

CHAPTER V

THE FARM COLONY

The farm life of little Denmark and the farm colonies of distant Australia suggest the kind of life we should offer to the soldier. It should be the kind of life we ourselves would be willing to go to after we have exhausted the hope and allurements of the city. It should appeal to the teacher, to the professional man, to the worker.

It should make provision for as many of the comforts and amenities of life as possible. There should be education and recreation. There should be short cuts to economies, and an end of the waste involved in the present individualistic way of doing things. Expert aid and assistance should be at hand, as well as protection by the government from usury, speculation, and middlemen. In other words, the farm colony should be as like modern industry as possible.

The farm colony contemplates an organization like the garden village of England. It con-

templates a ready-made farm all in order for working, rather than a tract of unbroken land or cut-over forests many miles from civilization. It contemplates co-operative organization as well, and a well-ordered community life.

Just as housing reformers in England, Germany and America worked for years for better houses through the control of private builders, and finally saw their dreams more than realized by the garden village, so the wasteful economic environment of the whole agricultural organization will be swept away and a new type of farming offered by the farm colony.

Socializing Farming.

The farm colony is in effect a proposal to socialize agriculture, to create conditions that will make farming easy and attractive. It aims to free the farmer from the many economic and social limitations under which he labors by reason of the fact that he acts alone. The underlying idea is group organization as opposed to individual lack of organization.

The farmer is almost the only industrial type that works alone. He is not organized for the protection of his interests. He has not

even the protection which the worker in the city enjoys.

The farm colony means community provision for the comforts and amenities of life through such services as are possible only when people live together. Education and recreation can be provided. Water, electric light and power, good roads, co-operation of all kinds can be supplied. The unit remains the individual farm, but the centre of the farmer's life is the community. Each resident owns his house, a barn and a piece of land large enough for an unaided man to cultivate. The colonist is equipped with sufficient capital to carry him over a season, together with some cattle, hogs, and farm-machinery.

The soldier farmer would start as does a small shopkeeper ready for business.

The colony should have some of the charm of the old villages of England, of the new housing communities erected by the United States Shipping Board and the Department of Labor. It should be organized so that agriculture will not be merely labor for the sake of producing enough wherewith to live. We have not, in the old order, thought of the farmer, of his wife, of

his family, of life itself. We have thought rather of the amount of land a man could own, of the amount of wealth he could produce. Even our agricultural colleges have thought but little of the possibilities of the farm and the joys which might come to a man from rational contact with nature.

The Size of the Colony.

The colony should be large enough to be self-contained. The population should be from 100 to 500 families. It should provide as many of the advantages of city life as possible, not educational and recreational alone, but economic advantages as well. Division of labor, and with it increased production, is only possible where men live close together. Men can work together in the breaking of their land, the bringing of it under cultivation, the building of houses, and the carrying forward of their common undertakings. All this is impossible to the isolated farmer. He works at a disadvantage because of his isolation.

A community of this size can have a common supply of water, of electric light, of power. It can join together for transportation and

marketing, for the buying of its supplies. Education, too, is possible in a colony of this size. There can be graded schools. Substantial schoolhouses can be erected, which can be made to serve as the town hall, the movie theatre, the place of recreation, and the centre of social amenities. All this is possible in a colony of from 100 to 500 families with a total population of from 400 to 2,000 people.

There would be need for carpenters, mechanics, storekeepers, teachers. There would be crafts of various kinds for disabled soldiers. Possibly retired persons would choose the colony as a home.

The colonies should be close by markets. They should be tributary to the great industrial centres. The waste in transportation, in the loss of perishable food, in the buying of supplies, in farming on distant development projects in the far West or South would be far more than offset by the economies which would come from locations within easy access to the existing markets. We are thinking not only of putting the soldier on the land but of offering him a generous kind of life.