

alongside them the fluctuations of price during the same period, noting how, in the words of the old riddle, "the higher you go the fewer," could not be expected, on purely personal grounds, to feel any particular enthusiasm, when he comes in after a fourteen-hour day, about hitching up another team, snatching a drink from his faithful thermos flask, and going out and ploughing more land as he whistles "It's a long, long trail" through the dark night. On purely personal grounds, I repeat, it has no attraction for him; and inasmuch as so large a proportion of the agricultural population of the west is of non-British origin, you cannot always appeal to it on patriotic grounds; you have to dangle that little old \$ sign. And if there is one thing that the farmers' movement of Western Canada has developed, it is that the farmer's reasoning process, although a little rusty, is in perfectly good shape, and is apt to grind out an argument into particularly minute pieces.

But suppose the farmer does go out and grow more wheat. Sacrifice perches on his plough handles, for he shakes his own economic foundations. To those to whom the prairie provinces of Canada represent, in a glib political phrase, "the bread-basket of the Empire," it may be a surprise that cereal production was, up to the time the war broke out, actually declining—not in volume, but in distribution. The country was being settled up, so that each year there was a bigger acreage under crop; but each successive year the acreage upon the individual farm was decreasing. And rightly so. It may be satisfactory for distant industrial communities to relegate the work of wheat-growing to virgin countries like this of which we speak, and to christen it its dear bread-basket; but it is not very satisfactory for the country concerned. No agricultural country ever got on a sure basis until it began to develop its live-stock and dairying industries, until it ceased tearing the vitals out of its virgin land by grain-raising year after year, and began putting fertility back into it by raising fodder-crops, until it abandoned the do-or-die profits of wheat and other grains, collectable once a year with the sporting chance of a hiatus, and adopted the regular pay-roll profits of stock. Beef-raising, pork-raising, mutton-raising, egg-raising,

milk-raising, are the foundation of all true agricultural prosperity, and because a "bumper crop" tends to disturb the development of these interests by creating illusive El Doradoes, so a bumper crop, in the paradox of a wise man, is a general misfortune. Western Canada had discovered this. It was steadily getting out of the grain business and into the live-stock business, and it is just beginning to reap the benefits when it is asked to "grow more wheat."

Patriotism does not consist only in offering one's life in the trenches; it may, in the circumstances indicated, consist in complying with such a request.

But to come back to the lack of prime producers, commonly known as the labour shortage. The outstanding peculiarity of the agricultural industry is that it requires that the hired help does not supplant the boss while the latter concentrates on bigger business, but only helps him to accomplish more of the smaller business. The war has stripped Western Canada of its man power, to use a phrase that Mr. Bennett has popularized. The ratio of enlistment has been far heavier in the west than in the east, and the Director-General himself recognizes not only that not one single man more can be spared from the land—that, in fact, some have gone from the land who ought to be sent back—but also that the cities of the west are quite inadequate to supply the large surplus of skilled labour necessary for seeding.

The labour scarcity was formerly almost exclusively peculiar to the fall. There never was much difficulty—before the war—in procuring a full supply of harvest labour; but since the war began, there has been a gradual enlargement of the area from which it has been drawn. The eastern provinces and the floating labour of the western cities at one time furnished all the harvest hands that were required. Harvest work, remember, unsettles the economic structure. Then British Columbia's help was requisitioned; then the soldiers; then last year recourse was necessary to the United States. Last year the west just managed to scrape through. But a shortage in spring labour has practically never been felt before; and the shortage has one acute side—that whereas a shift can be made at the harvest with unskilled labour, in the spring the only kind

wanted is skilled labour.

It is not certain, therefore, that the volunteers who in the cities are proclaiming their willingness to get out and help—as, for example, between ten and fifteen thousand Winnipeggers are stated to have done—will necessarily have their services accepted. The city people are being advised to look into the vacant lot situation. The cultivation of the gentle spud, now that its price has raised it to the point where a back-garden full of them lifts a man into the comfortably-off class, would provide an easy vent for the purely urban resident to work off his enthusiasm for getting back to the land, and demonstrate, in tired backs and aching muscles, what work on the land really means. It might likewise, in these days when we all have to face the humbling necessity of taking over the minor jobs to set free men who, by physical standards, are classed as more important, be a definite form of national service. The National Board should investigate it—the impressing of unskilled city labour to produce the country's potatoes on vacant lots, while the farmer raises more wheat.

In the meantime, desperate remedies are being adopted to secure those 12,500 extra farm labourers. As one measure, homesteaders will be allowed to hire out and at the same time to count their period of work for another farmer as part of their own homestead duties; but the government is going after the matter on bolder lines. It is advertising in some seven thousand papers in the United States, dangling high wages and the easiness of acquiring homesteads before the hesitant immigrant. The Dominion and the Provincial Governments are between them sending 44 special agents south; in addition to the special cent-a-mile railway rate that will obtain over the Canadian lines from the border, a portion of the fares of the experienced men from points in the United States to the border will be "absorbed." Because every potential immigrant is afraid of conscription, certificates will be issued to each man that he will not be called upon for military purposes.

It is estimated that it takes four men to harvest what one man put in. This being so, one can pertinently ask, in the words of the ancient hymn, "What of the harvest?"

THOSE *who* PRODUCE LITERATURE

IF, in a spirit of earnest inquiry you were to follow the pet dogs of a certain comfortably-off section of the city of Toronto, to the place where these dogs do most often happen together, you would arrive at a neat little shop, smelling pleasantly of well-waxed floors and containing several tons of literature. In other words, the dogs of this neighbourhood would lead you sooner or later to one of the branches of the Toronto Public Library. You would encounter there, of course, much nobler things than dogs. There, also, you would find the best housewives, and cleverest conversationalists of the neighbourhood, the conservatives and the advanced thinkers, the rich and the poor. Standing, face-to-wall, examining the labels on the backs of books might you behold impressive husbands, mixed with husbands NOT so impressive. And scattered here and there would you discover the children of this neighbourhood. Outside the door stand the baby-carriages, and up and down the street, above and below the little library shop, you might discern other patrons—men, women, children and dogs—on their way to or from this centre.

What I wish to dwell on is the dogs. Dogs, you say—in a public library! Unthinkable. Books, you say, holy! Would you let a dog breathe the air of a room dedicated to bound volumes? Yet, I would—and have counted, not without pleasure, no less than nine such beasts on leash in this same place of holiness. For the letting of dogs into the public libraries of this country is a sign and a symbol, and, like the irregulars whose absence from Irish life George Moore deploras, are the outward sign of an inward grace.

One of the prettiest features of our Canadian life is the singular purity of mind and lofty outlook of many of those whose fathers and mothers—on farms and in shops and by drudgery and self-sacrifice—have given them university educations. I do not say

Transforming the Library

By WAYFARER

that all our university people are thus pure and lofty. Please, Gentle Heaven, there is a faint blush of rugged and robust Canadianism which not even an Oxford career can rub off. But there is too large an element living in Canada very much as long-stalked weeds flourish on some barnyard eminence. They draw nourishment from this land—but without knowing it. They look at the sky and the stars and luxuriate in the gentle winds of cultivated bunkum which blow to and fro from other pretty weeds on other eminences. Forgetting the humble insects that crawl far beneath them on the same little hill they whisper to themselves—"Ah! How sweet is life! How charming to dwell upon the things of the spirit—a foreign spirit! How beautiful and how wise are the things that are said in London, W.C., and in Oxford. How charming are French songs and Russian morbidities! How exquisite is Chinese porcelain and the Dutch tulips." They think of the ancient Greeks—and their hearts melt with the mere recollection of what wonderful people they were before Constantine took them in hand. They think of British public life and public men and they sigh: Why are not WE like that? Why is Ottawa so mean in spirit? They sigh and they sway in the winds of culture (vide.) The Nation, the New Republic, the New Statesman and the Poetry Review—and of the dung-hill they know NOTHING! They save their money to make a Cook's tour of Europe, the while their knowledge of Canada is picked with long fingers from the columns of a press they deplore. They lament Ottawa, but would cure it by keeping their minds on other things and foregoing any real interest in Parliament Hill. While they dream in

the wind the good old barnyard holds them by their feet as mothers hold the skirts of infants leaping toward a light. The barnyard feeds them and supports them, and when they are dead, gathers them to its shabby but kindly bosom once more. But it is a foolish barnyard. It does not know that it has not the hearts of these blossoms. They belong to other lands and other ages.

It is a relief, therefore, to find dogs in our public libraries. It is a relief, too, to find, in the recent gathering of the Ontario Library Association, in Toronto, over two hundred really earnest Canadians who are trying, apparently, to do what they can, with what learning they have acquired, to make Canadian life more intelligent, brighter in every way. A few years ago this Ontario Library Association's first convention brought together only forty-one people. That was in 1908. Last year it numbered 198, and this year two hundred and fifty. A few years ago the public library in most Canadian towns was a place where "silence" signs held forth like Prussian sentries. Small boys with clumping boots were afraid to come in. The chief patrons of the place were old men who couldn't read, but came in to while away the hours till it was time to die, or young women, anticipating love, by reading how some glorious young lady of fiction managed it. Fogies, frumps and acid tempers were the chief characteristics. The girl behind the wicket was as likely as not to withhold a certain book from you, if she thought she dared, on the grounds that it did not seem to be a wholesome book for a person of your complexion. The air of the public library was marked with snobbery. It was usually somebody's "brainy" daughter who was given charge, and more often than not, she felt a certain contempt for the people who asked for the books she herself did not approve of.

But at the gathering of the Ontario Library Asso-