

BELGIANS IN THE CORN BELT

Practical Way of Succoring Unfortunate Victims of War.

EMPLOYMENT AS FARM HELP

A Plan More Feasible Than Colonization—Experience in American Farm Methods the First Essential.

Referring to articles in The Bee in regard to bringing Belgian farmers onto Nebraska lands, let me say I am in full accord with this sentiment; in fact, I called the matter to the attention of the president of the Real Estate exchange some weeks ago. I am not, however, in sympathy with the suggestion to colonize these people. The Belgian peasant, ten miles from his domicile, feels farther from home than the American farmer 200 miles from his. Having for generations lived in the same spot, followed the same customs, and usually directed by someone whom he, at least, thinks his superior, with new surroundings and changed conditions, he is practically helpless. To colonize a band of these people—strangers to our soil, climate, crop conditions and language—would be an act of cruelty.

On the other hand, if these peasants could be scattered among the farmers of the corn belt, they would not only find ready employment at liberal wages from the start, but as soon as their experience justified it, would have no trouble in arranging to lease land, the rental of which would be about one-half of a reasonable interest charge on the selling price of the land. It is shown by report of recent investigation made by our federal authorities that the renter, with one-twelfth the amount of capital, is receiving more in return for his labor than the owner of the land. One without undergoing the hardships incident to an isolated colony, the Belgian immigrant, and in many localities the members of his family, would find employment at good wages, with good housing and plenty of food from the start, and would thus become the owner of an unencumbered farm sooner and more easily than if colonized on western lands as has been suggested, and, perhaps best of all, these people would become assimilated, and while their industry and thrift would by contagion benefit the community, they would be benefited by learning not only our language, but our customs, and thus become real American citizens.

Perils of Settlement En Masse.

The worst thing about immigration into this country during the last fifteen years has been the settling of foreigners en masse, as has been done in such places as Paterson, N. J.; Lynn, Fall River, Lawrence, etc. Assimilation under such conditions is impossible, and their failure to assimilate and become Americanized is causing constant trouble. Examples of this were had in recent labor troubles at Lawrence, Mass., the copper mines of Minnesota and the coal fields of Colorado. According to present statistics, it requires interpreters in from four to six languages at each place to translate orders given by the police, in their efforts to check rioting. Labor and other troubles will increase and multiply so long as these communities are unable to speak and understand our language, and hence unable to comprehend and appreciate our institutions. On the other hand, nothing is so sorely needed in this country today as more efficient labor upon the farms. Because of the lack of it, our farms in the best sections of the corn belt are not producing more than 60 per cent of their capacity. Price of foodstuffs has already reached a point that is almost prohibitive to certain classes. We cannot reasonably expect a permanent further advance in price of farm products. If, however, our farms can be made to produce 80 per cent instead of 60 per cent of capacity, we can afford to sell these products at lower prices and still make a profit. This can easily be done if competent labor can be secured. The fact that farm laborers in sufficient numbers are unavailable is not the only bad feature in the situation. Perhaps the worst of all is the low efficiency of those laborers. They are not all idle, but they lack experience, knowledge and interest in the work. They are not interested in doing it, temporarily. They do not intend to make agriculture a permanent vocation, but plan to return to their occupations as soon as conditions make it possible. Hence their efficiency is at the minimum. A successful farmer, or farm laborer, must be "to the manor born," grown near to the soil, be in love with nature that he not only enjoys God's outdoors in the sunshine, but even in storms; and counts it no isolation to be "near to nature's heart," nor a misfortune to be removed from great cities—those solitudes "where men build fires in which to burn their own souls."

Reduction of Rural Population.

Few people seem to realize the tremendous reduction in rural population in the best portions of the corn belt. A line drawn from the southeast corner of Madison county to the southwest corner of Red Willow county, Nebraska, will leave south and east of it only four counties which did not lose in rural population between the census of 1900 and the census of 1910. There was but a very small percentage of increase in these four—mostly truck gardeners and the like, near cities. If the comparison is made between the census of 1890 and that of 1910, the line above referred to would move much farther west. This unfortunate condition obtains to a much greater extent in Illinois, Iowa, and the other states. Few seem to realize what this constant reduction in the rural population means to the cities of the west, and especially to the development and permanent prosperity of Omaha, whose territory is more exclusively agricultural than that of any city in the country. A depression in agriculture is at once reflected by a corresponding depression in the business of Omaha. An expansion in agriculture makes for a corresponding growth in our city. The merchants tell us that one acre of soil in eastern Nebraska contains about the same amount of those elements indispensable to plant life and growth as three acres of the virgin soil of Illinois, Indiana or Ohio. We are not, as we should, drawing upon this almost limitless source of wealth lying at the gates of our city.

Shortage of Farm Labor.

What should be done, it seems to me, would be to have our immigration laws so amended that farm laborers should be exempt, the same as personal servants, teachers and other classes now are. This country is in greater need of farm laborers than of teachers. A virtuous citizenship cannot be developed out of an underfed population. If there is a fear that advantages might be taken of such a movement to make it an avenue through which to bring labor for other purposes, it would be easy to so frame the amendment that farmers or other organizations assisting these people to

MISS EVELYN MARSHAL, New York society girl, whom Marshall Field 3d, the \$90,000,000 heir and grandson of the late merchant prince of Chicago, is to marry. Friends of the young couple intimate that the good ship Lusitania played a prominent part in the romance, which developed last September, when they were frequently seen together on the promenade deck, in the ball room and the dining saloon.—Photo copyrighted by Hagelstein Bros.

come should be made responsible to the government for the cost of deportation, in case the contract is violated, or for any other reason the immigrant proves undesirable. Then with a further provision, that a contract for farm labor entered into, say for not less than three or more than five years, between the non-resident alien and a citizen of this country, should be binding upon both, and to avoid local prejudice or international complications, make controversies arising

out of such agreements adjudicable only in the federal courts. With such a law, I am sure there will be an abundance of farmers and others who will gladly assist these unfortunate people to homes among us. I have only words of commendation for those assisting in sending the Christmas ship and in the Red Cross work, not extending a helpful hand to these unfortunate peasants will confer a more lasting benefit than the former, and in relieving mental anguish and hunger, be almost as great a blessing as the latter in relieving physical suffering. A movement as above suggested is not an untried experiment. The Jewish societies in this country have for years been working along practically the same lines. The indigent brother taken from unfavorable environments in Europe, when landed on our shores, is taken charge of and given employment by some of his people at such wages as he can earn, until he becomes familiar with our language, customs, etc., and as soon as capable of caring for himself, is encouraged to do so. Thus thousands of these unfortunates have been taken from almost unendurable conditions in Europe, and enabled to secure homes here and make life worth living. At the same time, our country has been greatly benefited by these additions to its positive forces for development. I know of no better charity, nor one that has secured better practical results. I trust that every good citizen of Omaha may become interested in this movement. **WILLIAM STULL**, Natural.

A teacher asked her class to write an essay on London. Later she was surprised to read the following in one attempt: "The people of London are noted for their stupidity." The young author was asked how he got the idea. "Please, miss," was the reply, "I saw in the text book the population of London is very dense!"—San Antonio Gazette.



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Women's Work.

(Continued from Page Three.)

league, has been postponed. The regular meeting of the Wyea league will be held Thursday afternoon at the public library. Christmas stories, as well as those of Bible heroes, will be told under the leadership of Mrs. E. A. Holyoke. Miss Winifred Cole, Miss Lucy Duke and Miss Mary Krebe will tell stories.

Y. W. C. A. Notes.
Rev. Charles E. Cobhey will speak at the Sunday afternoon vesper service at 4:30. The soloist will be Mrs. Frank Wely. The service will be held in the auditorium of the association building on the second floor. Miss Vera Moore will be hostess at the social hour, which follows the regular meeting at 5:30.

On Tuesday evening at 8:15 will be the first membership entertainment of the year. Miss Edith Lucille Robbins of Lincoln will give a concert in the auditorium. This entertainment is free to all members of the Young Women's Christian association and admission will be on presentation of the membership card. If reserved seats are desired they can be had for 10 cents. The admission for those who are not members of the association will be 25 cents. In her program Miss Robbins includes a group of children's songs and also a series of Norwegian songs if the costumes of that country. The one she was in Norway studying the music of that country. Seats for the concert can be reserved at the main office of the association building.

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