

WITHIN driving distance of the city of Toronto are farms which can be bought for less than it cost to put up the buildings, clear, drain and fence the land.

In other words: arable lands not thirty miles from the market of a half million Canadian people, can be purchased for nothing—provided the buyer is willing to pay back a part of the capital invested in the man-made improvements.

Yet, we are wont to say that agriculture is the backbone of Canada! And so it is. Thus, the relentlessness of logic brings us to the sad conclusion that something is seriously wrong with Canada's spinal column.

Within the ten years covered by the last census, Ontario's urban population increased by 400 thousand, and Ontario's rural population decreased by 40 thousand. A vast army of new consumers, vaster than all Canada's army overseas, and 40 thousand fewer producers to feed it!

And the people are asking why there is not enough food to go around, at the old time prices!

Since the war there has been a further coursing towards the depletion of the land. Don't turn to the enlistment figures of the rural battalions to find its volume, for they tell only part of the story. From a farm I know well, five men have gone overseas; and each man enlisted in Toronto. From rural Ontario and even from the far West, men were drawn to the city of bands, white lights, theatres, crowded streets, and prodigal entertainments during the days of active recruiting. The Toronto press, ever prone to comparisons, measured loyalty by the numbers of enlistments, and boasted of the super-loyalty of the Queen City. Like the Pharisee of old, Toronto gloated in her righteousness.

And there were men who left the farm for the city—and did not enlist—men who, unskilled in mechanics, found in the munition factories a pay for an eight-hour day's work, greater than a hundred-acre farm with all its capital investment could produce.

Left to himself, the farmer bent his tired back still lower and strove to maintain the food supply. That he has succeeded so well, is a

THE STRAFERS

By MARK KETTS

marvel; that he cannot continue, is a certainty. For he cannot continue. During the past three years, production has been forced by means which cannot be indefinitely extended. In the West, wheat has been raised on stubble; and in the East, corn has been grown on unhoed fields. But the day of reckoning is at hand. It is a law of nature that food cannot be produced without a bending of backs. Like Huns, the weeds are invaders, destroying crops and spreading destruction far and near, and like Huns, they will yield only at the point of steel.

Yes, it is true: there is no permanent success in farming without backaches. That is the main reason for the trek from field to factory. Greater comforts, shorter hours, more remuneration with less manual effort: that tells the story.

All the short cuts to production have been exhausted. The farmers of Canada have the last word in mechanical implements, and production still means manual labor and drudgery. The hours have been lengthened their full course—and then stretched to the breaking point. And now the eight-hour-a-day consumers are asking the fourteen-hour-a-day food producers to hurry up and produce more food, cheap food. The men who left the land, who refuse to go back to the land, are strafing the man who stayed on the land; they are denouncing him in the columns of their press as a profiteer.

Not many weeks ago, I ran into a mob on the East-side streets of New York. Soap-box orators were driving it towards frenzy by strafing the food-producers—and they succeeded. The mob upset hucksters' carts and broke plate-glass windows, and the soap-box orators went home, doubtless satisfied that they had done a good day's work.

But these things did not lower the price of

food. And nothing will lower it, except more food. A few miles away, over on the Long Island side, was a vast area of untilled land that would have produced food if the soap-box orators and the mob had bent their backs in its cultivation.

In Toronto, John B. Robertson, of the "Telegram," and Joseph E. Atkinson, of the "Star," are raising a hue and cry against the farmer. By combine, they gather their news, by combine they regulate their advertising rates, and by combine they raised the sale price of their product one hundred per cent., and with unblushing inconsistency demand that the farmers' product shall be cheapened by government regulation. The farmer's pay for his fourteen hours a day toil diminished.

The soap-box orators of New York, and Messrs. Robertson and Atkinson, of Toronto, are not alone in seeking to turn city against country. In England there are men who strafe the food-producers. Of them, Lloyd George said, the other day:

I need hardly say, not only have I no sympathy with this abuse which has been poured upon the farmer, but I deprecate it in the strongest possible manner. It is mischievous to the last degree, and it is not true. After all, these people who have been delivering these ill-considered and pernicious attacks do not realize the precariousness of the farmer's business.

The charges of profiteering levelled against the farmers, these wanton attacks upon men who, with heavy capital investments, are laboring at remuneration which is less than the current hourly wages of the city unskilled laborer, are, in the opinion of Britain's Premier, "mischievous," "ill-conditioned," and "pernicious."

More than that, they are futile. "There is no arbitrary Law of Supply and Demand!" As well might they have said there is no Law of Gravity. Capital and labor are liquid—save under slavery—and they move to the place of most remunerative employment. And so long as greater profits and higher wages are to be made in the city, the price of food will continue to advance. Once upon a time old King Canute said the laws of nature should be broken at his command. From his gilded throne chair he strafed the waves and bade them desist, but—

CAMOU

WHEN James Whitcomb Riley was praised as the man who had introduced the real child into American literature, he remarked, "I have only been trying to do the little fellow simplest, purest justice." Writing to an old friend, notes Edmund H. Eitel in Harper's Magazine, Riley once said: "The letters from delighted fathers and mothers, and even the pencil-printed ones from the lovely little chaps themselves, all—all go to make me one of the happiest, gratefullest of men—with never a child of my own, and yet with a world of them—thank the Father of us all."

On just one occasion he was drawn into an intimate talk in which he revealed from his vivid memory of the boy he used to be the real secret of his understanding of children.

"There is always beside me the little boy I used to be, and I can think his thoughts, and live his hopes and his tragedies now, just as much as I could when I looked like him."

"We have great times together—this little boy and I—and we are never more intimate than when some other little child is near us. I have sat here by the fire, or by somebody else's fire, and have seen a little, strange child come into the room when it seemed as if he must know how much alike we were and that I must go and talk



—Frank King in Cartoons Magazine.

This brave new word runs to and fro,
As Arras-Lille despatches show,
Marking the trick, with artful grace,
Which cheats the Hun before his face—
Old canvas, painted with a throw.

Hear pseudo-statesmen all aglow;
With patriot-phrase their plans o'erflow;
Mere platitudes and common-places:
Just camouflage.

Placards obscure the hustings. Row
On row they flash—each flash a blow
For King—or whom? God, we could
trace
Thy guiding hand when passions flow
O'er Canada, should men forego
Base camouflage.

—Reuben Butchart

FLAGE

with him. But I never did go to him right away, or call him to me. Why? Because the little boy I used to be was at my elbow, and I remembered very well how he used to like to have people treat him. Was it the people who made an affectionate rush at him and caught him up and covered him with kisses who won his heart? No, it was the people whose hearts he thought he had won.

"So with this little, strange child in the room, I would sit still and pretend to be talking with the grown-up people. But I never ceased to be conscious of him for a minute—only I wouldn't have let him know that for the world. I wooed him instead as subtly as ever lover wooed a sweetheart—and, when you consider it, a lover woos as if his sweetheart were a child, under-valuing what is too easily won, and overestimating what is hard to possess. . . . So I would hold out my hand to the child with all the absent-mindedness I could muster, and I would keep on talking. The little, strange child would watch like a little, shy rabbit, and come a little nearer, and a little nearer, and finally he would be standing with my arm around him, and all the while I would be talking to some one else, and not seeming to pay him the slightest attention."