RELATED THINGS
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THE SONG OF THE EARTH.

Bulkeley, Hunt, Willard, Hosmer, Merian, Flint,
Possessed the land which rendered to their toil
Hay, corn, roots, hemp, flax, apples, wool and wood.
Each of these landlords walked amidst his farm,
Saying, "'Tis mine, my children's and my name's.
How sweet the west wind sounds in my own trees!
How graceful climb those shadows on my hill!
I fancy these pure waters and the flags
Know me, as does my dog: we sympathize;
And, I affirm, my actions smack of the soil."

Where are these men? Asleep beneath their grounds:
And strangers, fond as they, their furrows plough.
Earth laughs in flowers, to see her boastful boys
Earth-proud, proud of the earth which is not theirs;
Who steer the plough, but cannot steer their feet
Clear of the grave.
They added ridge to valley, brook to pond,
And sighed for all that bounded their domain;
"This suits me for a pasture; that's my park;
We must have clay, lime, gravel, granite-ledge,
And misty lowland, where to go for peat.
The land is well,—lies fairly to the south.
'Tis good, when you have crossed the sea and back,
To find the sit-fast acres where you left them."

Ah! the hot owner sees not Death, who adds
Him to his land, a lump of mould the more.
Hear what the Earth says:—

Earth-Song.

"Mine and yours;
Mine, not yours.
Earth endures;
Stars abide—
Shine down in the old sea;
Old are the shores;
But where are old men?
I who have seen much,
Such have I never seen.

"The lawyer's deed
Ran sure,
'In tail,
To them, and to their heirs
Who shall succeed,
Without fail,
For evermore.'

"Here is the land,
Shaggy with wood,
With its old valley,
Mound and flood.
But the heritors?
Fled like the flood's foam.
The lawyer, and the laws,
And the kingdom,
Clean swept herefrom.

"They called me theirs,
Who so controlled me;
Yet every one
Wished to stay, and is gone.
How am I theirs,
If they cannot hold me,
But I hold them?"

When I heard the Earth-song,
I was no longer brave;
My avarice cooled,
Like lust in the chill of the grave.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson.

PUTTING THE IDLE PEOPLE ON THE IDLE LAND.

From the New York Times of July 22, 1906.

For the first time in the history of this great city there is being demonstrated the fact that there are New Yorkers who love the ground and God's free air sufficiently to cultivate the soil and live in the open if opportunity affords. Moreover, the demonstration further attests the fact that such a life is full of money-making possibilities. The one big point not yet solved and the one of supreme importance at this stage of the experiment is to find more land that can be used under the present conditions. There are plots of ground suitable all about, but the owners are indifferent or unknowing, and many of them are very hard to reach.

The experiment is the free farm garden enterprise of the New York Association for the Cultivation of Vacant Lots. The old Burke farm, belonging to the Astor estate, away up in the Bronx, running along the Bear Swamp Road on one side and the White Plains Road on another, is the scene of the activities that have the delight of novelty to New Yorkers and the substantiality of thoroughness to recommend them to the trained eye of the professional farmer. More than twenty families are living on the ground in big, comfortable housekeeping tents. There are children in almost all of the families, but the tents are scattered over twenty acres or more, and there is room for every one and for all to be as exclusive as they desire. Even the children have a share of work to do and are the happier for it.

The association back of the enterprise is not an incorporated one. It is made up of men who got together at the suggestion of Bolton Hall, a lawyer at 56 Pine street, where is the association's office as well. Howard Payson Wilds is the Chairman of the association, and H. V. Bruce is the Superintendent. The men who have done the work and formed the association do not care to be known as philanthropists. "We are just busy fellows who have had our chance and want to help give a chance to others who are not getting it in this big overcrowded city," said one of them simply and convincingly.

The grant of the land was obtained in April. It is a pretty piece of country, but it had never been tilled, and weeds and stones as well as brush higher than a man's head had dominion. But W. F. Syska, who has had farming experience in the Far West and in Europe, was engaged to reduce the wild to a tillable farm. It was a bit late to start farms for this year, but the weather conditions have been favorable and, combined with the fixed energy of the new farmers, have helped wonderfully in making up for the late start. The one great disadvantage, however, is incalculable, because it barred hundreds of applicants from receiving grants of tracts for this season. But there is more ground to be cleared, and the association and Mr. Syska are hoping to get it in readiness this fall—that is, if the grant is made for another year, as indeed all hope for.

Mr. Syska cleared and plowed the land. Then the association advertised that any one desiring to cultivate ground free of rental charge could have the privilege for the asking—and the maintaining of the garden already begun. Only 20 per cent. of those who

applied could be accommodated. Some of these live on the ground in the big tents; many live in the Bronx and can go to their garden patches almost daily if they desire; still others live down town in Manhattan, and are obliged to spend ten cents each way for carfare and one hour and a quarter every time that they go to their patches. But all the farms look almost equally well, and there are no traces of neglect anywhere. Of course, that is a part of the only contract entered into between the association and the gardeners, and neglect would mean forfeiture of what has now come to be regarded as a genuine treasure.

The necessary implements, all seeds, and young plants are supplied by the association. Expert instruction also is free, and Mr. Syska is consulted at all times about conditions and requirements. He, with his wife and six little children, lives in the only house on the place—a house that looks to be a hundred years old.

The quiet reserve with which each resident farmer acknowledges an introduction places these people at once in the social class. These are people of dignity, whose innate sense of refinement has not been killed by poverty which has overtaken a few. But a chance is all that they ask. They have native force enough to do what is further required in order to command success.

Not the slightest attempt has been made by any one to encroach upon his neighbor's garden, but all are united in the purpose of preventing any trespassing, and in the spirit of mutual helpfulness and co-operation there is nothing lacking.

The one great difficulty has been that of carrying water from the spring to the various tents. There has been only one pump, but this week a new one is to be installed. Next Spring the association hopes to have Croton water, with frequent taps, throughout the entire tract. There have been enough rainstorms to care for the gardens, but a dry spell would work great damage, as it would be impossible to carry water enough to save the produce.

Some of the gardens—those owned by the people living down town—are cared for only Saturday afternoons and Sundays, when the gardeners take with them enough food to last over that they may stay near their patches over night. It is a bit pathetic, but it is beautiful, and possibly it is the beginning of the solution of the problem of congestion in some parts of this great teeming city. One housewife, whose husband has been ill from a serious fall, tends the garden as well as her home in the tent while he goes to town for treatment and to look for work. She is the mother of four pretty children, two of whom help in the garden and one of whom is a little father, caring for the babe of two summers, who is pretty fretful at times.

"We hope that we shall never need to go back into the city to live," said the mother, who had been such a pretty woman in the years before the strain came. "I used to think that the city was the best place for poor people, as it affords such fine opportunities of educating the children, but now I see that the country is the place of greater growing opportunities and more real home life, and if we can only find a permanent place where we can make things grow, and where my little boys will be free from the contamination of city street children, I shall be content with a humble lot and shall be appreciative that I was given another chance to get back to Mother Earth before it was too late for me to care for her as we all should care."

An Italian from the lower East Side has one of the most remarkable of all gardens, and one that is a model of care, despite the fact that he works in town all week and goes up late Saturday afternoon. But he works even into the night, and is up at the first break of day. He saw that he might have a little corn if he planted a row down the path through his plat, and this he has done, to the amusement of all the other gardeners, to whom he never speaks and from whom he expects nothing at all.

A social club of East Side girls from the University Settlement has the only flower garden on the tract. They raise the flowers to send to the various Hebrew charities throughout the city. They are working girls, but they spend Saturday and Sunday at the farm, where in two tents are six cots each, and where they cook and eat out of doors. They have hammocks under the trees, and on Sunday afternoon are surrounded by a dozen or more of their friends who visit them.

A school teacher makes her tents, three of them, the headquarters for her pupils who are continuing nature studies under her tutelage during the summer months. Hers is a thrifty garden, from which no produce is sold, as it all goes to the homes of the boys who are working during vacation, but who helped to plant the garden before school closed last month. The teacher had intended going to Europe this summer, "but this is so much better, and to be in touch with my boys all summer is such a satisfaction," she said, with shining eyes and a look of deep affection.

Old men are among the colonists, and that they are happy men is easily guessed after a few moments' conversation with them.

A little Negro, Rocco, who is the "kinkiest-headed boy in the Bronx," according to the word of the farmers, is the mascot, and a dear little boy he is, running all day on errands to and from the Syska house, carrying messages, and helping out in a hundred ways in which a willing boy can make himself useful.

Many of the farmers are not trying to make money, but just a living from their vegetables, and others are farming for the almighty dollar, and are realizing it. They know that if they can make any money this year, after the late beginning, they are assured of more next season. So it is with an eye to the future that the experiment is watched with double eagerness.

There are daily applications from people living in Brooklyn as well as from residents in all parts of Manhattan for admission to the farm, but no way has yet been devised of increasing the surface of land, and that is what is needed; real estate agents have not been able to help, although they have expressed sympathy with the plan. They cannot grant the use of vacant lots in their care without getting at the owners first. For the most part these owners are rarely getatable by men who can present the cause of the people who would till the land if they could get the land to till.

New York attempted this experiment before, but without success. Now, however, the conditions are liberal and common sensible enough to have peo-

ple feel that they are free in their work. Moreover, as it is now conducted, the plan appeals only to the thrifty who are eager to learn any lesson of betterment in life.

Such in brief is the present condition of vacant lot gardening in New York city. To extend its work the committee needs the loan of more land, and contributions of money.

It costs about $6 per family to those who need it. With this aid the recipient is able to produce in vegetables a value of $10 for each $1 expended by the committee. Is this kind of philanthropy not better than that in which it requires one dollar in cost of administration to extend one dollar of aid?

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A PROPOSAL FOR THE UNEMPLOYED.

The Greater Part of a Leaflet Published by the Right to Work National Council, 10 Clifford's Inn, London, E. C.

"Back to the Land" is becoming quite fashionable and commonplace; scarcely a day passes without its being dished up as a pious expression of opinion by the press in some shape or form, in connection with the unemployed and other social problems—cabinet ministers are even found ready to advocate it—in mild form, of course, and with proper "safeguards." Public thought is, therefore, moving in the right direction even if slowly, and "Back to the Land" is at last being recognized as something more than a "fad." A proposal for which there is "something to be said."

To the student of social problems, however, this talk of "Back to the Land" under present conditions offers little hope in the way of a solution, because there is as little chance of getting "back to the land" for the masses of the people as there is getting to the moon. True, the land is here—plenty of it—and some of the best in the world; all that is needed is the opportunity to get at it.

Common sense says that for the idle man to be linked to the idle land is the most desirable thing that can be achieved, but so long as there meets the unemployed man at every vacant piece of land an announcement that "Trespassers will be prosecuted"—which recent events have shown to be no idle threat, "Back to the Land" is little better than a political squib for the political joker.

The unemployed and hungry workers in various parts of the country have, by what is called "grabbing" unused land and attempting to cultivate it, endeavored to prove that it is a slander to label them as "wasters" and "unemployable."*

It is not intended here to deal with the fundamental evil of the land system which is largely responsible for maintaining the present grave condition of affairs, though we do not hesitate to assert that private ownership of the land—which should belong to the nation—is one of the causes of the unemployed problem. Our object now is to demonstrate that in spite of political differences which divide people, there is a means which lies near to our hand, which, without a large expenditure of money, time, or effort, will provide honorable, healthy and profitable labor for many thousands of our fellow citizens, whereby they can be freed from the sufferings and degradation which result from unemployment.

We suggest a "way out" for many who are in the depths of despair, and one about which we have no shadow of a doubt. It has been tested in practical fashion and proved successful. Our proposal is to copy the plan adopted in many American cities—the "Vacant Lots" cultivation which in Philadelphia has provided profitable labor for many able-bodied unemployed, by the aid of which they have worked their way back to health and independence.

We do not say that "Vacant Lot" cultivation will produce the social and industrial millennium; we simply say it is a crime against humanity that honest workmen, women, and little children suffer, starve, and die in our midst, or—what is practically as bad—are barely kept alive by the aid of demoralizing charity. By adopting the simple plan suggested, thousands of our workless could immediately—and at small cost—produce sufficient food for themselves and their dependents.

We are not theorizing, we are telling of something that has actually been done—and is being done—in America. What can be done there is possible here. All that is needed to make a success is to harness the "Common-sense team"—the idle man and idle land.

In the early spring of 1894 thousands of idle men were being enrolled in "Coxey's Army" for the avowed purpose of marching to Washington to demand work from the government.

The then mayor of Detroit proposed that all the idle land in the city be turned over to the workless people to cultivate, on condition that they should have all they produced.

An immediate response from landowners of the city which placed at the mayor's disposal many hundred acres of land, was followed by an equally quick response from the unemployed.

Allotments, varying in size from one-fourth to one-half an acre, were prepared and given to nine hundred and forty-five heads of families. Seed potatoes were furnished sufficient to plant each allotment, and in less than four months over fourteen thousand bushels of excellent potatoes were gathered by the allotment workers.

This result inspired confidence and caused experiments to be made elsewhere, notably in Buffalo and Boston. In Detroit the number of cultivators increased to more than fifteen hundred families; these produced on four hundred and fifty-five acres of what had formerly been only idle lots, potatoes and other vegetables to the value of more than £5,400. In 1896-7 other cities took up the work, Philadelphia among the number.

The first year in Philadelphia the Vacant Lots Association provided gardens, seeds, tools and instruction for about one hundred families on twenty-seven acres of ground. At a cost of about £360 vegetables worth £1,200 were produced.

In eight years the work of the association steadily expanded until one hundred and fifty-eight acres were producing crops to the value of £7,500. Many of the gardeners have graduated from vacant lots to profitable little farms of their own, and thus there has been established, on a basis of self-support, many who would otherwise be a burden on the community.

*For a brief account of the "Manchester Grablanders" see The Public of August 11, 1906, page 442.