

# "BACK TO THE FARM"

## II.—Restoring the Balance. Back to the Land.

By C. V. GREGORY.

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WE have seen how the high cost of the necessities of life and of foodstuffs particularly is the direct result of the downward trend of population. The same cause is responsible for the terrible congestion of population in some parts of the great cities, with the attendant disease and misery. Such conditions are deplorable, the mere so because they are unnecessary. There is enough food in the world for all, enough shelter for all and enough room for all. Men will come to learn—indeed, they are already learning—that they are paying too high a price



A COMFORTABLE FARM HOME.

For the privilege of living in the city. The settling of the tide of population toward the city began when the city possessed some real advantages that were not found in the country. Today this condition is reversed. The current still flows cityward only because of habit. There is a tremendous amount of inertia to be overcome before the direction of the flow of human beings will be reversed, but the day of "about face" is coming.

You may travel for hundreds of miles through the west, where broad arable fields stretch out on every side, with a population of not more than four to the square mile. Even in the fertile Mississippi valley there are but twenty-five people located on each square mile. In the east the country population is more dense, but here there are thousands of quarter sections and eighty acre tracts of land so fertile that ten acres properly tilled mean prosperity.

Contrast this with New York city, with 12,578 people to the square mile, or Chicago, with 11,448. The cities boast of their size and greet each added thousand enthusiastically. As well might a sardine can ask to be packed more tightly. The city is calling for men that it does not need, for which it has no work at living wages and no room without crowding some one else a little closer.

The country is calling for men—calling with the voice of opportunity. There is room for all and to spare. There is a good living for all and a surplus besides. The decentralization of the cities, the movement to the country, means saner, cleaner living. There is less of strife and sordid selfishness out in the open country, where the grass is green and the twitter of song birds replaces the city's din. Children raised in the hayfields make the men of brains and brawn for which the world is calling. Out in the country it is possible for every man to have a home. The humblest laborer can be covered at night by his own cottage roof. The future of the nation depends upon the preservation of a pure and healthy home life, and nowhere can this be so surely attained as in the country.

A higher standard of living is possible to the man in the country. He can build a house for the price of two or three years' rent in the city. He can have fresh vegetables and fresh meat and fresh eggs on the farm that make the canned and cold storage products of the city a disagreeable memory. Forty cent eggs mean doing without to the average city dweller. To the countryman with a small flock of poultry they mean prosperity. The man with his own cow doesn't complain of the high cost of milk and butter, for grass is always cheap.

In the country the everlasting struggle to keep up appearances is not felt so keenly as in the city. The useless extravagance that makes the bill for clothes the heaviest drain on the city man's pocketbook is lacking. Men and women are taken more for what they are worth and less for what they seem to be. The man who lives beyond his income in an effort to appear more than he really is is looked upon with disapproval. In the country the standard of living as it applies to the real things—food, clothing, shelter, books and papers—can be maintained much higher than it can on an equal sized income in the city. The temptations to reckless extravagance are much less, and the margin for saving is consequently much greater.

From the standpoint of the average individual and for a great many who are above the average country life at present is much more desirable in almost every way than city life. Some

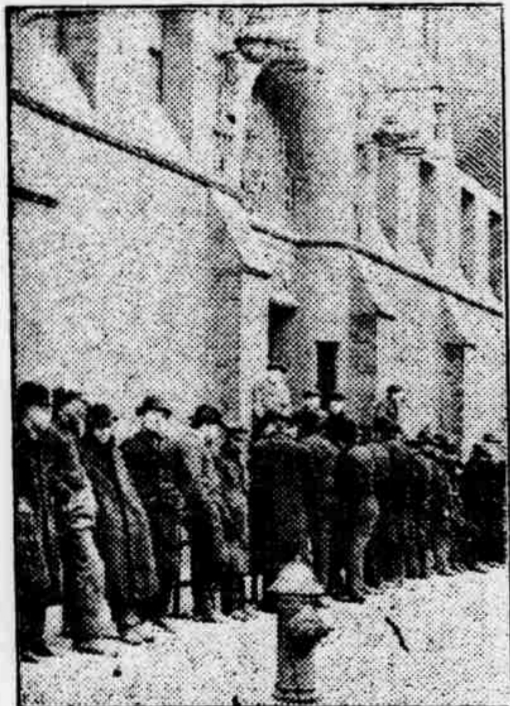
of the more specific advantages will be taken up in later articles. From the standpoint of the nation an increase in the number of people who till the soil or who live close to it is absolutely necessary. We might find temporary relief by letting down our tariff barriers to the wheat of Canada and the cattle of Argentina, but such relief would be only temporary. The inflow of cheaper meat and bread would but accelerate the growth of the cities. When the limit of the production of Canada and South America was reached we would face another crisis of high prices, this time much more serious than we are undergoing at present. The only way the price level can be permanently adjusted and lasting prosperity assured is by increasing the proportion of country dwellers.

At present there are too many drones in the hives of industry. The unearned increment, the rapid rise in real estate values for which community growth is responsible, has placed hundreds of thousands of people where they can live from the proceeds of rents—live without working. They are granted a perpetual tax upon the industry of others—on the necessity of people to live. Legislation that will put a heavy tax on this unearned increment will in a large measure right this wrong and force the property owners into productive labor. The decentralizing of the cities will force down the abnormally high rents and help to thin the ranks of the people whom excessive rents have allowed to remain in idleness.

Aside from the people who do not work, there is a vast army of non-producers who are supported by the men who work at productive labor. Our system of getting goods from producer to consumer is needlessly expensive and cumbersome. There are too many middlemen on the way, who through custom have come to think they have a divine right to an easily earned share of the consumer's dollar. Much of this awkward system of distribution has been made necessary by the concentration of the manufacturing industries in large cities and by the location of these cities without reference to the markets for their manufactured goods or the source of their food supply. It has been estimated that if Philadelphia were located close to its food supply the cost of living in that city would be reduced 20 per cent.

The time has come for a radical re-adjustment of the system of distribution. The consumer and the producer must be brought closer together and a large share of the energy wasted in duplication and rehandling of products turned into productive labor. As an example, there are nearly 100,000 commercial travelers in this country. These men are well fed and well paid. The cost of selling goods through them is enormous. The consumer pays this cost in increased prices. The plan of selling all sorts of goods in small quantities by personal solicitors is a remnant of the old days of cutthroat competition. It has little, if any, place in modern business. Today business has been put on a scientific basis. Consolidation is the keyword of efficiency. Consolidation has reached its highest development in manufacture. Transportation is not far behind it. It is time that competition—the kind of competition that fosters inefficiency, duplication and excessive cost—is eliminated from the unproductive industries.

In the very nature of the case there must always be a class of unproduc-



THE "BREAD LINE" IN NEW YORK.

tive workers. It is for the best good of the nation to limit this class as much as possible.

The future prosperity of America, then, depends upon the decentralization of the cities. Large cities are economically wasteful, and they will have to go. The manufacturing cities of the future will be located with reference to food supply as well as with reference to the market for their products. In recent years the farmers of the hog raising districts of Iowa are coming more and more to ship their hogs to local packing houses for slaughter, thus eliminating the long freight haul to Chicago. A plan is under way to establish a terminal elevator at Cedar Rapids, where the bulk of the Iowa grain can be cleaned and graded and shipped direct to the consumer. In this way the toll of Chicago, with its heavy terminal charges and its army of middlemen, will be almost entirely eliminated.

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Ethel—Jack really won Maud by hardness and coldness. Elsie—What do you mean? Ethel—Diamonds and ice cream.—Boston Transcript.

One of the chief factors in the way of this enterprise and many others of like nature is the discriminatory freight rates which the railroads give to the large cities. But this is a matter that will be remedied in time. The era of the open country and the country town is dawning. The great city has its place, a place which it will continue to hold, but it cannot be the dominating force in America. It can it must no longer attract the power of young manhood and young womanhood from the country districts.  
(To be continued.)

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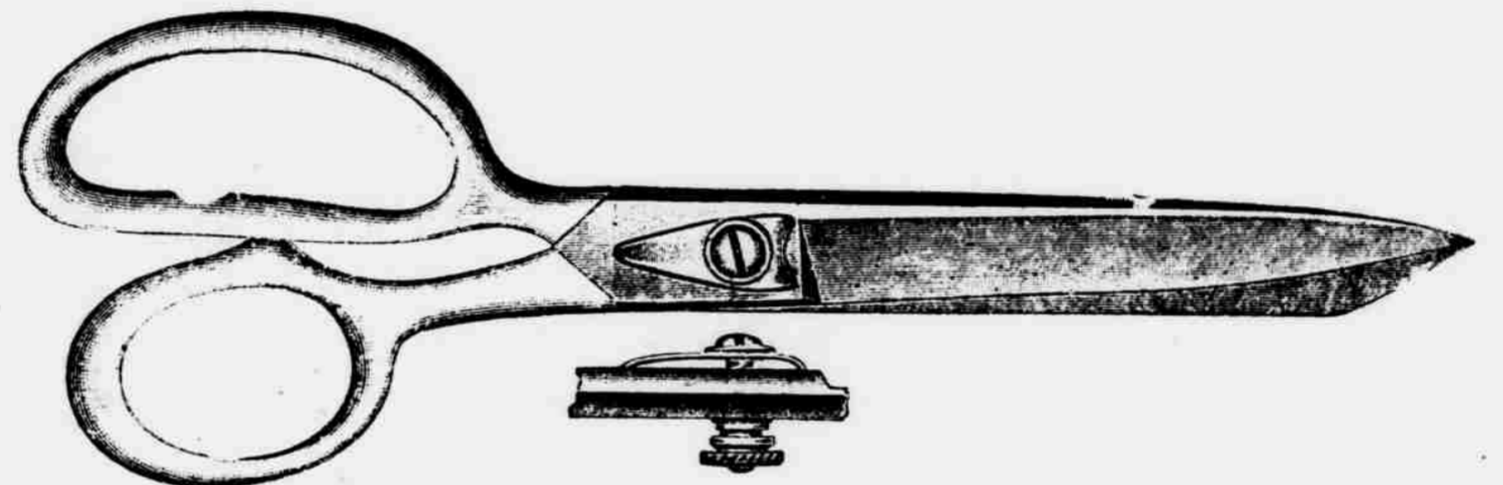
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