

FARM AND DAIRY

&

RURAL HOME

Issued
Each Week

Only \$1.00
a Year

Vol. XXX.

FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 20, 1911.

No. 16

THE LABOR PROBLEM--VALUABLE SUGGESTIONS BY A HIRED MAN

Every employer of farm labor will find this article exceedingly interesting. Points we often overlook are enlarged upon and they set forth why a hired man is apt to be discontented. Some thought given to the factors herein discussed will enable you to get better satisfaction from your hired man this season. The writer of this article is an upright, hard-working young man, well known to the editors of Farm and Dairy at the request of whom this special article was written.—Editor.

THE Labor Problem! How much we hear about it nowadays—from the employers' point of view. So far as the papers are concerned the laboring man is about as "mum" on the subject, important as it is to him, as the farmers used to be on the tariff. The farmer has now awakened, and is making himself heard on tariff matters to good effect. It is time we laboring men were awakening also. From my experience as a hired man I wish to give Farm and Dairy readers a few of my ideas on the labor problem, which should help farmers to better understand the labor problem they must solve.

Many are the theories advanced why labor is continually forsaking the country districts for the city. We are told that the ordinary hired man objects to country life, that the farmer cannot pay wages the employer in the city is enabled to offer, that the allurements of city life as portrayed in the newspapers, and the get-rich-quick schemes, which are talked of in every rural community, make the hum-drum existence of the farm unbearable to the average young man. In many cases, the scarcity of labor is blamed on the general "cussedness" of the hired man.

OLD COUNTRY LABORERS

Finally, when unable to get a man when he wants one, some farmer with a little more ability to write or talk than his fellows will carry his case to the reporter of the local newspaper, or to some farm journal to which he is a subscriber. A howl is raised about the great scarcity of laborers on Canadian farms and the Government is urged to bring out Old Country men to make up this deficiency. That this policy has been successful is proven by the fact that the Government insists that anyone whose passage to Canada is assisted by charitable institutions must go to work on the farms of the country.

Men who are for ever kicking about the scarcity of labor seem to ignore the fact that probably in their own neighborhood are farmers who never have any trouble to get all the help they need; that while the Government is luring out men to assist in working their farms, there are lots of men just as good in our towns and cities who would be willing to work on the farms did they find conditions congenial. Such being the case, the farmer who finds that he cannot possibly get help should put himself in the hired man's place for a while. Did he do so with an open mind, he would soon find out where the trouble lay, and the labor problem to a large extent would be solved by improving the conditions under which the man lives and works.

VIEWPOINTS IN CONTRAST

We hear much about the long hours of labor

on the farm, but to my mind the lack of employment the year round is the factor that militates most strongly against establishing a good class of working men in the country. Most farmers with whom I have come in contact plan their work so that the heaviest part of it comes in the summer and the luxury of a hired man is then indulged in. Instead of being regarded as a profit maker for his employer he is in most cases regarded as an extra expense, and his services are dispensed with as soon as possible. The city employer, I have found, looks on labor as a source of revenue. The work the employee does not only yields to him a living but a profit to his employer as well. Does not the farmer make a profit out of labor as well? If he does not, there is something wrong with his management.

Farm work must be planned so as to give the hired man employment the year round. No in-

His Favorite Paper

Editor, Farm and Dairy,—Please don't stop my paper, as I expect to go to town soon and sign for it in the Echo Office. I think a great deal of Farm and Dairy and will stop two other papers so as to have more time to read Farm and Dairy.—William Squire, Essex Co., Ont.

telligent man would be satisfied to work for his board for five or six months each year. In many of our best farming sections, however, if the hired man would stay in the country during the winter months, he must either take a very low flat rate for his wages or work for his board with little or no pay for perhaps six months. The man who is content to do this has very little ambition, and the chances are he will be a very unsatisfactory employee.

FEW FARMERS HAVE STEADY WORK

Of all my employers, and they have been numerous, only one of them had work for me in winter. This was not due to lack of appreciation of my work, for all expressed the desire to have me next season, if I was available. Most of them were willing to keep me for my board and a very small wage for the winter. Had I not desired to become thoroughly familiar with all farming operations, so as to become well qualified to run a farm of my own, I would have left the country for the city sooner than I did.

The second factor of importance, and which is almost as powerful as the first in driving hired men from the farms, is that the average farmer fails to realize that the hired man is a social animal and has the same desires for society as has his employer. This factor is provided in

most city establishments where many men work together. On the farm, however, in most cases, there is just one man. If he would have society at all, he must either be made one of the family or tramp into town after a hard day's work, which few of us wish to do.

In too many cases, even while the hired man eats with the family and is apparently one of them, he is treated as an inferior being and made to feel at all times that he is most decidedly a nuisance. Many a time have I wished that I ate in the kitchen instead of in the dining-room with the family where the talk was all over my head, where I was supposed to keep perfectly quiet, as befitted and inferior. Can you blame anyone for leaving the farm when treated in this manner? When only one man is to be kept on the farm, the farmer must realize how lonely that man is apt to be and treat him accordingly.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS MARRIED MEN

So long as the farmer maintains the attitude which he now does towards the hired man who is married and has a family, he must depend as he now does on transitory labor, which he knows is apt to be unsatisfactory. Many a hired man who has worked in the country all his life and been perfectly satisfied with conditions there finds that if he wishes to get married he must leave the country.

The hired man is only human, and his ideal is along the same lines as that of his employer, a home of his own. But the married man is not wanted in the country. If he is taken at all he must have no family and his wife must work in his employer's kitchen. This factor explains why in a great number of cases apparently satisfied and contented employees suddenly decide to seek employment in the nearby town. When the farmer contrives not only to give work the year round, but, when the young man so desires, to give him a chance to get married and live in a home of his own, the labor problem will be in a good way for a complete solution.

SMALLER POINTS

The two foregoing points I regard as the main ones. The smaller ones, such as wages and hours of labor, are the ones that we hear most about because they are the ones that are easiest appreciated. The hired man does not need to be a very deep thinker at all to chafe under the conditions on the farm when he must accept a low wage, or what he considers a low wage, and work from daylight until dark.

While the man working in town gets what looks like a larger wage, I have found after working in both places that the man on the farm will be able to save just as much in a year as will the man in the city. A good man should be worth to his employer \$25 a month the year round with board and washing. This salary compared with the \$2 a day which he would get in the city used to look small to me, but I was forgetting the other expenses which the city employee has and which I have since found from experience are large. The man who is good enough to earn \$300 in the country would be worth \$600 in the city. He would have 52 weeks' board to pay at \$3.50 (poor board at that, and often costing more), or \$182, and his washing would come