

Need of Social Centres.

Clubs for Amusement, Education and Social Benefit.

Country Life in Canada is improving all the time. Here are suggestions by Arthur Alex. Stoughton (Professional Adviser to the Greater Winnipeg Plan Commission). All feel the difficulty of the situation as regards a wholesome, satisfying country life in districts where the length of the winter emphasizes the isolation of the farmer and his family. The lack of social pleasures and entertainment and of opportunity for self-expression and development create a feeling of dissatisfaction and unrest, especially among the young people, with the natural result that the country is depleted of its most promising workers.

It has been amply proved in discussions of social welfare that if people living on the land are not to degenerate there must be some sort of community life and the opportunity for and impulse toward a social spirit. There must be machinery for organising this common life, and a vital thought must be infused into it, so that it may become a cohesive force. It must be infused with the personality in a teacher or minister or social worker or other who has idealism and the willingness to give of his best, without stint, for the inspiration and betterment of his fellows, if an aggregation of farmers is to be transformed into a community. The necessity of providing the setting for this activity must be realized by someone with sufficient vision to discern the signs of the times and grasp the needs of rural life. These and all others must put their personality and talents, of whatever kind, great or small, into the common life to sweeten and elevate it.

Every Member of the Town.

The organization may be called a Community Club, or any other name, but it should welcome to its activities every member of the community, without restriction. It should be absolutely free from bias or religious or political or other opinion, and dedicated wholly to the betterment of the community and every member of it. It should have a program of meetings and entertainments extending through the season, pre-empting one night of the week for it, which would afford sufficient variety to satisfy everyone. These would properly include lectures, readings, debates, concerts, plays, good moving picture shows, entertainments, social gatherings, suppers, fairs and competitions for farm and home products. Local efforts would be largely used, with an occasional lecturer or musician brought from without. All sorts of matters of real personal interest would be discussed, from husbandry, dairying, stock and fruit raising and housekeeping, to history, political economy and world movements. The social spirit should always animate the proceedings, to promote cordiality and good feeling. The hearty greeting and the warm hand-grasp are worth more than the knowledge acquired.

The club meeting would be the place in which all questions of public interest would be considered and policies decided upon, whether of projects for raising money for charitable purposes, or of schemes for village improvement, where everyone would have a voice, as in a town meeting, the Town Council being in this way reliably informed of public sentiment. It would thus have a variety of functions, fostering education, recreation,

entertainment, the public concern, improvement of farming, etc., but its essential beneficence would be its knitting together all elements and individuals of the community in a common sympathy and interest.

Spruce Up!

It may well be questioned whether any such common activity as outlined could be long maintained in the village centre of the usual sort, often utterly without arrangement, unbeautiful, and lacking the barest necessities for the inspiration of a civic spirit, or whether the community spirit which would be engendered by such an organized life would long tolerate the poor appearance which many villages and towns present. There is imperative need that a radical change should be made in the attitude of communities toward the appearance of their roads and village centres. When the settlement is projected the centre should be laid out and the buildings planned and designed with the same sort of care and respect for appearance, and the requirements of the situation, as is exercised in planning the civic centres of towns and cities. It is woeful to think of the hopelessly distressing aspect of these little villages on the prairies. When we compare these with the smallest and poorest of English villages, always picturesque and charming, no further comment is necessary.

Beauty is one of the most valuable assets of a village as of a city. It is said that "God made the country, but man made the town." In many cases man ought to feel thoroughly ashamed of his own handiwork. If an architect is not employed to design the buildings the local carpenter must be educated to do them in a simple, straightforward style. Any architectural journal will in the course of the year afford many examples of small houses well planned and agreeable in aspect.

The tidiness of a village can be maintained only by the efforts of individuals, or as one of the activities of a village society or by officials more than usually alert.

To secure a proper lay out of the village centre it must be planned by the original owner of the whole tract, whether it be a Province, corporation, or individual. This owner must have sufficient vision of what is essential in such a plan that all the utilities and amenities may be provided for in it. A suitable area should be devoted to community purposes—sites for the school and community hall, locations for the hotel, creamery, cold storage, plant, garage—all these properly related to the railway station, freight shed, elevator, etc.

Games.

Near the school should be arranged a series of garden plots, through the supervised care of which children would not only learn about plants and their cultivation, but they would gain an interest in their parents' chief concern. There should be a play field, with facilities for games, and a space laid out prettily and planted as a small park. School grounds, gardens, play field, and park may very well be combined in one area of from six to ten acres, which would be the public park of the town.

The pride in the appearance of this should be a sufficient incentive to support a society or a committee, by which it would be kept in

order and developed from year to year. The way to enrich and socialise rural life is not hard to find. All that is required is the desire and the enthusiasm to follow it out.

INTER-EMPIRE TRADE.

With a view to promoting imperial trade and assisting the allies in their work of reconstruction the Canadian Government has established in London a trade mission. At the request of Sir Robert Borden, Mr. Lloyd Harris, who rendered splendid service to the Dominion and to the allies as head of the Canadian War Mission at Washington, has undertaken to act as Chairman of the Mission. Associated with Mr. Harris are a number of Canadian business men who are well acquainted with the new industrial Canada, which owes its recent remarkable expansion to causes arising out of the war. Office accommodation has been secured at British Columbia House, 1 Regent Street, S.W. 1, and the mission has already commenced operations.

It is the desire of the mission that no effort should be spared in re-establishing and extending those old trade connections which existed prior to the war between the Dominion and the Mother Country. The serious tonnage losses and other circumstances interrupted these to some extent. Canada has available for export large supplies of food stuffs, timber, paper and wood pulp, asbestos, nickel and agricultural machinery and a wide range of other manufactured products. It is hoped that it may be possible to find a market for some of those goods at any rate in the United Kingdom. The question of assisting the import into Canada of goods produced in the United Kingdom, will not be overlooked. Canada is dependent upon foreign countries for supplies of various kinds, although not to the same extent as Great Britain. It is considered that the articles required should, as far as possible, be obtained from within the Empire, and in order to encourage such imports a substantial preference has for many years been granted by the Dominion in favour of the Empire produce.

The duty of assisting the allies in their work of reconstruction is also absorbing the attention of the mission. Canada is willing to place her immense resources at their disposal and the Dominion Government is prepared to grant credits to allied governments so as to enable them to obtain the supplies which they so urgently require. The mission is at all times ready to assist persons in the United Kingdom who desire to obtain information with regard to Canadian trade.

THE PRAIRIE COALFIELD.

The Canadian Bureau of Scientific Research is testing a process for converting the bituminous coal of Alberta and Saskatchewan into the equivalent of cheap and smokeless hard coal.

MAJOR W. H. KIPPEN, D.S.O., M.C., Overseas Representative of the Department of Soldiers' Civil Re-Establishment, is at all times pleased to give to all members of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, or any persons interested in Canada, any information dealing with Demobilisation, Re-Settlement, and Re-Establishment of soldiers in civil life, either by letter or by personal interview at his Office, 6 Hanover Square, London, W.1.