaranteed the fruits of what he produces. There is no great difficulty about producing enough wealth on a farm. For thousands of years men lived in a fair degree of comfort without great machines, without any industry except that of the hand-loom and the spinning-wheel. And to-day Denmark and Ireland indicate the comfort that can come to a people when they work under proper conditions on land which they themselves own. There is enough wealth and to spare to be gotten out of fifty acres of land. In Denmark men live above the poverty-line on from two to four acres of land.

**The Colonists' Budget.**

The investment of the average farmer in the farm community will be from \$3,000 to \$6,000. He will have a comfortable home, a barn, necessary machinery, one or more cows, chickens, some fruit-trees, sufficient working capital, and a piece of land large enough for him to cultivate. There will be smaller holdings and less expensive houses costing from \$2,500 to \$3,500.

The colonist will pay the government from \$100 to \$300 a year or some \$10 to \$25 a month on his investment. This in time will repay the loan and the interest as well. Light and water from community plants will supply domestic needs, and provide power for the farm or for such light industries as the colonist may want to carry on. Supplied at cost, these will be negligible items in his budget.

Food there must be. And food is a scarce article to the poor of our cities. Yet it is cheap enough on the land, so cheap that a great part of that which we produce is never gathered. It is left to rot in the fields. But our little colony is a food-factory, organized to produce with the least possible labor the best food the soil can be made to yield.

The colonist has a small patch about his cottage on which he can raise all the vegetables, fruit, and eggs that he needs for his household. His cows will produce milk, butter, and cheese, and his hogs, bacon and ham. He brings his milk to the co-operative dairy or a collector gathers it for the entire community. This of itself yields a substantial income. For a cow, if properly bred and cared for, is a great wealth-

producer. In Denmark where the cows are milked by machinery and are bred with the greatest care, the average annual yield of butter in some herds has been raised to 229 pounds, and of milk to 617 kilograms. In this little country 68,000 farmers make some kind of living from farms whose average size is  $\frac{37}{100}$  of an acre. They supplement their work on their own farm, it is true, by working a portion of the time on the larger estates in the neighborhood.

Once the problems of rent and food are solved, a man is comparatively free. He possesses himself. Fuel would be bought at wholesale through the co-operative store as would clothes and other commodities. Fuel might be supplied in part from the forests of the neighborhood just as it is to-day in hundreds of little villages in Europe where the forests are still the common possession of all the people. With the elemental needs supplied, a few hundred dollars a year would support a family in far greater comfort than the average worker or many professional persons and teachers in the cities enjoy.

**Artisans and Artists.**

There would probably be disabled soldiers in the colony. They would have their place and their industries as well. There would be artisans, carpenters, painters, workers of all kinds. For this is not exclusively a farm colony by any means. The factories would not be machine-shops or cotton-mills, however. They would be handicraft-shops, which have fallen away in competition with our large-scale production, but which will probably be recalled to life as a result of the efforts of the warring countries to create new industries for disabled men. Hundreds of crafts which contribute to the beauty of life could be developed in the village or be carried on within the home. They include wood and metal working, weaving, designing, glass and copper making, the printing and binding of books, the making of toys, the designing of wall-papers, carpets, rugs, the making of beautiful furniture, and the creation of artistic things in porcelain, china, and other wares.

**The Fine Arts.**

The drama, music, and other forms of art expression can be made a part of the every-

day life of the colony as they are in the garden villages of Great Britain. The schoolhouse should be the centre of such activities. It should be the people's playhouse.

The community school was a dream but a few years ago, but to-day in every progressive city, and in hundreds of rural districts, schools are being built and used for all kinds of activities for which there was formerly no place. New types of school buildings are being erected. They are equipped for new uses. The assembly-room is an auditorium. It has a stage. The seats can be removed for receptions and dances. There are swimming-pools and gymnasiums. The public library is housed within the school. All this has become a conventional part of school architecture. In the city of New York people's orchestras and community singing societies have been organized. They have become permanent institutions. Dramatic leagues educate the children in expression. Pageants are given, and art exhibitions are held, while candidates for office come to the school platform to speak or be heckled as to their political policies.

More recently the schools of New York have



become the centre of labor activities. They are used for meetings of the trades-unions, for discussion of factory conditions, for the promotion of a people's education.

**The Club-House of Democracy.**

In our little village the school would be the community club-house. Round about it would be playgrounds, tennis-courts, a baseball-diamond. There would be an experimental farm in the neighborhood. The co-operative societies, the town council, candidates for office would meet here.

The schoolhouse should be in the centre of the community, located on the most prominent street. Surrounding it would be shops, the church, and other community buildings.

All this has been done in the many housing communities erected by the government during the war.

Electric light and power should be provided at the lowest possible cost. Where produced by water-power the cost is very low. It can be used for cooking, for operating machines, for relieving the drudgery of domestic work. More important still is its use for small crafts,

or domestic industries, or for doing the work on the farm.

These forms of community expression are rapidly finding a place in almost every city. We are passing into a more generous kind of living in the towns, but thus far no provision for recreation has been made for the farm. Isolation precludes it. This is one reason why the farm is being abandoned. It does not compete with the commercial and voluntary attractions that the town offers. These must and should be provided, as they can be in a community. There is in fact opportunity for almost as full a life in an organized farming village as there is in a large city.