

Jews Are Answering the Call of the Land—Ten Thousand Families Have Left Congested City Districts for the Farm

Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society Endeavoring to Induce Immigrants to Go Into Country.

By ISRAEL J. ZEVIN.

HERE is something significant about the stoop leading to the office of the Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society, at No. 174 Second avenue. The first step is unusually high, and a man who is unaccustomed to it will stumble if he does not take care. It is not known whether this high step is merely a consequence of poor masonry or was set there with a purpose to test the patience and perseverance of the would-be farmers who flock to the society's office with the intention of going "back to the land," whether they would lose courage at the first hardships to be met at the very beginning of their new life.

There are at present 10,000 Jewish farming families in the United States, and, contrary to the tendency of the general population, the number of Jewish farmers is steadily increasing. About half of them are more or less under the supervision of the Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society. It is expected that with the coming influx of immigration after the cessation of hostilities in Europe their numbers will greatly enlarge, and the society is in a state of preparedness to meet its new obligations.

The Jew takes up farming as a great ideal in life, for the ownership of a little land and a living means much to him after many centuries of homelessness and wandering. Once an agricultural people, the Jews have been estranged from the land, for during the twenty centuries of their life in exile agriculture and the owning of real estate were forbidden to them. In some countries they are forbidden even today.

A Jewish writer who recently visited a flower show with the purpose of reporting it for a Yiddish paper was greatly disappointed when he attempted to describe the various flowers he had seen there, for he could not, for the reason that the Yiddish vocabulary has no names for even some of the most common varieties of plants.

The people who speak the vernacular had few opportunities to study them. So the newspaper story was never written and the beautiful impressions of the exhibition never found expression. Only roses and lilies you can call by their names in Yiddish; the rest are just flowers! In Hebrew there are names for nearly every flower that was known to the prophets, but Yiddish was cultivated during life in the Ghetto. And people of the Ghetto could see green grass and plants only when they took one of their dead to the cemetery.

Love for the Open Reawakens.

But with the falling of the Ghetto walls the old love for life in the open awakened in the Jew's heart. The cry, "Back to the land!" was taken up by the "grandchildren of the Ghetto," and they found many supporters to aid them in their desire to become tillers of the soil. Many movements and societies have been started for this purpose. It was no easy task to reclaim the Jew to farm life. His customs, his habits, acquired by centuries of life in the Ghetto, were against it. But at last the Jew has proved to be a successful farmer.

"In spite of his being handicapped at the outset by his ignorance of the very rudiments of farming the Jew has made fairly satisfactory progress as a farmer," said Leonard G. Robinson, general manager of the Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society. To support his assertion he quoted Professor Alexander G. Cance, who, in an article in the Survey of November 4, 1911, entitled "Jewish Immigrants as Tobacco Growers and Dairymen," speaks in glowing terms of the Jewish farming settlements in the vicinity of Hartford, Conn.

The Jewish farmers in this section, according to Professor Cance, do not suffer by comparison with their German, Swiss or American neighbors. Their substantial buildings, modern equipment and large dairy herds impress him that they are "commercial farmers and look for no mere subsistence only; they expect handsome returns." He adds that it does not appear "that the Jewish farmers produce less pounds an acre of tobacco or that, on the whole, the quality of the cured leaf is inferior to the average of the vicinity." He found the investment of the average Jewish farmer in horses, tools, implements and farm machinery larger and the equipment more modern and complete than those of many non-Jewish farmers.

A Storehouse of Information.

Mr. Robinson, who has just completed his eleventh year's service with the Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society, has made farming his life study and is now considered one of the best authorities on agriculture in the United States. He is a living storehouse of information and has all the statistics and official reports concerning agriculture at his finger tips.

"A fair estimate, based upon the figures in possession of the Jewish Agricultural Society and the United States Immigration Commission," Mr. Robinson said, "is that there are about ten thousand Jewish farming families in this country, comprising a total population of about fifty thousand souls, occupying 9,200 individual farms. By taking the averages in the thirteenth United States census I place the total acreage owned by Jewish farmers at 1,200,000, with a value of real and personal property of about \$80,000,000.

"As respectable a showing as these figures make, the influence of the Jewish farmer upon farming in this country is not numerical. His influence is rather due to what he has contributed toward the betterment of rural conditions and to his leadership in various undertakings in the direction of rural progress."

Praised in United States Reports.

To support his last statement Mr. Robinson quoted from an abstract of the United States Immigration Report, published by the Government Printing Office, in Washington, Vol. 1, 1911:—

"Whatever may be said of his agriculture,

the Hebrew farmer is a thinking, protesting citizen. Assimilation or fusion with other races is retarded by religious tradition and rural segregation. Americanization in the sense of desire for representative government, democratic institutions, an educated electorate, equality of opportunity and the free agency of the individual is developed highly in the land owning Hebrew. The Hebrew on the land is peaceable and law abiding, but he does not tamely submit to what he believes to be oppression and he has a highly developed sense of personal rights,



Leonard G. Robinson, General Manager of the Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society.



Jewish Farmers at Their Annual Convention in New York.

civil and economic. The rural Hebrew has shown his capacity for self-government, and no colonies were visited whose members voted less as a unit than those where rural Hebrews made up a material part of the electorate."

The fundamental activity of the Jewish Agricultural Society is the rendering of financial assistance to those desiring to become farmers and to enable those who are already on the farm to maintain their foothold. This financial assistance consists of the granting of loans for the purchase of the farm, for equipment or other urgent needs. The rate of interest charged is four per cent, and the principal is repayable in easy instalments. The society's funds being limited, it does not as a rule make a loan where the funds are elsewhere obtainable. Most of its loans are, therefore, on second mortgage and not a few on third and occasionally even on fourth mortgages. The society's report for 1915 shows that there is scarcely a State in the Union to which the society's activities in the way of financing the Jewish farmers do not extend.

Protects the Beginner.

Besides financing the farmer the society has another task, and that is to locate the new farmer on a farm that is suitable to his means. The society protects him from the land shark and the unscrupulous farm agent. It also buys desirable farms in selected localities, which it sells at cost and on easy terms. The new farmer is assisted in selecting his horses, cows and all requirements. A plan of work is outlined for him by one of the travelling experts, and the new farmer is shown how to utilize each plot of land to the best advantage.

The head of this system of itinerant instruction is Mr. Joseph W. Pincus, the editor of the Jewish Farmer, the only agricultural Yiddish paper in the world. Its aim is to provide for the non-English reading Jewish farmer expert advice on agricultural subjects. Every issue of this publication contains much useful information and instruction.

The Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society, of which Mr. Alfred Jaretzki is president and Mr. Cyrus L. Sulzberger is secretary, was founded in February, 1900, and has taken over all agricultural matters which were previously in the hands of the Baron de Hirsch Fund. The funds of the society are contributed in part by the Jewish Colonization Association and in part by the Baron de Hirsch Fund. In the contribution of the latter is a \$2,400,000 fund established by the great philanthropist during his life, besides a legacy left by the Baroness.

Establish New Jersey Colony.

One of the remarkable achievements of the Baron de Hirsch Fund was the founding of the well known Jewish settlement of Woodbine, in New Jersey. It was established in 1891. A tract of 5,900 acres of land was purchased at a cost of \$37,000. Of this area about 275 acres were laid out for a town site and about 2,000 acres surveyed into thirty acre farms.

It was hard work for the new settlers, for Woodbine, like most of that part in the State, was cov-

ered with a dense growth of scrub oak and pine. But as the work done by these pioneers was paid for by the fund and they were able to support their families, who had been left in New York, they determined to hold out the struggle until won.

At the present time Woodbine is classed as an agricultural-industrial colony. Among its industrial enterprises are a machine shop, two clothing factories, a knitting mill, a hat factory and a box factory. These industries, which are housed in brick buildings and equipped with the most modern machinery, are providing employment for nearly six hundred men and women.

Woodbine is unique in being the only municipality in this country in which all the offices are filled by Jews. It controls its own school system, its own Street Cleaning and Police departments, the members of which are all people of Jewish race. The Woodbine Volunteer Fire Brigade is one of the best

sheds, erected a silo and made other improvements. Recently they were offered \$10,000 for the farm. Their only encumbrance on it is a mortgage of \$1,000. They have a stock of twenty-four cows and three horses. They have about ten acres in tobacco, and their annual income from the farm is about \$5,000.

The Jewish farmers are organized in local societies, and these locals are united into the Federation of Jewish Farmers of America. Altogether there are fifty-six local organizations divided among eighteen States. The federation held its seventh annual convention at the Educational Alliance in New York from December 5 to December 8, inclusive. It was one of the most successful conventions in the history of the federation. Many important questions relating to the business of farming were discussed, and among the prominent men who addressed the delegates were a number of representatives of the Departments of Agriculture of some of the nearby

for the sufferers in the European war zone. One of the most interesting sessions of the convention was that devoted to the second generation of Jewish farmers. The delegates at this session represented boys' and girls' clubs, the Baron de Hirsch Agricultural School and the National Farm School, as well as some of the agricultural colleges. The convention ended with a banquet in a Broadway hotel.

Inclined to Stay on Farm.

The lure of the city has been always a great detriment to the progress of the farmer. Doubtless there are some of the children of the Jewish farmers who—like the children of the non-Jewish farmers—find this lure too strong to resist. However, the number of Jewish boys or girls who leave the farm is small, and of the few that leave some come back.

Nearly all the Jewish farmers take summer boarders, and it has been noticed that the coming of the



Exhibition of Agricultural Products Raised by Jewish Farmers and Displayed at Educational Alliance in New York.



The Volunteer Fire Brigade of Woodbine, N. J.

Photo by Louis Hebling.

city folks, with their exaggerated styles and extravagant ways of living, leaves a bad effect on the wives and children of the farmers.

Many of them, attracted by the glamour of city life as described by the youngsters from New York, seek fortunes in the city, with the frequent tragic result.

The Jewish Agricultural Society also conducts a farm labor bureau, and it has placed thousands of young men who had worked in the sweatshops of New York with well to do American farmers, through whom they are given an opportunity to learn farm work and become farmers for themselves.

Sadie Buys a Suit on Instalments

THE big sign passed Sadie in lower Broadway just as she was coming from luncheon. The sandwich man was moving quickly and the street was crowded, so Sadie had time to give it only one hasty glance. However, that glance took in enough to completely clear the sky. Was it possible that she could get a new spring suit by paying just two dollars this week and the rest gradually in one dollar instalments?

Sadie had given the question of a spring wardrobe very serious thought, and she had come to the conclusion that it would have to be dispensed with as far as possible. Suits were so expensive and seven dollars a week does not permit many extravaganzas. Sadie had argued the question pro and con any number of times. She knew that her season-before suit and hat were shabby, but—well, she would have to get along with them as best she could. Sadie was a philosophical little soul, and she had almost resigned herself to the inevitable, when she received an invitation for a "racket" at Mame's for the following night.

That started the trouble all over again. What could she wear to Mame's? It was true that there was her blue serge from last autumn, but every one, including Sadie herself, had seen that dress every day for the last seven months. Besides, it was worn at the elbows and there were two great big black spots on the front caused by ten-year-old Jack's ever present fountain pen. No, she could never wear the blue serge. She would rather stay at home than do that. But still Mame's parties were not to be given up without grave consideration.

At the doorway of the large, light office of the credit company Sadie was met by a well dressed young woman, who, with the most friendly smile in the world, offered to show Sadie the "stock"—the "suits"—the "bargains."

At the sight of the first suit Sadie's heart began to beat less jubilantly. It was a cheaply made garment of the thinnest blue serge with a bright colored collar and resembling last year considerably more than the present year, though truly like neither. Sadie knew that she did not like it, but still it was a new suit, and Sadie had learned through a series of bitter experiences that any kind of new suit is better than no suit at all.

Sadie looked at a second suit. This was even more miserably made. As Sadie tried on the coat she heard the sleeve lining crack. The third and fourth suits were even worse than the first and second, so Sadie timidly picked up the first suit and asked the price.

The amiable young saleswoman carefully exam-

ined the tag and smilingly said, "Thirty-five dollars. Yer see, yer pay five dollars down an' three dollars a week."

Sadie began to feel weak. "Five dollars down and three dollars a week! Why, your sign said two dollars down and one dollar a week!"

"Oh, you seen our sign," the amiable lady replied, still smiling. "Well, yer see, that only holds good for our cheaper suits, and I didn't think yer was wantin' ter see them."

Sadie, however, insisted that they were precisely what she did want to see and sent the smiling saleslady scurrying among the stock to find one. Sadie might have known what the result would be, but this was her first experience, and so she was disappointed when she received the answer that the last of the cheaper suits had just been sold.

"I'd take that there blue serge suit fer thirty-five if I was you, dearie. It looks swell on yer—just as if it was made ter order—an' it's a bargain, too—a genuine bargain. Why, some of them up-town shops is sellin' them same suits as yer tried on there fer forty dollars, and yer'd have ter pay cash there, too. No, I tell yer, dearie, ef yer take this here suit fer thirty-five yer won't be makin' a mistake."

Sadie looked at the suit in the long speckled mirror. No, it did not look bad on her. It fit her nicely. Maybe she ought to take it, but \$35 was a lot of money. She had never spent that for a suit before. Still this was different. She wouldn't have to pay for it all at once—just \$5 down and \$3 a week.

Just then the head of the firm made his appearance on the scene.

"Miss, that suit is a wonder on you," he said, "and it is so cheap—only thirty-five dollars. Um, such a bargain! Why, the uptown shops are selling that same suit fer fifty dollars."

Sadie would get paid to-morrow afternoon, so the kind head of the company promised to put the suit away for Sadie until the next day. Promptly at six o'clock on the following evening she came in with \$5, signed a number of papers that she didn't in the least understand and took her new suit away, lighter in heart and purse.

There are hundreds and hundreds of Sadies—so many Sadies that the Friendly Credit Clothing Company has four big branches in the downtown sections of the city where working girls are most numerous. Every Monday morning the mail brings crisp bills from hundreds of Sadies who are scripping and saving to "keep up appearances at Mame's party."