

MILLIONS FOR DEFENCE; WHAT FOR FARMING?

By GILBERT McCLURG

Despite Bumper Crops and Other Evidences of Plenty, There Is One Big Business Which the United States Has Failed to Put On a Proper Footing, and That Is the Big Business of Nation-wide Agriculture.

IT IS self-evident that the city cannot exist without the farm and without railroads to transport food from the country. The city is a parasite, sucking the farm dry. But the farmer can thrive and grow fat, independent of the metropolis.

The farmer, George Washington, for instance, looked not to the town for the primal necessities of life. From his plantation the three primitive requisites of man—food, clothing, shelter—were easily obtained. George Washington the farmer razed trees for the building of houses; bred and fattened beef, sheep, pigs, chickens; grew vegetables and grains for his hospitable board; clipped and wove wool, picked and spun cotton for raiment—at Mount Vernon.

Washington voiced a slogan priceless not alone for the Americans of his generation, but for Americans of to-day, when he said: "How much more valuable to the undebauched mind is the task of making the most of the earth than any vainglory that can be acquired by ravaging it. It must be obvious to every man who considers the agriculture of this country and compares the produce of our lands with those of older countries how miserably defective we are in the management of them."

Not 1 per cent of the ten million people in and near by New York City have learned by personal visit and ocular demonstration of the country's fields of production, and of agricultural America at large. The lure of the city's wage scale has attracted moths to its candle of commerce and singed them for life.

IN ANOTHER FIFTY YEARS AMERICA MAY HAVE TO FEED 200,000,000 PEOPLE.

America has doubled its population within the last forty years, and during the next like period may be obliged to meet the needs of fully two hundred million people. But immigration lingers in the great centres and adds to the difficulties attending employment and production of food staples.

We should implant in the minds of the immigrant, the unemployed and of the oversupply in all lines of business and of the professions the call of the soil, and of farm opportunities and rewards throughout the nation. The farmer not only feeds the world but saves it, and to maintain the productivity of our fields is the ultimate problem of America and the foremost question confronting us.

In Cooper Union, under auspices of the People's Institute, the writer lectured recently on "The Invitation of the Soil," to an audience of newly arrived immigrants, laboring men and unemployed. It was a People's Forum and I was plied with questions. One questioner wanted to know if rich corporations and individuals had not stolen and gobbled up all the government's homestead land, and I replied that in Colorado alone there are six million acres of virgin soil yet to be entered by the homesteader, and twenty million acres in that state alone which may be had at less than \$10 an acre—which land is fertilized by potash, due to the decomposed granite of the mountains (which contain feldspar from which potash is obtained); phosphorus from the lava beds; gypsum from the ancient geysers; so



Waist Deep in a Sea of Wheat.

that the soil is wonderfully strong in minerals and fertile, and colored red ("Colorado") by iron, which gives to fruits and vegetables a rich color and flavor that other soils cannot surpass.

Years ago at a lecture in Cooper Union Horace Greeley presided and advised the young men present to "go West and grow up with the country." A pioneer trainload of immigrants from New York and New England, led by the lecturer, General Cameron, formed the first irrigation colony, at Greeley, Col. When they alighted from the train and stepped forth in the sage brush wilderness, devoid of habitation, the first immigrant inquired: "Where's the nearest farming land?" Another exclaimed: "Where are the wild raspberries we have heard so much about?" Another asked for the nearest hotel, and a fourth revengeful individual yelled: "Where's Cameron? Let's hang him!" But that sage brush land, which cost those pioneers only \$1.25 an acre, is to-day worth four hundred times as much and produces the best potatoes, sugar beets and raspberries of America. In gold and green of harvests is now printed the map once lettered "The Great American Desert."

THE IMMIGRANT CULTIVATES THE SOIL, BUT NOT AMERICA'S.

Thousands of foreign immigrants who have in a few years earned a modest competence in the United States have left our shores and gone back to Europe to invest their hoardings in land which they are cultivating. These immigrants had no opportunity to learn of the soil-wealth and farm invitations throughout America. They could not make long trips into the cotton, rice and cane growing districts of

the South; to the dairy, apple, hop and grape regions of New York State; or to the wheat, alfalfa and sugar beet fields of the Rocky Mountain region; or to the citrus fruit and nut

whole story of American farm methods. Agriculture in the most intelligent meaning of the term is something almost unknown in the United States.



Greeley Potatoes in Their Colorado Home.

growing industries of California or Arizona. They could not learn that Illinois and Iowa are the richest agricultural states of our Union, and that New York is but eighth in its yield of the eleven leading crops of the nation.

Less than five miles from a railroad and within sixty miles of New York City, land may be had at \$15 an acre. A steer turned out to graze there would earn seven times 6 per cent on that land cost, and New York is paying higher and higher prices for beef. The acting quartermaster general, at Washington, told the House Military Committee this spring that the cost of a soldier's ration had within a few months advanced more than 11 per cent. The family market basket soars on high—upborne on the war eagle's wings!

The farmer must thrive and be abroad in the land if the nation is to prosper. The uncultivated waste places must be tilled. Unless our lands yield increased produce, said James J. Hill shortly before his death, there will be no labor and no prosperity beyond mere self-support, and our population engaged in agriculture has dwindled to 33.2 per cent. All the rest must be supported on that narrowing foundation. Our increasing population, drawing upon a soil already much impoverished, turns food production from a resource into a problem. The rapid decline of our position as a producer of breadstuffs has been checked a little by the tremendous efforts made to induce a better agriculture and a more intelligent care of the soil. Our farm processes are still almost incredibly antique and unproductive. The yield per acre of wheat in Germany in 1912 was more than double that of the United States; that of rye nearly 80 per cent greater; of barley over 30 per cent; of oats nearly 50 per cent, and of potatoes only a little short of 100 per cent. Such returns from a soil cultivated long before Tacitus wrote, in a climate inferior to ours for grain production, tell the

America is importing millions of dollars' worth of herbs, roots, flowers and seeds, used in the drug trade, which she could easily and profitably grow at home. America boasts but one horticultural college for women, yet women and children might easily be taught to grow: Caraway seeds, of which we import nearly three million pounds annually, and which at wholesale bring 5 or 6 cents a pound; orris root, of which we import half a million pounds each year; golden seal, whose seeds are worth \$1.50 a pound; wormwood, capsicum, ginseng, peppermint, thyme, hoarhound, lavender, boneset, burdock, foxglove, cascara, belladonna, heliotrope, coriander, marshmallow and a host of other medicinal plants.

We mine wastefully, and in turning coal into coke Pennsylvania wastes nitrogen it needs to supply its agricultural fields. We waste more than 50 per cent of the wood in trees made into lumber in the process of cutting, sawing and manufacturing. For years tons of valuable fertilizer have been thrown away by the Columbia River salmon canning companies. Farmers of Corea, China and Japan have kept their lands fertilized while cultivated for four thousand years, but in New York, New England and Ohio farmers have worn out their lands, through neglect, in fifty years.

There is more gold in the United States today than ever before in any country in the world's history, chiefly because the farmer leads in maintenance of the nation; yet it is not assured that gold will remain here, through agricultural preparedness, nor is it guaranteed our future by farm efficiency and economy. We are the most wasteful of nations, partly because of our youth and partly because of our lack of training.

America has sent few experts to report to her farmers agricultural methods throughout the world. We have no agricultural geography. While our officers study European wars we re-

main wofully ignorant of twentieth century farming methods of foreign lands. Southern China grows two crops of rice annually, yet one suffices in Arkansas and Louisiana. Mongolians, on a smaller area, maintain a population five times larger than that of the United States. Chinese farmers for centuries have rotated leguminous crops, realizing these were essential to enduring soil fertility, yet it was not until 1888 that our Western scientists conceded that leguminous plants are mainly responsible for the maintenance of soil nitrogen—the most important of the minerals necessary for plant life.

Uncountable wealth of rich silt and organic matter for centuries has rushed unhindered down the Mississippi and other of our great rivers to the sea. Some day perhaps the vast tonnage of this wasteful plant food will be turned to account, correspondingly increasing the South's crop yields and fertilizing the sandy plains from Florida to the Mississippi—through canalization enriching the 50,000 square miles of the Gulf and Atlantic coastal plain.

MONTANA INDIANS LEARNED SOMETHING TO THEIR ADVANTAGE IN NEW YORK.

Elkanah Watson exhibited his merino sheep in Pittsfield, Mass., in 1807, and better wool and mutton were thereby introduced into New England. New York began its educational agricultural propaganda twelve years later. Nearly a century afterward New York City witnessed its first Agricultural Exposition and Land Show, in Madison Square Garden, in 1911. One of the results of this exposition was the discovery of the world's best wheat, grown



Guaranteed Mortgage-lifters, Pigs and Alfalfa.

Inasmuch as Soldiers' Rations Have Gone Up Eleven Per Cent in a Few Months, Agriculture May Soon Be Considered in Connection with Preparedness, and Then Possibly, "Something Will Be Done About It."

by Seager Wheeler, of Rosthern, Saskatchewan. Mr. Wheeler later won first prize for his wheat at the San Francisco exposition. His wheat has improved the wheat of the world. It was discovered at the New York Land Show, by comparison, that a silkier and glossier cotton is raised by irrigation methods in semi-arid regions than is possible to produce in the humid Southern States. Montana Indians brought by a Western railroad to see the New York Land Show, inspired by its sights, grew during the next year on their reservation twice the yields they had formerly secured per acre. The East learned from the West and South.

Why has Uncle Sam not planned a land and land products exposition—of all America? A nation is culpable if it does not advertise and exploit its land opportunities. Railroads set a better example. Why does not Uncle Sam create and maintain permanent agricultural expositions of all America, one in New York and one in Chicago? The people are to blame for Uncle Sam's indifference.

What is more important than a land show—a farming exposition of all America, under direction of our national government?

If we are to spend a billion dollars for military and naval preparedness let us wisely invest an additional one-twentieth of such sum for agricultural preparedness, which would mean as much for the nation as the display of a hundred battleships in the Hudson, or two hundred thousand khaki-uniformed men on parade. Let us not only prepare for defence but also for agricultural efficiency, since the farm is the base of our national pyramid of wealth. Uncle Sam can afford to establish a permanent, ocular demonstration of his lands and farm methods, comparing these with the rest of the world. We have failed to put on its proper footing the biggest of all big business—agriculture.

"THE ARMY AND NAVY FOR EVER," OF COURSE, BUT DON'T STOP THERE.

Surely Uncle Sam can afford this, for while our country covers less than 6 per cent of the earth's area and numbers about 5 per cent of the earth's population, it produces 76 per cent of all the corn grown in the world; 70 per cent of the world's cotton; 70 per cent of the world's oil; 59 per cent of all the copper; 43 per cent of the pig iron; 37 per cent of the world's coal; 35 per cent of its tobacco; 25 per cent of its silver; one-fourth of all its wheat; 21 per cent of all the gold, and contains more than a third of all the wealth of the civilized world. Uncle Sam's permanent agricultural exposition would be every man's exposition, for all have part in the earth, the mother, the true goddess of plenty.

Says a veteran railway builder: "The conservation of our land and its improvement to the highest point of productivity, promised by scientific intelligence and practical experiment, appear to be a first command of any political economy worthy of the name. Thus we may give new meaning to our future, new lustre to the ideal of a republic of living, federated states, shape anew the fortunes of the country and enlarge the borders of hope for all mankind."