

BACK TO THE FARM.

UNCLE SAM PREPARES FOR HIS SOLDIERS.

By HON. FRANKLIN K. LANE,
(Secretary of the Interior.)

"The men who have offered their lives for democracy need not fear about a job when they return home. This is a big order, but I believe we can make good. Already the government has plans under way which will insure for every man an opportunity to work at good wages on his return.

"No one can tell how many of the old places will be ready and waiting for the soldiers and sailors when they come home; but no matter how many there may be there is work to be done in the making of America upon which they can be used with profit to themselves and to the country.

"They have been doing a destructive job, and doing it well, to the pride and glory of our country. When they come back to us they can do a constructive job in the reclaiming of our lands and in the building of homes in the United States, for themselves.

"All over the United States there are quantities of lands that are capable of producing cotton, corn, wheat and fruit, which are out of use. Altogether there are perhaps 250,000,000 acres of such lands that in two or three years by scientific drainage or by irrigation or by stumping could be converted into first-class farms.

"Here, for instance, are some of the figures showing the amount of land in the South along the rivers and the coast that can be made into farm homes by the expenditure of a little money and a little labor:

State:	Acres:
Alabama	14,785,000
Arkansas	13,893,000
Florida	10,109,000
Georgia	20,141,000
Kentucky	3,222,000
Louisiana	11,877,000
Mississippi	13,203,000
Missouri	6,900,000
North Carolina	2,745,000
South Carolina	6,994,000
Tennessee	7,833,000
Texas	12,936,000
Virginia	9,929,000
West Virginia	4,634,000

"In the far West, in the arid country along the Colorado river in Arizona, along the Snake in Idaho, the North Platte in Wyoming and Colorado, and near the great rivers of the West, there are millions of acres of lands that can be irrigated; while in the South and in the Northwest there are more than 1,000,000,000 acres of land that have been logged off but which are lying idle today.

"The plan which I have presented to Congress means that we shall put this land to use. That is where the country gains. It means that it shall be put into condition by the soldiers after they have been mustered out. That is where the soldier gains.

"Every man who has been in the ranks of the army or the navy shall have an opportunity to go on to one of these projects and have a job at the current rate of wages in building a dam or a ditch or leveling land or pulling up stumps, building dikes, clearing land, building houses or roads or fences; and that this shall be done in accordance with the plans which I hope the government will authorize us to make within the next few months.

"This means that the boy goes back home for a time, meets his people, and then is given a chance to take a place in one of the great camps that will be formed for the reclamation of some of this unused land.

"He gets his wages. Out of these he will pay a certain amount for his board, save enough in a year and a half of two years while he is working to pay a first installment on a farm anywhere—North, South or West, and have that as his own. It will be a farm that will be prepared—not a piece of wild land, but a farm in a settlement which has its roads already built. It will be a farm already surveyed, fenced, a house and a barn built, the land cleared, so that a man can move in his furniture and begin life at once.

"These farms shall be located upon lands which the Department of Agriculture will approve as suitable for raising certain crops. They will be connected with the railroad, if they are not immediately on it, by good roads. They will have centers, little towns already planned with a good schoolhouse up and ready for the teacher. They will be chosen with

reference to the marketing of the produce that will be produced upon them, and they will have administrative agents of the Government who will be advisers as to the methods of farming and marketing.

"In sort, each man can have a job, the Government advancing the capital, and out of the combination of his own labor and the Government's capital he can be given an independent living.

"But this is not to be done in the slightest bit as a matter of charity, nor is any man to be coerced, but taking up the work. It is an opportunity which the Government out of appreciation for the fine service rendered by its boys gives to them. They will pay back the money with interest, but they can pay it back over a period of 40 years.

"We are spending \$50,000,000 a day in fighting the Boches' and surely we can afford to spend a few days' war outgo in setting up for life the men who whip the Boche. We are planning the reconstruction of the men who come back sightless, armless, legless. They will be in our continuing care. But the men who come back able for work will not ask or expect that they be given anything more than a fresh chance in the world. And that chance they ought to have.

"It will be a profitable arrangement all around. The money will be advanced by the people. It will be returned by those who take the farms. The boy from Boston or New York or Chicago, who never has had a chance at a life out of doors but who has had land hunger in his soul will be able to realize his dream.

"Kipling wrote a poem after the Boer War about the man who had come back from South Africa and been given a job as a gardener. Into his nature had come the love of the big out of doors, and he could not reconcile himself to the narrow life that had been his before the war.

"I expect hundreds of thousands of city-bred fellows will have this desire for an independent, out-of-door life, and there are already a million men in our army who come off the farms, many of whom will never have a chance to own a farm unless there is some such plan as this.

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