

The Rural Problem.

The problem of getting and retaining men and women on the farms grows no less. The last census shows that conditions in Eastern Canada are very disappointing, and in our own West, the growth of the towns has more than kept pace with the settlement of the rural districts. One of the most striking facts is that young women seem to be even more anxious than young men to leave the country for the town. The problem is one worthy of serious consideration. Everybody is of the opinion that our hope is in the soil, and one of our first efforts must be to have it occupied by prosperous and happy people.

Now, there is a reason for every condition, and the reasons for farm desertion are many. Unfortunately the chief reasons are often overlooked. It would be more than interesting to get the views of our readers on this point. Our country goes to great expense and trouble to induce settlers to come here, and it is very disappointing to find that no sooner are some of them nicely and comfortably settled than they proceed to sell out and move to the nearest town. If the old people do not want to have the homestead the young people refuse to remain, and that settles the matter.

In the last fifty years the factory has taken the place of the home. As a result workers have flocked to the centres. The percentage of people in towns and cities has increased from twelve to forty. All this was natural and unavoidable. The disquieting feature is that in the one great industry which requires men and women of courage, industry and intelligence, there are comparatively few willing workers. Farming is not very popular, especially with young people, and all the eloquence of writers, political leaders and professional men of all kinds does not seem to make it so. Indeed, a speaker's unwillingness to adopt farming as a vocation often varies inversely as the number and power of his arguments in favor of farming as a business and of the farm as a home for young people.

Theoretically, the arguments in favor of farm life are very conclusive. There is good air, splendid exercise, quiet, beauty of environment, independence and freedom from many of the temptations of the towns. And yet people leave all this for the sake of city associations, and there must be reasons. These are of two kinds. In the first place, there are disadvantages and discomforts on the farm; and in the second place the town has, or seems to offer, greater opportunities and attractions.

Among the disadvantages of the farm are these—the physical discomforts, the lack of modern conveniences, the difficulties of travel, the poor opportunities for education, the loneliness of the solitary life. Added to this the laws of the land are decidedly in favor of the moneyed man in the factory-town, and the possibility of making an honest living is to the farmer rendered as difficult as possible. The lack of companionship is felt, especially by the women and the young people, the continuous manual labor and the long hours during the busy seasons are certainly very trying. And these are only samples of the drawbacks. On the other hand the call of the town is strong and persistent. It spells opportunity, choice, social companionship, better dress, greater conveniences, more luxuries, cash payment for services, amusements, variety. Of course, to the young man or woman who moves to the town all these advantages are not realized. Life is often much more trying and miserable than on the farm. On the whole it is not nearly so enjoyable, but experience alone reveals this.

As people are constituted today they are attracted by the thought of wealth, ease, position, companionship, and they make sacrifices to obtain these. It is because the city seems to hold out opportunities that are lacking in the country, so many young people desert the farm. The cure for the situation is, first of all, to show that many of the seemingly advantages of the city are not real, and the second is to enrich country life where it is lacking, so that there will be no disadvantage whatever. It is evidently impossible to surround the dwellers on the farm with every city luxury, just as it is impossible for to put the townsman in possession of all the good things of the country, but there is plenty of room for enrichment of the farm life, and this enrichment is the very first necessity.

The young people may as well understand to begin with that for most people in this country the farm offers as good opportunities for money-making as any other calling, and this notwithstanding the fact that trade conditions are unfair to the farmer. So, too, the labor is no more exacting, the hours no longer, than those of the average worker in the town. In these days, too, the position of farmers is not only as honorable, but is generally considered as honorable as any in the land. But when it comes to companionship, physical comforts, and opportunities for culture and enjoyment, then is real difficulty to be faced. The way out of the difficulty is for farm-

ers, individually and collectively, to aim at improved conditions. Good roads and good schools—these are almost first in importance, and both are possible. Then come improved dwellings, with some pretence of refinement and some opportunity for privacy. Libraries and suitable play things for old and young—these will make the evenings pass pleasantly and profitably. The home should be better than the stable. The wife should have as many modern conveniences in the kitchen and dairy as the husband has in the field. If he can afford a hired man, she can afford a maid if one is to be found. The children, too, are to be treated if they were more valuable than the stock. If the ranch boy gets sixty dollars a month and board, the school teacher should get an equal amount. The only place where we can get a real home is in the country. There are few counter attractions. Young people do not leave the fireside to be entertained. The first duty of farmers, a duty surpassing that of adding to the acreage or the herd, is to make the home a place in which mother and children will delight to live. That is the real solution of the rural problem. For where there is sweet home life, there is the best companionship, and there is none of that monotony which has, after all, more to do with distaste of the country than anything else. That which holds every time is the home feeling. When this is backed up by social enjoyment, the neighbors young and old meeting from time to time for mutual improvement and entertainment, the farm will seem to be, and, indeed, will be, the most satisfactory place in which one can spend his days.

EXPRESS RATES.

It is impossible for express and freight rates in Western Canada to remain as they are for much longer. In the United States the express companies say that they will not be able to stand a fifteen per cent. reduction. Of course, they ignore the fact that their stock is so thoroughly watered. If all the facts were known, would it be surprising to learn that the real dividends on express company stock, so far as Western Canada is concerned, is not six per cent., but more nearly five times this rate? One thing is certain, that the public regard the present rates as unduly excessive, and if they cannot be reduced to a reasonable basis, there is only one solution, namely, that the government must establish a parcels post service similar to that in the Mother Land. The question of cheaper transportation of commodities is only part of a larger question, that of protecting the people against the exactions of privileged monopoly.

STRIKES.

Another big strike ended, and nothing settled; but employers, employees, and general public all in a worse position! Surely there is justification for the third element to begin to assert its rights in this matter. In every community the individual's rights and privileges must be limited, because the general public has also its rights and privileges. When two men engage in a street brawl, the police, as representing the public, soon make it clear that every breach of the peace is community affair. There is no great difference in the case of many of our strikes, and the settlement of difficulties should be referred to regularly-appointed commissioners. These would see that some measure of justice is dealt out to both parties concerned, while the chief sufferer, the general public, is protected.

THE MARRIAGE QUESTION.

The decision of the Privy Council on the questions submitted touching marriage leaves matters just about where they were. The vital point has not yet been settled, but it must be just as soon as the Hebert case is up for decision. What the home-makers in Canada are anxious to know is simply this: (1) Is a marriage between two persons, one or both of whom are Catholics, when solemnized by other than a Roman Catholic priest, legally binding either in Quebec or any other province of Canada? The decision on this point is awaited with eagerness. A *Ne Temere* decree is all well and good when promulgated among the faithful as a guide to action, but when by a legislature it is practically incorporated into the laws of the land it is an entirely different thing.

GOVERNMENT BY COMMISSION.

After all, nothing is more sensible than government by commission. We are coming to that more and more. It is absurd, when one thinks of it, for four or five men of ordinary knowledge and ability to determine the policies of a province in such matters as transportation, education, public morals, trade relations. Governments do well in all matters where

accurate and comprehensive information is necessary to wise action, to call upon men and women who have had special opportunities for research and whose decisions are not likely to be biased by personal or party considerations. In Manitoba, the Telephone Commission, in Saskatchewan the Telephone Commission and the Elevator Commission, give illustrations of what can be accomplished when men who know are called upon to collect information and offer advice. Nearly all mistakes in government, not due to party or personal influence, arise from the habit that political leaders have of deciding great issues in their own small wisdom. The worst of it is they think they know it all.

Now the cheapest and safest commissioners that a province could have for most purposes could be selected from members of the civil service and the state educational institutions, provided care is taken in the appointment of these. Why should not every piece of agricultural legislation be approved or censured by the Deputy Minister of Agriculture and any experts that there may be at the Agricultural College? Why should not the instructor in civil engineering in the university be advisor to the Minister of Public Works? Why should not the teachers of science in the university be asked to direct their best efforts to solving local problems affecting human, animal and vegetable life? Why should not the professor of economics be asked for expert knowledge before laws are enacted touching upon trade relations? Why should not the professor in geology be an expert on good roads? Why should any move in temperance legislation, education or moral reform of any kind be attempted until the opinions of the best informed are secured? The sooner legislation is entrusted to those who have the necessary knowledge, rather than to those who have accidental authority, the better.

CONSERVATION.

The following from an American farming paper is well worth reading. If Americans have reason to feel alarmed, how should we view things in Canada today?

In July, Chancellor Lloyd George got into operation his Workmen's Insurance Act, the most radical sociological legislation in the laws of any nation; and now he announces in a signed statement: "We intend to put our hands to the great work of freeing the land, which was meant for the use of the many, but which has drifted into the hands of the few—to the work of freeing it for the people and their children forever." It would seem that England, with its 36,075,269 population on 58,575 square miles, would be making use of every inch of its soil; but there are thousands of acres unused and the land conditions are deplorable. How they got that way and how these conditions can be unravelled is a problem for that very extraordinary man, Lloyd George.

We should watch the process with attention; interest, and in the meanwhile we might look at our own land conditions. The following statement or variations of it are repeatedly made in Congress without contradiction: "Out of the 784,647,308.77 acres of public lands which have been disposed of by the government, fully 350,000,000 have been granted to speculators and corporations. The railroads received land grants of about 200,000,000—a perfect empire." Another statement made in Congress and not denied is that these railroad lands are now worth at least \$25 an acre. According to the last census we had in the United States 850,000,000 acres of farm lands, improved and unimproved—and the unimproved reached nearly 425,000,000 acres.

These are big figures, but even they hardly let us grasp the fact that we are using less than a fourth of our land area. More than three-fourths of the United States is uncultivated. In the course of time our population of a hundred millions is to increase to hundreds of millions, and, looking ahead even half the length that England has gone in her history, we see the potential value of all these idle acres. That is why the fight to keep our land and to improve the land laws and to strengthen the whole cause of conservation is so important in the United States.

THE BULL MOOSE.

A new party, or rather, a new movement. The significant thing about it is, not the leader, but the principles advocated. He may pass away and many of the Adullamites in his camp may return to their old love, but the idea of government for the people by the people will remain. While the extreme naturalism of the new movement is overlooked (and the declaration of a national policy in such an extreme form was no doubt a political necessity), there is little on the platform that will not commend favorable criticism. Although the "Bull Moose" may not be in our minds our ideal character, not so captivating indeed as the nominee of the Democratic party, we are forced to admire his strength and to endorse most of his policy.