

FROM CITY SLUMS TO FARM LIFE.

An Account of the George Junior Republic—A Farm of 240 Acres Worked by Boys Rescued From City Streets, Who Govern Themselves.

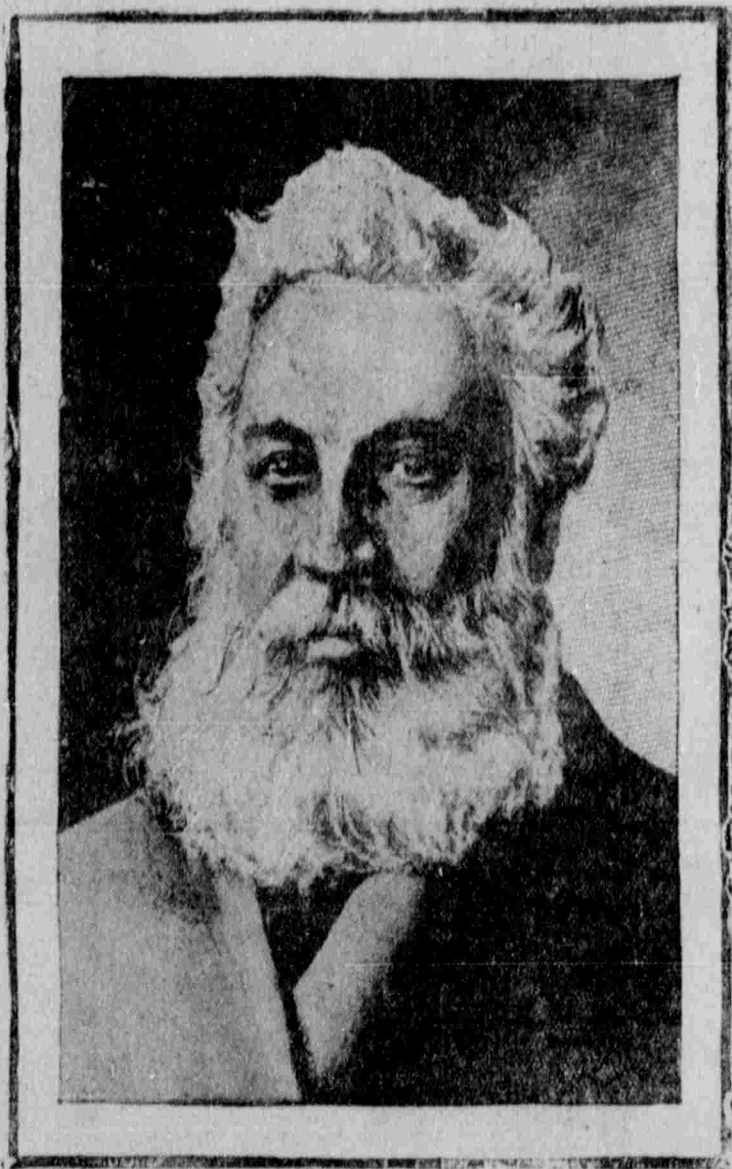
Some 20 years ago or more, writes C. E. Chapman, the New York Daily Tribune began the work of giving the poor children of New York City a two weeks' outing in the country—a work which has been continued without intermission, and the scope of which has been increased from year to year. The pleasure, health and good this work has done can never be estimated in dollars. The country people have responded nobly and furnished food and shelter free to these "city cousins" and have given in some instances permanent homes to them.

In 1890 a young man, enthusiastic and philanthropic, gave up all his business prospects and resolved to devote his life to bettering the condition of poor children. With small financial resources he was handicapped, and had to work with the means Providence provided. He arranged for the reception of some 200 children among his friends and relatives in Freeville, N. Y., where they remained for two weeks. The Tribune Fresh Air Fund paying for their transportation. This was kept up for two or three years, when some vacant houses

my wagon in the barn. I reported the loss to the "nolles," and in about a week the wagon was returned to me, and the boy who brought it back said: "The chief was a new 'guy,' and he is located in the 'pen' (bail). How they found it is a mystery to me. They had last season 12 acres of potatoes, 40 of hay, 25 of corn, 45 of oats, 12 of buckwheat, 7 of millet, 1 1/2 of beets, 2 of white beans, 1 of cabbage, 3 of garden and 2 of small fruits. They milk 35 cows, and all the dairy products are used on the farm.

The silos at the back of the barn have a capacity of 150 tons, and the plank frame barn is a model. The dairy house near by is provided with all modern tools, and is presided over by a former street urchin of 16 years who grew a few inches when his butter won a first premium at the town fair. The eight horses, arinks, cattle and young stock are cared for by the boys, under boy overseers. If you had seen the boy rigging load of boys and girls go wild when it was announced that their full-blooded Hottentots had won premiums you would know what enthusiasm means. The cow stable is provided with cement floor and improved cow stalls. The association is incorporated, and issues shares, which are sold, and the

SOLUTION OF THE AERIAL PROBLEM.



"shall we ever be able to fly?" is now answered in the affirmative by Prof. Alex. G. Bell of Bell telephone fame. Prof. Bell has been studying the aerial problem for a long time. He now claims to have practically solved it. The kite and the balloon is the basis of his discovery. Leading scientists express confidence in Prof. Bell's claims.

were rented for their use, and the food was supplied by the churches in the vicinity, even as far as Auburn, Oswego and Syracuse; but the problem of permanent good kept coming up in the young man's mind, and the question, "How can I make these impressions last, produce some permanent good?" continually haunted him.

An energetic good man and an idea when brought in contact result in action and success. He worked and talked until some money was raised, and in 1895 the few children selected were kept there for the winter. Some of them were hard cases; some were incapable of thinking for themselves, and all of them had the "street training" and grit which made them precocious and hard to govern. As an illustration of their grit: One day four small boys came to my home from the camp to spend the day. They arrived too late for dinner, and Mrs. Chapman prepared some pancakes, butter and syrup for a luncheon. They were hungry, it tasted good, and they ate two quart basinsful of batter without a pause.

"Would you dare give them more?" asked the hostess. "Mix another basin," said I, and she did.

To finish off I gave them a quart basketful of big blackberries each, and they were equal to the occasion. After a little one boy was missing, and after some searching he was found flat on his stomach on the back porch.

"What is the matter?" I asked. "There is nothing the matter of me; I am having a good time. What a lark! Blackberries until me belly aches!"

That is the stuff one has to provide for when dealing with the question of reforming so-called incorrigibles.

How should these children be governed, too shrewd to be successfully watched, too stubborn to be punished, they were "holly terrors," alone and united. What would appeal to them? haunted the young man by day and mingled in his dreams by night. Difficult problems seem easy after they are solved, and we say, "Why did not I think of that?" Put these children on their own resources, make them responsible for their deeds, make them know that labor, honesty and goodness bring their reward, and that idleness means hunger, dishonesty, means imprisonment and ostracism. Older people govern themselves; let the children do the same.

I do not wonder that people were incredulous when the George Junior Republic was launched, but the results show that the idea was founded on right principles. From that small beginning it has grown until now it occupies 240 acres of land, all its own. The superintendent of the farm department, Mr. Cockburn, has had wonderfully good results when the character of his help is understood. Seventy-five boys from all conditions of life, ranging from eight to 14 years old, would not be considered the best of help, but they do actually straighten out, take hold of work, and sometimes of things which do not belong to them. This is mostly done by the newcomers, and is resented by the "citizens," who do all they can to ferret out the guilty parties. While visiting the institution to get the photographs my fountain pen was stolen from my coat, which was in

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profession, or may take a civil service examination and get on the police force. The motto, "Nothing without labor" forces them to do something, for the fare at the paupers' table is only just one degree better than the fare from the loaves, the water is not frozen, but the bread is hard, and one or two days of it teaches the lesson needed. At the present time the ranks are recruited from the courts that send children here for various petty offenses, and boys beyond the control of parents, both rich and poor, but too young to be sent to reformatories. When the boys have become reliable in every way and have something they can do, they are allowed to start in life with some good name.

At my request a "citizen" only 14 years old prepared an account of the George Junior Republic, which is better than mine, and is given below. This is in no sense a community and is not subject to the same destroying principles. It has been said, "Communities do not abide; only republics are stable."

In 1890 William R. George, who had spent his boyhood on a farm in West Dryden, a small hamlet near Freeville, and who was then interested in charitable and reform work in New York City, determined to take some of the neglected children of the slums to the country for a summer outing. The plan was in the nature of the Tribune Fresh Air work. Some of the children were taken by the various farmers' families—friends and relatives of Mr. George—while nearly half were assembled in one house under the direct care of Mr. George himself. The next year tents were provided, and 211 children roamed the country for four weeks.

An obvious difficulty arose: The farmers demanded protection against the lawless little visitors from the city; there was a necessity for control. Moreover, a strong tendency to pauperism showed itself; the children were receiving food and gifts of clothing, which they soon demanded as a right. These things led, first, to a system of punishment (the gang), and second, the cardinal doctrine of the republic, "Nothing without labor." Finding by actual experience the existence of a keen sense of justice, and seeing the advantage of ridding from his self-appointed position of arbitrary dispenser of punishment, Mr. George established a jury. Then it was discovered that the boys made better policemen and keepers than the elders. Finally, late in the fall of 1894, when focusing the results of that and previous years' experience, Mr. George was suddenly struck with a plan toward which he had long been unconsciously groping—a junior republic. So in the summer of 1895 the experiment for the direct purpose of being pioneers of a permanent junior republic, no longer a republic for summer alone.

"The numbers have increased normally from that time to the present, and the republic is now a permanent, all-the-year-round home for children, an institution founded on belief in the healthfulness of the child's nature and trust in a human supplement of the

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"The republic farm consists of 240 acres of land. At present there are 17 buildings: a chapel, the Jane Hope cottage and a bakery are now in course of construction. The accommodations are of the simplest description, and it is intended to keep them so. What is desired is to accustom the citizens to a clean and healthy mode of living.

"The aim of the cottages is to establish closer ties of relationship between the citizens and to introduce into the lives of the citizens an atmosphere of home life. It already appears that this is a wise plan, for in some cases the bonds of fellowship became so strong that they furnish examples of fraternal feeling that would be commendable in families that are held together by ties of consanguinity.

"Every citizen must earn his or her own living. It is obvious that in order to do this every one must have some employment. There are several branches of industry—printing, farming, carpentry, cobbling, housekeeping, cooking, etc. 'He who does not work does not eat.' There are no paupers, no one depending upon some one else. In this way the citizens learn to assume responsibilities of their own; not only this, but they also learn the value of money. The food is plain and wholesome. The cost per capita varies some-

what in the different cottages, but in no place does it go above 35 cents a week. The continual healthy state of the large body of youngsters up in Freeville is the wonder of many.

"The village doctor who looks after the health of the citizens attributes this admirable condition to plenty of exercise, wholesome food and pure air. The treasurer's report from Oct. 1, 1900, to Oct. 1, 1901, states that \$6,990.42 was spent for provisions.

"Of course, the republic, being yet young, is largely dependent upon outside aid. It receives no financial help from the state, and is therefore supported by voluntary subscriptions. The plan of the trustees is to enlarge the association until the fees of the members are sufficient to pay the running expenses of the republic. Then all special gifts of money could be put into an endowment fund or utilized in enlarging and improving the plant. It is not intended to make of the republic a penal institution, and at present the courts cannot commit a child here except under suspended sentence.

"The republic does not claim that it is doing what no one else ever did, but it is safe to state that during the short time that it has been in existence the percentage of bad material that it has handled and moulded into good, of the individual examples that it can hold up to the world, is greater than that of any other one institution (in the reformatory sense) in the country. At present there are two graduates of the republic in Cornell university and one at Harvard, and two others are preparing for a college course.

"The farmers are up before breakfast and down to the barn in order to do chores, and nothing need be said about the extent of their appetites; in fact, no one could find a poor one at the little commonwealth. In several cases those citizens most deserving have been allowed to enter into partnership with the helper and instructor in the department in which he works. Self-government, industry, wholesome food and outdoor sport have done wonderful things for the boys and girls in the republic, and those who will pay a visit to Freeville can see a healthy, thriving, loving, striving body of citizens."

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