

THE LAND AND INDUSTRIAL COLONY

HADLEIGH, ESSEX

The Hadleigh Colony, of which Lieut.-Colonel Laurie is the Officer in charge, is an estate of about 3,000 acres which was purchased by the Salvation Army in the year 1891 at a cost of about £20 the acre, the land being stiff clay of the usual Essex type. As it has chanced, owing to the amount of building which is going on in the neighbourhood of Southend, and to its proximity to London, that is within forty miles, the investment has proved a very good one. I imagine that if ever it should come to the hammer the Hadleigh Colony would fetch a great deal more than £20 the acre, independently of its cultural improvements. These, of course, are very great. For instance, more than 100 acres are now planted with fruit-trees in full bearing. Also, there are brickfields which are furnished with the best machinery and plant, ranges of tomato and salad houses, and a large French garden where early vegetables are grown for market. A portion of the land, however, still remains in the hands of tenants, with whom the Army does not like to interfere.

The total turn-over of the land 'in hand' amounts to the large sum of over £30,000 per annum, and the total capital invested is in the neighbourhood of £110,000. Of this great sum about £78,000 is the cost

of the land and the buildings; the brickworks and other industries account for £12,000, while the remaining £20,000 represents the value of the live and dead stock. I believe that the mortgage remaining on the place, which the Army had not funds to pay for outright, is now less than £50,000, borrowed at about 4 per cent, and, needless to say, it is well secured.

Lieut.-Colonel Laurie informed me on the occasion of my last visit to Hadleigh, in July, 1910, that taken as a whole even now the farm does not pay its way.[6] This result is entirely owing to the character of the labour employed. At first sight, as the men are paid but a trifling sum in cash, it would appear that this labour must be extremely cheap. Investigation, however, gives the story another colour.

It costs the Army 10s. a week to keep a man at Hadleigh in food and lodgings, and in addition he receives a cash grant of from 6d to 5s. a week.

Careful observation shows that the labour of three of these men, of whom 92 per cent, be it remembered, come to the Colony through their drinking habits, is about equal to that of one good agricultural hand who, in Norfolk, reckoning in his harvest and sundries, would earn--let us say, 18s. a week. Therefore, in practice where I, as a farmer, pay about 18s., or in the case of carters and milkmen nearly £1, the Army pays £2, circumstances under which it is indeed difficult

to farm remuneratively in England.

The object of the Hadleigh Colony is to supply a place where broken men of bad habits, who chance in most cases to have had some connexion with or liking for the land, can be reformed, and ultimately sent out to situations, or as emigrants to Canada. About 400 of such men pass through the Colony each year. Of these men, Lieut.-Colonel Laurie estimates that 7-1/2 per cent prove absolute failures, although, he added that, 'it is very, very difficult to determine as to when a man should be labelled an absolute failure. He may leave us an apparent failure, and still come all right in the end.'

The rest, namely 91 per cent or so, regain their place as decent and useful members of society, a wonderful result which is brought about by the pressure of discipline, tempered with kindness, and the influence of steady and healthful work.

Persons of every class drift to this Colony. Thus, among the 230 Colonists who were training there when I visited it in July, 1910, were two chemists and a journalist, while a Church of England clergyman had just left it for Canada.

As a specimen of the ruck, however, I will mention the first individual to whom I happened to speak--a strong young man, who was weeding a bed of onions. He told me that he had been a farm labourer in early life, and, subsequently, for six years a coachman in a

private livery stables in London. He lost his place through drink, became a wanderer on the Embankment, was picked up by the Salvation Army and sent to one of its Elevator paper-works. Afterwards, he volunteered to work on the land at Hadleigh, where he had then been employed for nine months. His ambition was to emigrate to Canada, which, doubtless, he has now done, or is about to do. Such cases might be duplicated by the dozen, but for this there is no need. *Ex uno disce omnes.*

All the labour employed, however, is not of this class. For instance, the next man to whom I spoke, who was engaged in ploughing up old cabbage land with a pair of very useful four-year-olds, bred on the farm, was not a Colonist but an agricultural hand, paid at the rate of wages usual in the district. Another, who managed the tomato-houses, was a skilled professional tomato-grower from the Channel Islands. The experience of the managers of the Colony is that it is necessary to employ a certain number of expert agriculturalists on the place, in order that they may train the raw hands who come from London and elsewhere.

To a farmer, such as the present writer, a visit to Hadleigh is an extremely interesting event, showing him, as it does, what can be done upon cold and unkindly land by the aid of capital, intelligence, and labour. Still I doubt whether a detailed description of all these agricultural operations falls within the scope of a book such as that upon which I am engaged.

Therefore, I will content myself with saying that this business, like everything else that the Army undertakes, is carried out with great thoroughness and considerable success. The extensive orchards are admirably managed, and were fruitful even in the bad season of 1910. The tomato-houses, which have recently been increased at a capital cost of about £1,000, produce many tons of tomatoes, and the French garden is excellent of its kind. The breed of Middle-white pigs is to be commended; so much so in my judgment, and I can give no better testimonial, that at the moment of writing I am trying to obtain from it a pedigree boar for my own use. The Hadleigh poultry farm, too, is famous all over the world, and the Officer who manages it was the President for 1910 of the Wyandotte Society, fowls for which Hadleigh is famous, having taken the championship prizes for this breed and others all over the kingdom. The cattle and horses are also good of their class, and the crops in a trying year looked extremely well.

All these things, however, are but a means to an end, which end is the redemption of our fallen fellow-creatures, or such of them as come within the reach of the work of the Salvation Army at this particular place.

I should add, perhaps, that there is a Citadel or gathering hall, which will seat 400, where religious services are held and concerts are given on Saturday nights for the amusement of the Colonists. I may mention that no pressure is brought to bear to force any man in its

charge to conform to the religious principles of the Army. Indeed, many of these attend the services at the neighbouring parish church. Notwithstanding the past characters of those who live there, disturbances of any sort are unknown at Hadleigh. Indeed, it is extremely rare for a case originating on the Colony to come before the local magistrates.