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RAKER-FAKERS.

FOR the most part an American periodical resembles Talkative in the Bedford Tinker's dream. It deals with things heavenly or things earthly, things moral or things evangelical, things sacred or things profane, things foreign or things at home, things more essential or things circumstantial—provided that all be done with "profit." And, like guileless Faithful, the workaday reader (listening to Lawson's screaming, or to a mud-raker's moral spasms) exclaims:

"What a brave companion have we got! Surely this man will make a very excellent pilgrim!"

But "they dew say, down East," that there are raker-fakers as well as nature-fakers—and that it is not, for instance, an unheard of thing for a patchwork photograph to figure in a magazine's morality campaign.

Following upon variorum readings of municipal, financial and legislative "revelations," the magazines have lately dished up some delectable specimens of parasites and bacteria. After making a descriptive acquaintance with the Hook-worm, Pellagra, and a few other new-world and old-world horrors, the average reader wonders whether his own mortal coil will not be shuffled off by a compilation of everything except Housemaid's Knee.

NEWSPAPER **H**AVING diagnosed all mention-able (and some not so mention-able) ills of the flesh and of the body politic, the popular press is now analyzing economic problems. Within the last few weeks the newspapers have discovered what everyone has known for some years back—that the Cost of Living has been rising. So, some new thrills are being given the public by displaying this patent fact in upper-case scare-headings.

But fact must be explained by theory. Therefore, theories are being furnished and acted upon—with prompt hysteria. The trades unionist resolves to eat no meat while the trust standeth. But his abstinence offendeth his brother the farmer, who straightway boycotts the city worker's manufactured product. Meanwhile, the fish-dealer with "gently smiling jaws" asks a few cents a pound extra for the fancy denizens of his cold-storage warehouse.

Away back in the heyday of Bryanism, the cry was that falling commodity prices were rushing America to the demnation bow-wows. Now the

favoured view is that rising prices are heading the public in the same direction. And certainly the man on fixed salary—as distinguished from the union wage-earner on the one hand and the "undertaking capitalist" on the other—has been having no easy time of it. But it is not necessary to jump to the conclusion that there will never be any easing-up apart from legislative enactment. Beyond an effort to prevent flagrant cases of restraint of trade, state interference is likely to result in confusion worse confounded.

Any exact solution of the problem of rising prices remains among Lord Dundreary's category of things that no fellow can find out. But there are economic principles that go far towards explaining the general phenomenon. And the consideration of these gives basis for the hope that readjustment, in some measure, will come about in the natural course of supply and demand.

Neither trusts nor the world's increasing gold supply would seem the main influence in advancing prices. A factor more potent than either has been a greater increase in consumption than in production of natural products. But there are already signs that point to some gradual correction of this. The rush of agricultural immigrants to our own West is one; another, the practical agitation that American farmers should more intensively cultivate the soil. Also, city dwellers not a few are heeding the cry of "Back to the land"—attracted by agriculture's unprecedented promises of reward.

OIL AND **M**ISQUOTATIONS from reports of the Dominion Geological Survey are apparently being used by some of the oil companies widely advertised as operating in Western Canada. Thus far the operating seems to have been chiefly upon the pockets of unwary investors, by means of what H. G. Wells, in his story of a patent-medicine king, terms "that alluring, button-holing, just-let-me-tell-you-soberly-something-you-ought-to-know style of newspaper advertising."

That oil is to be one of the future assets of the Canadian West seems altogether probable. But the West is a big place, and likely to be prodded by a good many drills that fail to strike oil. Some more concrete evidence should be asked than a printed chart with a score of oil-wells "provided for in the ground plans of the company."