

CHAPTER IV

THE NEED OF FOOD

Even before the war the drift to the cities was most pronounced. In 1880, 70.5 persons out of every 100 lived in the country. In 1900 there were only 59.5. By 1910 only 53.7 persons out of every 100 were farmers. Between 1900 and 1910 the urban population of the United States increased by approximately 12,000,000 persons, the country population by 4,200,000. In 1900 the urban population was 31,609,000. Ten years later it had increased to 42,623,000, an increase of 34.8 per cent. During the same period the rural population increased from 44,384,000 to 49,348,883, an increase of 11.3 per cent.

Food-production has also been falling. This is indicated by the following:

Before the war began there were 15,000,000 less sheep in the country than there were in 1905.

There were 8,500,000 fewer beef-cattle than in 1909.

There were 46,059,000 sheep in 1917, as compared with 51,482,000 in 1913.

Hogs decreased from 67,543,000 to 62,747,000.

The number of domestic animals on farms according to the census of 1900 and 1910 was as follows:

YEAR	DAIRY COWS	ALL CATTLE	SWINE	SHEEP
1900.....	18,108,666	69,335,832	64,686,155	61,735,014
1910.....	21,795,770	63,842,648	59,473,636	52,838,748
	3,687,104 Increase	5,493,184 Decrease	5,212,519 Decrease	8,896,266 Decrease

The per capita production in many staples has fallen rapidly or remained stationary. The production of all meats fell from 248.2 pounds per capita in 1899 to 219.6 in 1915. During the same period the production of milk fell from 95.6 gallons to 75.5 gallons; of cereals from 43.9 bushels to 40.2; and potatoes from 3.6 bushels to 3.5 bushels.

During the sixteen years prior to the war the per capita production of food was diminishing, as was the gross annual output.

These conditions are not confined to any section of the country. Farms are being aban-

done, tenancy increasing, and the farmer is finding it increasingly difficult to make a living.

Added to other causes, the land is being exhausted. Its early fertility is passing. This is true in the wheat belts of the Northwest, which a few years ago were held to be capable of producing for a long period of time without fertilization.

These conditions must be faced in connection with the suggestions for the return of the soldier to the land. For no matter what the generosity of the government may be, the soldier will not go to the land or remain there if he cannot make a living. The first task is to make farming a profitable profession. And this involves a new kind of farming.