

THE ADVERTISER
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FARM TRAINING
FOR SOLDIERS

Promising Results of a Government Experiment in England.

Canadians are looking forward with considerable hope to the arrangements, made and making, to establish ex-soldiers as farmers.

First in order of importance of course, must be the Dominion Government's plan. This, as the Prime Minister assured Sir Rider Haggard the other day, "will be satisfactory to all those who have at heart the great purpose." For its details we must wait till Parliament meets.

Then there is the scheme embodied in the British Columbia "Soldier Homestead Act." This includes a free grant of land, and a loan of money for improvements to each soldier settler, with exemption from all except school taxes, and five years' exemption from seizure for debt.

There is also a scheme of the Canadian Pacific Railway—a development of the ready-made farm system, the Company devoting millions of dollars to this enterprise.

Most of the schemes proposed are for able-bodied men; and for general farm work an able body is as necessary as an able mind. But some forms of work on the land can be hopefully undertaken even by men more or less disabled.

The Government, through its Military Hospitals Commission, is already giving the men at some of the convalescent institutions instruction in gardening and poultry-raising; and a good deal of progress may be expected along these lines.

Canadians are therefore keenly interested in watching the similar experiments now being carried on in the old country.

In England, the first experiment in the program of training disabled soldiers for work on the land started eight months ago at the Cheshire County Council's Agricultural College, and the result so far is regarded as most promising.

Some of the men have either lived in the country or worked on the land before, while others are town-bred; but all alike have shown considerable aptitude. They have been disabled in various ways. Two, for instance, have lost an arm, and one a hand; but all three have shown themselves perfectly competent to do good work. In every case the country life, and work in the open air, have been of benefit to them.

The main endeavor has been to make the men good all-round farmers. Some of them will be able to manage small farms of their own; others have obtained or are obtaining sufficient practical knowledge to assist in gardening, dairy-work, or poultry-raising. All spend much more time in actual work than in attending class-room lectures; but they are learning a little botany and chemistry, and enough veterinary surgery for simple purposes. Some of the men have already been placed in good situations.

One of the most urgent requirements of our country is that our returning soldiers shall be encouraged and assisted in every practical way to seize the opportunities offered them for such training; and this will be available not only at the Convalescent Hospital, where a beginning can be made, but afterwards at the agricultural school and colleges which offered to instruct men disabled from returning to their previous occupation.

The Government, as our readers will remember, makes special money allowances for the maintenance of the men and their families while this instruction is being taken.

A Soldier Lad Tells of Flanders and the War

The following is a letter from Stanley Holland of the 25th. Battn., written to his father Mr. William Holland of Aylesford:

Flanders, Aug. 17th 1916.

DEAR FATHER:

It is a long time since I wrote my last letter to you, but of course you know all about me, and as much of what I am doing, through mothers letters as I can tell any one.

I was very glad when your letter to Jim and me came today.

I am quite a distance from Jim today as the Batt'n. left last night, he does not have to leave the transport lines, so when the Batt'n. are in front line, support or reserve, I do not see him at all, I was glad to be out the last trip for I saw him several times, and had long talks with him. I hope he will stay with the transport, for I know it will be better for him in every possible way. You know there are many, many lines of work in connection with the war, other than that in the firing line, and some men are better fitted for work back at the transport lines, or base than for the trenches. There is a constant demand for men to work on the roads, railroads, ammunition columns; Army Service Corps, as well as Batt'n. transport; but there are many other big and important branches, and in these as well as in the firing line, good sober men, not afraid of rough, dirty, hard work, are always wanted.

Some people will laugh sometimes and sneer at a chap behind the lines, who has for his work, something similar to what he was used to in private life, but they forget that not every man can do that particular line of work while nearly every man can do in the front line. I mean by that, that a man does not need to know a trade, it is not required of him in the front line. There are hundreds of painters needed all the time; thousands of carpenters, blacksmiths shoe makers, harness-makers, machinists, in fact mechanics of every sort, to repair transport waggons, autos, Lorry's; boots for troops, painting signs, nearly every branch of work that is done in large cities, must be done to keep up an army on active service, and keep every department in perfect running order all the time.

I often wish father, that you could visit this country, and be privileged to go anywhere you wished, and get a good idea of this machine,—the British army,—apart from the awfulness of war, there is not much of interest to one who does not take an active part.

I often wish I could have one month with nothing to do but roam around at will, exploring ruined towns, trenches and places that were at one time 'no man's land' but now are securely held by us. Flanders is a beautiful country, in many respects; not unlike England. The great avenues of tall straight trees, that resemble our Canadian elms, and lovely flower gardens, where flowers that must get great care in Canada and must be either carefully covered up or dug up in the fall, are here safe in the open all winter. The Flemish farmers certainly understand the art of growing vegetables, and the soil is very rich. But farms are small compared with those in the Annapolis Valley.

One thing that strikes one as strange is, how unconcerned the people are in regard to the terrible war that is going on so near them. Lots of farmers work away only a couple of miles from the firing line, and many of the fields are badly torn up with shells. One of the hard sights, and a very common one, is the once beautiful trees that are scarred and broken by shell fragments and shrapnell. I have been in several small parks where not a single tree is left, without a mark but many are broken short off, by a direct hit from a shell. I often think that if you could be somewhere near the firing line during a heavy bombardment, you would see something and hear something too, that would thrill you through and through. Sup-

posing you were a half-mile in front of our light batteries, that is the eighteen pounders, such an ear-splitting crack, as they have, it often gives one a headache. Then the heavier pieces, up to the twelve inch guns, all going at once, so fast you could not count the shots. You would wonder that anything could possibly live around the vicinity, where the shells fall. The shriek of the big shells is awful, especially those of the enemy when they come near. I think if there is any sound heard during a bombardment that will always be remembered by those who have been near, it is the shriek of a shell just about the instant it explodes.

I have seen several heavy bombardments at night, it is then a sight, never to be forgotten, if you happen to be in a position where you can look back in the direction of our guns, it is quite wonderful how the sheets of flame light up the country for considerable distance from the batteries.

But I guess there is no one over here but would be glad to see the end of it all, for my part it cannot come too soon. Our Batt'n. has been here almost a year now, and a year is too long to stay in a war ridden country like this. But I am sure not one of us would want to go back until our bit is done. Whatever certain bit happens to be allotted to us. Yet something seems to tell us that we are not going to be here very long. Everyone believes we are on the road to victory, though final victory may still be a longer way off than we think.

Am sending some "Forget-me-nots," I gathered them in a garden back of our Billett. It seems such a shame the way the flower gardens are left to themselves, such beautiful flowers and such a variety and no one to take care of them. I am glad your garden is doing so nicely, only wish I could be there a while and have some of the good "eats."

I had Jim up to dinner with me last night, and we had a good old fashioned one too. Roast beef, potatoes, peas, tomatoes, then peach pudding, he evidently enjoyed it all.

Bob White has been doing fine and is thought a great deal of in our platoon. I hear he is sick now but don't know how seriously.

You will have read the good news of the advance on our front long before you get this. I tell you there has been rejoicing everywhere. The advance was not on our front, but near and the artillery fire has been tremendous, it is certainly splendid the awful when so many big guns are going in unison. There are times when sleep is impossible, and one gets up in the morning just as tired and sleepy as when he laid down.

Perhaps you don't know but, we have not always been on the same front or sector for several months after we first came over we had a comparatively quiet sector but since March we have been in the worst places of all, and have been hit hard. The Ypres Salient was awful, every part of it. I have been through Ypres several times. The destruction there is terrible. Magnificent buildings are now heaps of ruin, or else full of shell holes. It is a very large town, but they say there is not a single building there that is not more or less damaged. I gathered a few roses there one day when we halted for a rest, but as I had to carry them in my tunic pocket, they were not much more than powder when I got to my journey's end.

The reason I did not write any letter while in London was because Jim was writing, and I was either talking, in the sights or sleeping. Just think, I have not had my clothes off since I left London, except to change once or twice. My it is awful, especially when we cannot even take our boots off for six days at a stretch.

I pray every day that the awful war will soon end, and those who are spared may return to home and loved ones.

Must now say good night, with love to all.

STAN.

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