

OUR HOME TOWN.
A Department Devoted to Village Betterment.
RICHARD HAMILTON BYRD.

The editor of this department desires to keep in touch with the active members of Civic and Local Improvement Associations, and every one interested in the improvement and the beautifying of private lawns and public parks?

What is being done in your town to encourage small industries and for home employment? What is doing along the lines of street improvement and the beautifying of private lawns and public parks?

Are your local merchants receiving the support of the local trade? Experience, plans and suggestions will be welcomed by the editor of this department and so far as possible given place in these columns.

THE INDEPENDENT TOWN.

Make Each Rural Center Dependent Upon Itself and Its Own Resources.

There has lately developed a strong sentiment looking to the improvement of the home town—making each community, as much as possible, dependent upon itself and its own resources and those of its surrounding country, and independent of the great centres which are constantly striving to secure a portion of the local wealth. This local self-sufficiency may be fostered by an individual and co-operative determination to bring the town up to its highest possible plane of comfort, general usefulness and beauty to its residents. This may be described as a movement for civic improvement. The accumulation of considerable wealth in many American villages and towns, during the last ten or twenty years, the development of popular education and the increase of leisure, has given an opportunity for the performance of public duties, such as had not seemed to exist to the young man or woman of the former generation, who, in the effort to secure a livelihood and establish a home had given little thought to the duties of citizenship and social responsibilities. It is only within a comparatively few years that "nature study" has entered into any of the public-school work, or even manual training, while there are many who yet think that such institutions as gymnasiums, baths, playgrounds, and even vacation schools and free lectures are unnecessary time-consumers for the young.

Nevertheless the general movement for a better education along rural lines and for backyard and street improvement, and the general betterment of the village and town is rapidly increasing.

As an instance of this, even in such a large city as St. Louis, girls and boys are given practical instruction in gardening, through the Junior School of Horticulture of the Missouri Botanical Gardens. The children are permitted to sell their own products—a decided stimulus to their efforts—and in this way many of them earn considerable pocket money for vacation time. This school has been in operation for a number of years and is of great value to the citizens as well as to the children of the city, the latter of whom would otherwise know practically nothing of nature as country children know it.

Even in Texas the school garden and town improvement idea has made headway, although there has been greater difficulty in obtaining popular approval and support, possibly, than in any other section of the country, owing to the fact, perhaps, that the Lone Star State has vast areas of unoccupied land, and to the fact that the influential majority has been but a short time removed from the cattle

THE AGRICULTURAL HIGHSCHOOL.

Successful Examples Described by Crosby of Department of Agriculture of Local Improvement Through Rural Education.

In the new Year Book of the Department of Agriculture, just issued, is a description by D. J. Crosby, of the office of Experiment Stations, which shows, in a number of instances, what splendid results are being attained through the introduction of common sense agricultural studies in some of the country village schools, and how they directly affect and benefit their home towns. There is, what appears to be, an almost ideal Pennsylvania village high school, which the writer visited. He describes what he saw:

In Erie County, Pa., surrounded by a good general farming and dairy country, is the village of Waterford, on the outskirts of which is the site of Fort le Boeuf, of French and Indian war fame. At Waterford the first school in Erie County was established in 1801, and here as far back as 1822 was erected a stone academy building, which is used to-day as the main part of the high-school building. The township of Waterford has a population of 1,400 and about one half reside in the borough of Waterford. The borough has its own elementary school, but the high school is supported and controlled jointly by the borough and township.

This high school, with its three teachers and three courses of study (language, scientific, and agricultural), has an enrollment of 80 pupils, and 25 of these are in the agricultural course. This course includes agriculture, five hours a week for four years. The work of the first year is devoted to a study of plant life—germination, plant growth, plant food, reproduction, propagation, transplanting, pruning, and use of plants; the second year to a study of field, orchard, and garden crops; the third year to domestic animals, dairying, and soil physics, and the fourth year to the chemistry of soils and of plant and animal life. Text books are used in the classrooms; a small library of agricultural reference books, reports and bulletins of this Department and experiment stations, and agricultural papers contributed by the publishers is in almost constant use, and lectures on agricultural subjects are given before the class and before the whole school by the instructor in agriculture, who is an agricultural college graduate. But the feature of instruction which chiefly distinguishes this agricultural course from the ordinary high school course is the prominence given to the laboratory work and the outdoor practice. For the laboratory work there is no elaborate apparatus. The pupils make much of their own apparatus, furnish their own reagent bottles, and moreover use them. In the plant-life course the pupils study not elaborate and carefully prepared drawings, but

It had been organized only three or four weeks, and yet the interest manifested and the readiness with which the boys and girls described the best type, the dairy type, and various breeds of cattle, the mutton and wool types of sheep, the principal breeds of draft horses, and some of the standard-bred roadsters and trotters, were indeed surprising. At the close of the recitation the class was taken to a barn in the village where several fine roadsters were owned. The owner was not at home, but the teacher had standing permission to take the horses to examine them. A fine Hambletonian mare was led into the yard and examined critically by the pupils and criticised by them, the different points being brought out by skillful questioning on the part of the teacher.

From this place the class went to a livery barn where a splendid black Percheron stallion was stabled for the day. A member of the class had discovered the horse as he was being driven in from another town 14 miles away, and following the driver to the livery stable. In much the same way the local butcher is the instructor in the high school. The class studying the best type of cattle, or the mutton sheep, or the different classes of swine is taken to the butcher shop and given a demonstration lesson on cuts and their relative values, which of the breeds are apt to produce the better cuts, which the better quality, and so on.

Thus this little village high school, though it pays only \$2,250 a year in

OPPORTUNITIES AT HOME.
PERNICIOUS PHILOSOPHY OF JOHN J. INGALLS' FAMOUS POEM.—HOW HOME OPPORTUNITIES HAVE BEEN OVERLOOKED.

Solution of the Labor Question to be Found in the Development of Home Industries.

Many a beautiful thing is pernicious in its effect. There is no telling how many men have given up a good fighting chance and have literally laid down in harness because they had absorbed from John J. Ingalls' poem OPPORTUNITY the idea that they had had their chance, and that for them at least opportunity would not return. Here is the poem:

"Master of human destinies am I,
Fame, love and fortune on my footsteps wait.
Cities and fields I walk. I penetrate
Deserts and seas remote. And passing by
Hovel and mart and palace, soon or late
I knock unbidden once at every gate.
If sleeping wake; if feasting rise before
I turn away; it is the hour of fate.
And those who follow me reach every state
Mortals desire and conquer every foe
Save death; but those who doubt or hesitate,
Condemned to failure, penury and woe,
Seek me in vain, and uselessly implore:
I answer not, and I return no more."

A beautiful poem—yes, but pernicious as is the theory of fate or the twin tenet of predestination. If opportunity comes but once, where is the use of striving?

President James of the University of Illinois during the recent commencement exercises took occasion to refer to the philosophy of Ingalls' famous poem. "It is false and misleading," said Mr. James. "It is not a single opportunity which comes to a man; it is a train. It is a never-ending procession, some small, some large, growing perhaps more small and more insignificant as the years flow on, but ever and always opportunities too numerous, too great, and too large for us to utilize fully."

This is good, helpful optimism. There never was a time when opportunities of all shapes, sizes and colors belabored up on every corner as they do to-day. And they are not confined to any particular country or locality. They are waiting everywhere. Under the rapidly changing industrial and economical conditions they are springing up in odd and out-of-the-way places. Old settlements—old villages, moss-grown and for years silent as the cemetery that clings to their skirts, are finding new youth in the revival of occupations and simple industries which twenty years ago were deemed impossible. The abandoned farms of New England—the farms that were left tenanted because it was thought that the only opportunities for success were to be found in the West—are receiving new leases of life.

BE A HOMECROFTER
Learn by Doing. Work Together.
Give every Man a Chance.

THE SLOGAN OF THE HOMECROFTERS IS
"Learn by Doing—Work Together—Give Every Man a Chance."
"Every Child in a Garden—Every Mother in a Homecroft, and Individual, Industrial Independence for Every Worker in a Home of his Own on the Land."

"A little craft we owned—a plot of earth,
A garden stored with peas and mint and thyme,
And flowers for posies, oft on Sunday morn,
Brucked while the church bells rang their earliest chimes."
—Wordsworth.

"The Citizen standing in the doorway of his home—contented on 'his threshold, his family gathered about his hearthstone, while the evening of a well spent day closes in, and sounds that are dearest—he shall save the Republic when the drum-tap is futile and the barracks are exhausted."
—Henry W. Grady.



THE FIRST BOOK OF THE HOMECROFTERS

HAS JUST BEEN PUBLISHED AND AMONG ITS CONTENTS ARE THE FOLLOWING ARTICLES OF ABSORBING INTEREST

The Brotherhood of Man
Charity that is Everlasting
The Secret of Nippon's Power
Lesson of a Great Calamity
The Sign of a Thought

Copies of "THE FIRST BOOK OF THE HOMECROFTERS" can be obtained by sending twelve two-cent stamps with your name and address (carefully and plainly written) to The Homecroft Guild of the Tailor, 143 Main St., Watertown, Mass.

This book is the first of a series of articles on the Platform of the Homecroft Movement. The following is taken therefrom:

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND HOMES ON THE LAND.

That children shall be taught gardening and homecraft in the public schools, and that Homecraft and Garden Training Schools be established by county, municipal, state, and national governments, where every boy and every man of work who wants employment where he can gain that knowledge, can learn how to make a home and till the soil and get his living straight from the ground, and where every boy would be taught that his first aim in life should be to get a home of his own on the land.

BUILD HOMECROFTS AS NATIONAL SAFEGUARDS.

That the New Zealand system of Land Taxation and Land Purchase and Subdivision, and Advances to Settlers Act, shall be adopted in this country, to the end that land shall be subdivided into small holdings in the hands of those who will till it for a livelihood, and labor find occupation in the creation of homecrafts, which will be perpetual safeguards against the political evils and social discontent resulting from the overgrowth of cities and the sufferings of unemployed wage-earners.

PROTECTION FOR THE AMERICAN HOMECROFTER.

That Rural Settlement shall be encouraged and the principle of Protection for the American Wage-worker and his Home applied directly to the Home by the Exemption from Taxation of all improvements upon, and also of all personal property, not exceeding \$2,500 in value, used on and in connection with, every Homecroft or Rural Homestead of not more than ten acres in extent, which the owner occupies as a permanent home and cultivates with his own labor and so provides therefrom all or part of the support for a family.

ENLARGEMENT OF AREA AVAILABLE FOR HOME-MAKING.

That the National Government, as part of a comprehensive national policy of internal improvements for river control and regulation, and for the enlargement to the utmost possible extent of the area of the country available for agriculture and Homes on the Land, and for the protection of those Homes from either flood or drought, shall build not only levees and revetments where needed, and drainage works for the reclamation of swamp and overflowed lands, but shall also preserve existing forests, reforest denuded areas, plant new forests, and build the great reservoirs and other engineering works necessary to safeguard against overflow and save for beneficial use the flood waters that now run to waste.



WATERFORD HIGH SCHOOL CLASS JUDGING A HAMBLETONIAN MARE

salaries and only \$370 for other expenses, has a faculty made up of numerous specialists and an equipment of illustrative material such as few technical high schools could afford. And the pupils are being trained in the "elements of failure and success," not only on "all the farms of the neighborhood" but in the village shops and markets. This is training for efficiency. It is training for culture, for breadth of view, and for sympathy with all that goes to make up the life of the community.

Homecroft and Craft.

The "homecroft" idea, referred to by George H. Maxwell in his address before the Biennial Convention of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, is closely allied to the "home arts and crafts" propaganda, in which so many, in and out of the federation, are interested. The homecroft, owning his home and a little patch of ground—an acre or two, more or less—is of all persons the one most likely to be interested in home crafts—little lines of manufacture, which, added to the produce of his ground, may afford a support to his family, either constantly or as a substitute for wage-earning employment when some great shop or factory may be suspended. Aided, perhaps, by a little gas engine or electric motor, he may have a choice of an infinite variety of crafts, in which he and his family may profitably engage. Here is a combination which seems to offer relief from the demoralizing and dehumanizing conditions of our present factory system; also a mode of multiplying the number of those citizens, independent of both landlord and employer, who are the backbone of American democracy. Give us the homecroft and the craftsman in one!

Keep Politics Out.

Every public-minded citizen should make it known that he is absolutely opposed to partisan, political control in the management of public parks, roadside improvement, playgrounds and like town betterments. Nothing can be more detrimental to such development than the interference of politics. Party responsibility, as a remedy for municipal mismanagement, has been proved a "delusion and a snare." Such methods have raised to important places bigoted, incompetent and sometimes dishonest men, who, by reason of their weaknesses or mismanagement, have disgraced what should be honorable and respected positions. Our citizens should insist absolutely that no political considerations be allowed to interfere with park affairs, and should visit with marked censure and disapproval all city officials who prostitute their trusts for mere political gain.

Fresh Air Playgrounds.

American cities are far behind European cities in making provision for public parks, especially in providing for the instruction and amusement of children in them. In modern municipal equipment in Europe, much provision is made for the instruction and amusement of children, and in most modernized European cities large sums of money have been expended in procuring open spaces for them in districts of congested population.

ment exercises took occasion to refer to the philosophy of Ingalls' famous poem. "It is false and misleading," said Mr. James. "It is not a single opportunity which comes to a man; it is a train. It is a never-ending procession, some small, some large, growing perhaps more small and more insignificant as the years flow on, but ever and always opportunities too numerous, too great, and too large for us to utilize fully."

PENDULUM IS SWINGING BACK.

For a full half century the American people have been money-mad. Everything has been sacrificed to the one idea of accumulation. The dollar sign became the sole badge of honor, and a man's success was measured not by what he made of himself, not by what he accomplished for his fellows or the world at large, but by the size of his pile.

This standard of success has warped the imagination of the whole people. The merchant and professional man bend every energy to the piling up of gold bricks. And the farmer, not to be outdone, lies awake nights thinking how he may get more land. He has now more than he can till, but the land lust has seized him and home comforts and a quiet life are sold in the market in order that the influence may be removed.

This has been the condition for many years, and it requires careful observation to detect any change. But a reaction has set in. The pendulum is swinging back. A growing sentiment in favor of a moderate success, a quiet life and home surroundings is apparent. With this comes a desire to get back to original principles; to abandon the cities and seek the beautiful life of the farm and the village.

The growth of our cities has been abnormal—the direct result of abnormal transportation conditions. "To him that hath shall be given, and to him that hath not even that which he hath shall be taken away," has been the working policy of modern commercial transportation companies. The small town has been sacrificed to the city. This was the natural result of competition. In centers where numerous railroads meet, low rates are given to both the in-going and out-going freight, but where there is but one road, the traffic is taxed all that it will bear. This condition has had a

OPPORTUNITIES AT HOME.

tendency to draw the manufacturing interests into the great transportation centers, the tide has flowed strongly toward the city and the small town has had a hard struggle to retain its own.

In this respect, however, the pendulum is swinging back also. The conditions surrounding the workmen in the cities, the lack of home life and the presence of accumulated vice, have demonstrated to the satisfaction of every one that we will never reach our highest industrial success until the average workman is placed where he can have fresh air, a family, and a home for that family. The small town, everything else being equal, is the place for industries. A man with a home, and who spends his evenings with his family beautifying that home, is not only a better citizen, but he is worth infinitely more to his employer than his brother laborer who has no interest other than that he finds with his saloon companions and in ward politics.

When the reformers have settled the industrial labor questions they will not be calling for less hours of work, but a distribution of the hours of work. Six hours in the factory or the mine and the balance at home working on an acre of ground may be made a solution of the whole question between labor and capital. Any man with a home and one acre of the earth's surface that he can call his own, and with employment at fair wages during five or six hours of the day, need never fear want for himself or his family. Under such conditions his family can be reared and educated and live under the advantages of a wholesome social atmosphere.



CLASS IN LIVE STOCK JUDGING CATTLE AND PLANTLIFE at Waterford, Pa., High School.

range business. However, the more centralized portion of society has taken the matter up, and it is stated that the most public-spirited citizens of the towns and cities, together with the progressive teachers have made school gardens and rural education a success during the past two seasons and have aroused such enthusiasm among the pupils, that wherever it has been tried, the school garden has become a fixture.

Let your child plant his own garden, gather his own harvest of fruit and flowers, learn through his own small experience something of the influence of the sun, dew and rain, and gain thereby a remote presentiment of the reciprocal energies of nature and a reverent feeling for the divine life and law expressed in nature. The child is a plant, a vegetable, and must live out of doors, or nearly so, as conditions will permit. Froebel realized that health was the basis and test of all our energies, and that this was one of the morning stars of the new hygiene.

the plants themselves with reference to their life history and economic uses. For the outdoor praeitium the school is unfortunate in having neither land nor domestic animals nor fowls, and yet it has a wealth of illustrative material all around it. Every good farm within a radius of 3 or 4 miles, nearly every barn and poultry yard in the village, the butcher shops, and the farm implement stores furnish costly illustrative material and extend vastly the teaching force of the high school. The farmers and owners of good live stock either bring their animals to the door of the school house to be studied by the class in agriculture or allow the class to go to their barns and fields for this purpose. It is said to be a rare thing for a good horse to come to the village and get away without being examined by the high school class in animal husbandry.

The writer was fortunate in being the guest of the school one day last October and in having an opportunity to listen to some of the recitations in agriculture. A class of 14 boys and 6 girls were studying animal industry.

(Continued on column 6)