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THE FUTURE OF GARDEN CITIES IN AMERICA: DEMOCRATIC TOWN PLANNING TO BE ACCOMPLISHED BY COÖPERATION

"The city is a place where men lead a common life for a noble end."—Aristotle.

The interest of the American people in the garden city movement is steadily gaining ground. Not only have we seen what Europe is accomplishing along this line, but in our own country we are being awakened by the crying need of a saner distribution of population, better working and living conditions and greater opportunity for outdoor life. We are beginning to understand that if we are to become a nation of healthy, happy and efficient men and women we must see to it that our young people have the kind of public training and home influences which will make for strong physical, mental and spiritual growth,—and this implies both the intellectual opportunities of the city and the wholesome inspiration of the country.

These things, we find, are most difficult under present badly adjusted social conditions. The bitter experience of our civilization has proved conclusively that neither city nor country, as existing today, furnishes opportunity for the development of the best individual and social life. Each has its virtues and defects; each, in part is essential to our well-being, but each has failed to give us much happiness, health or a true democracy. We have yet to build our ideal city, to find a means of reconciling civilization and nature, getting the advantages of the city without congestion, and the healthfulness and beauty of the country without social isolation.

In view of these facts, it is no wonder that the garden city movement makes strong appeal. Its ability to combine the good and eliminate the evil of both country and town life has been so successfully demonstrated abroad that it seems to present the only obvious and satisfactory solution to our problem. But if it is to be effectual and permanent in its results it must be the direct expression of the common will and effort of the people, the outcome of their own conscious and united action for a clearly defined end, and not an individual philanthropy, or the imposition of some temporary reform or altruism. We may apply many of the principles and gain much
valuable experience from the successes and failures of the various experiments in Europe, and the few in our own country; but we must build our own garden cities in our own way, according to our own local and national needs, opportunities and limitations. We believe that the garden cities of America to be a success must be coöperative and democratic rather than paternalistic or proprietary as in England and Germany.

But democracy must forever be born of the wish of the people, for it implies both interest and responsibility in the relation of the individual to the State. And people do not really desire coöpera-
tion until they are sure it is the best thing for them to plan and act as a unit and invest their collective capital for a common end. Also they must be convinced that such coöperation will result in personal as well as in common good. It might be possible to enlist the aid of a few large-souled individuals by appealing to their sympathies and ardor for reform; but if the garden city movement is to be put on a firm footing in this country it must appeal to the enlightened self-interest of the majority. The people must realize that intelli-
gent united action along this line will result in actual benefit to them-
selves and their families. They must feel not only that their collec-
tive effort will bring them in the long run what they most highly value, but also that it is possible for their economic ideal to be car-
ried forward on a sound basis. They must understand that the planning and building of a model garden city is a straight business proposition, not a philanthropic scheme or a risky speculation. As Grosvenor Atterbury has put it, "The future of the garden city de-
pends on its ability to earn its own living, to pay its own way."

Moreover, only in such collective and harmonious action lies the protection of the people from the ravages of the land speculator. The keen competition in real estate circles has not only produced many wasteful conditions and artificial values in our suburbs, but it has frequently upset whole farming communities. The buying up of land for purely speculative objects and the use of fertile acres and pasturage by the "gentleman-farmer" for golf links and other purposes, has given many farmers an unnatural view of land values and uses, and they are apt to lose interest in the real work of their fields and live idly in the hope that some rich city man may come along and buy their acres at fabulous prices for speculation. And this sort of purchase not only means that the land may remain un-
used for years, or may be cut up into small lots for the possible future erection of badly built houses, but it also means that the individual who eventually buys one of these lots will have to pay the original speculator an exorbitant price or a correspondingly large yearly in-
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terest. This, of course, is inevitable under present conditions, and to some extent is right: for the value of the land will have been increased by whatever improvements or transit facilities may have resulted from the speculator's ownership. But how much more to the interest of the home-seeker it would be if he were able to avoid this expense of the speculating middleman, buy his land direct and build for himself the kind of home that he wanted, a place of permanent comfort and beauty.

But this can never be accomplished by the average citizen of small income, and here again we see the necessity for coöperation. If private persons who wish suburban or country homes would unite into a group and act collectively, buying and improving on a large scale as the speculator does now, only with a view to the establishment of an ideal community, then our garden cities might be begun. By such unified and consistent action the people would get the kind of homes and environment which they really want, embodying the combined advantages of city and country life, and at the same time, by acting on an economical basis, they would be saving the interest on their money which would otherwise have gone to the speculator. Such an undertaking as this obviously would not be an easy task, nor would it mean getting something for nothing. It would require money, brains, personal and collective effort.

In the development of a model community, the people will have to band together for the securing or raising of capital; they will have to pay expert business men to manage the financial and executive end, and competent architects, builders, town planners, landscape gardeners and other professionals to carry out their wishes and help them put their ideals into practical, economical and beautiful form. Such enterprise will need wise and careful consideration, insight into present needs and forethought for future possibilities. In fact, the model town has been defined as “a place where the conditions of living are wisely controlled, where a certain amount of flexibility is allowed for organic growth, and where foresight is evidenced in provision for the future.”

A SIDE from the material benefit which will result from the creation of such a healthful and inspiring environment as a garden city affords, there is the equally or even more important factor of its reaction upon the people who are responsible for it. Its biggest value to both individual and community is the development which the people themselves secure from it. By their commingled efforts and aspirations, by their intelligent and friendly coöperation for a common cause, by the awakening and stimulating
of their sense of personal responsibility and integrity, the training of their business judgment, the emphasizing of their love of home life and right home surroundings, the quickening of their civic consciousness and civic pride,—out of all these things they gain their own intellectual and spiritual growth, evolving gradually, by the work of their own hands and hearts and brains, the solid structure of a real democracy.

Thus far, the only example in this country which nearly approximates the Continental garden city in its collective planning and development is Forest Hills Gardens, the work of the Russell Sage Foundation on Long Island, accounts and illustrations of which have been published in The Craftsman from time to time. This undertaking, which has been defined by Robert W. de Forest, one of the trustees, as "a business investment with an educational purpose," while, of course, not democratic or coöperative in the sense outlined above, will nevertheless prove a valuable demonstration to the country at large of the advantages of such an ideal type of community, and will prove, we hope, the incentive to home-seekers to develop homes for themselves along similar lines.

The garden city movement was first started in Europe, and it is interesting to note its steady growth and increasing popularity. H. Inigo Triggs, in the preface to his volume on "Town Planning, Past, Present and Possible," says:

"It was not until the latter half of the last century that the subject of town planning began to be systematically studied. Originating in the far-reaching schemes of Baron Haussmann for the improvement of Paris, the movement gathered impetus with the remodeling of many of the more important cities of Europe consequent upon the demolition of their fortifications. In England, until Mr. John Burns introduced the Housing and Town Planning Bill, any idea of a systematic treatment of the subject was practically unknown outside æsthetic coteries, and although such matters as public health and restrictive building laws have for many years received great attention, we have yet very much to learn upon the subject of the laying out and development of town areas. The structure of our towns, the development of our suburbs and the creation of entirely new districts have been with us nearly always pure matters of chance. What was a village, expands to a town, which in its turn becomes a populous city without any preparations being made for the great change. As each difficulty arises it has been either quite left to chance, or solved in the best manner which the circumstances of the moment permit, with little thought for the requirements of succeeding generations. We are beginning
to see what the consequence of this state of affairs has been, and to realize gradually that a city is not, and ought not to be, a chance aggregation of so many houses, any more than a rational dwelling is a fortuitous collection of bricks and mortar."

Mr. Triggs quotes Aristotle, who defined a city as "a place where men live a common life for a noble end," and asks, "How can we accomplish this end unless we make our cities so attractive and so beautiful as to diffuse a beneficent influence over our homes and our entire life?" This "beneficent influence," unfortunately, has not been diffused by the kind of cities which our modern civilization has reared. Neither have we found satisfaction and fulfilment in our suburban and country life. In our blind groping for wealth and happiness we have foundered between two extremes—the overcrowding of our cities on the one hand, and the desolation of our country on the other. The case has been so effectively stated by Ebenezer Howard, the founder of England’s first garden city, that we can hardly do better than quote him here. In his book "Garden Cities of Tomorrow," he sets forth the people’s need of a "town-country," the sort of community which will combine all that is best and avoid all that is bad in both country and town. And to make his argument more graphic, he uses a diagram: three magnets, attracting the People. One magnet is the town, another the country, and the third the "town-country." By these magnets he marks the essential characteristics of each division:

"Town: Closing out of nature, social opportunity, isolation of crowds, places of amusement, distance from work, high money wages, high rents and prices, chances of employment, excessive hours, army of unemployed, fogs and droughts, costly drainage, foul air, murky sky, well-lit streets, slums and gin palaces, palatial edifices.

"Country: Lack of society, beauty of nature, hands out of work, land lying idle, trespassers beware, wood, meadow, forest, long hours, low wages, fresh air, low rents, lack of drainage, abundance of water, lack of amusement, bright sunshine, no public spirit, need for reform, crowded dwellings, deserted villages.

"Town-country: Beauty of nature, social opportunity, fields and parks of easy access, low rents, high wages, low rates, plenty to do, low prices, no sweating, field for enterprise, flow of capital, pure air and water, good drainage, bright homes and gardens, no smoke, no slums, freedom and cooperation."

The result of the theories, plans and practical efforts of Ebenezer Howard was the founding of the Garden City at Letchworth, Hert-
fordshire, England, which, through the work, writings and illustrations of its architects, Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin, has already become familiar to readers of *The Craftsman*. Other model communities of a more or less similar nature, paternalistic, proprietary or coöperative, have sprung up in various countries.

Charles Mulford Robinson, in a footnote in his "Modern Civic Art," says: "Striking illustrations may be pointed out of this new industrial movement in, for example, Port Sunlight, England, with its model cottages, its allotment gardens, garden plots, and flower shows; in Cadbury's Bourneville Village Trust, just out of Birmingham; in the Krupp city of Essen, Germany; in the Westinghouse community near Pittsburgh; in the transformation wrought by the National Cash Register Company at Dayton, Ohio, and in the development at the Acme White Lead and Color Works, Detroit, where there has been adopted the motto, 'Take hold and lift.' The success of these settlements indicates that industrial regard for civic aesthetics is not a concession to sentimental impulse on the part of manufacturers who are willing, for its sake, to sacrifice something of efficiency; but that it is a phase of the effort to secure the latter. It is based on a recognition of the fact that the laborer is a better workman if the environment of home and shop be shorn of dreariness; if his higher impulses be fed, not starved, and he be made more man and less machine."

In this connection and in these days of class injustice, special privilege, social and economic extremes, and the consequent increasing discontent among the masses of the people who are complaining that our so-called democracy has betrayed them, there is much significance—perhaps even prophecy—in Ebenezer Howard's definition of the garden city movement as "a peaceful path to real reform."

In his "Sesame and Lilies," Ruskin has put into words his vision of the ideal city and the manner of its attainment. It will come, he says, "through sanitary and remedial action in the houses that we have; and then the building of more, strongly, beautifully, and in groups of limited extent, kept in proportion to their streams and walled around, so that there may be no festering and wretched suburb anywhere, but clean and busy street within and the open country without, with a belt of beautiful garden and orchard around the walls, so that from any part of the city fresh air and grass and sight of far horizon might be reachable in a few minutes' walk. This is the final aim."