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EDITORIAL

Labor and Farming

It has come to be a stereotyped complaint, "labor is so high it takes all the profits out of farming." Many people have heard the statement so often and having paid what a few years ago would be considered extravagant wages have come to believe it as a fundamental truth that answers every question relative to the better advancement of farming. But the expensiveness or cheapness of labor is not measured by the number of dollars a man is paid each month but by the results in actual produce shown after the labor is done. Improved machinery necessitated a change in the wages paid per month.

We may expect that the cost of labor will not be less until there has been a readjustment. Labor may be expected to keep on rising as farm machinery improves and economy is effected in other ways in the use of labor, farm produce and the cost of all the necessities of life. A man at thirty dollars a month will net his employer a larger balance of profit and himself have a smaller balance than a man doing similar work a few years ago for twenty dollars.

Before finally accepting the oft repeated opinions about the cost of labor one should inquire whether or not in the long run the labor cost of raising crops is not decreasing while the actual value of land, that is, the employer's property, is increasing. It may be that it will be found that the man who complains about the high price of labor is not complimentary to his own ability to manage that labor. It is possible that the constant complaint is nothing more than an admission of lack of ability.

This question of the price of labor is worth considering by parents whose families are growing up. It is often said by such parents that "we cannot farm any longer. Our boys are growing up and are starting for themselves."

This simply means that children are discharging a filial duty according to a dollars and cents standard. As a rule, where such a condition exists, it is unsatisfactory for all concerned. It is the part of wisdom for the head of a family to so direct the assistance of his boys that it will be to the mutual advantage of all concerned, but there should never be that helpless dependence upon children in middle life that leaves parents unable to continue their undertakings a few years later.

Success in Farming Co-Operation

To obtain a supply of fresh meat on the farm during summer is a problem. Even if one is near town it is next to impossible sometimes to obtain first class beef, while the price charged usually for the kind that is sold is out of proportion to what it should be as measured by the cost of the animals. This condition is due largely to the fact that in small towns and throughout the country there is less demand than in the cities, for the cheaper cuts of meats. Buyers would rather pay eighteen or twenty cents per pound for porterhouse than five cents for chuck or shank. And where everybody wants the fair quality cuts and few are so poor that they have to buy the cheaper parts, there is bound to be demand for one and lack of demand for the other that will force up the price of the higher quality article, but may not affect oppositely the price of the less desirable ones. As a result the average price of beef is high and likely to remain so as long as the butcher's customers are prosperous enough to create a demand for the best meat.

Farmers, however, have a means of supplying themselves with first class beef during summer at cost absolutely, providing a sufficient number are willing to band together to ensure disposal at once of the entire carcass every time an animal is killed. In many sections of the country organizations under the name of beef rings have been formed and are working satisfactorily. Beef rings are rather simple forms of co-operative organizations, not of such large intentions as some of the co-operative movements that have been planned, but they have been signally successful in the work they have undertaken to do. In another column of this issue the managers of a number of the oldest and most successful rings in the West, explain the management of these organizations, and their experience should be of value to those contemplating organizing along this line. The beef ring is a good means of supplying farmers with beef during summer and is a test of a community's ability to organize for co-operative buying or selling in a larger way. If the farmers of any given district cannot unite to the extent required for the carrying on of a beef ring they are unlikely to attain to much success in any scheme of co-operation that they may undertake.

Significance of Emigration Figures

Americans have been consoling themselves regarding the exodus to prairie Canada by pointing out that, while in the fiscal year ending June 30th, 1908, 56,860 persons left the United States for Canada, 58,826 went from the Dominion to reside in Uncle Sam's domain, leaving a small balance of 1,966 in their favor. It would be interesting to know what proportion of those left each respective Province. Certainly, the blanching drain of blood which used to leave almost every Canadian community for cities in the Republic, is no longer in evidence, having been succeeded by a less-exhausting and decidedly encouraging movement of the people of the East towards their own Western country.

There is, nevertheless, a constant tendency, more or less pronounced, for a proportion of our young people to leave the land for cities either in our own or foreign countries, and, while this may never be wholly stemmed, and may, up to a certain extent, be necessary and beneficial, it points to the urgent necessity for so modifying and adapting our rural educational systems as to interest children in agriculture, and thereby retain as many as we can.

It will never do to seduce or compel our boys and girls to farm, but it is legitimate and wholesome to spare no pains so to arouse an interest in the farm as to hold all who may choose it of their own accord. The life of the farm is a rational life, and a rational education, together with a rational conception pervading the home life, will not draw children from it, save only that inevitable proportion who are better "cut out" for some other vocation. This proportion is not nearly so large as the chronic cityward drift may have lead us to suppose, but, to minimize it, we must educate our country children for the farm.

Objects of Summer Fallowing

The objects aimed for in summer fallowing differ in relative importance as the districts differ in which the practice is carried on. In older settled sections, where the soil has been cropped to grain for years and its organic matter and fertility pretty well exhausted, the elaboration of plant food, the breaking down of the cruder compounds within the soil, and the preparation of these for the use of succeeding crops, is the object sought in summer fallowing. In other districts the eradication of weeds is the primary purpose, while in others, notably the southern sections of Saskatchewan and Alberta, the first object of summer fallowing is to store moisture in the soil.

The elaboration of plant food, the eradication of weeds and the retention of moisture are objects that may be attained by methods of cultivation that are very similar, so that certain general principles may be laid down in summer fallowing and followed in practice more closely than principles that may be stated generally

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