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EDITORIAL.

The Exodus to the Country Districts.

A Milwaukee, Wis., despatch states that Fred Pabst, the former president of the Pabst Brewing Co., and one of the most widely-known millionaires in Wisconsin, having acquired a fine stock farm, to go into the business of stock-raising on an elaborate plan, is now enrolled at the University of Wisconsin, taking the course in agriculture. The incident lends point to a recent observation of President Creelman, of the Ontario Agricultural College, that the problem city people are now trying to solve is how to get back to the farm. It looks as though the tide of rural exodus is turning backwards, and the difficulty of the future will be to keep people in the stuffy, congested atmosphere of the towns. No doubt some will enquire what good it will do to send more people to the country to increase production and make competition keener. What good will it do? It will strengthen the ranks of agriculture immensely and infuse hope and confidence into the business, for these men will have realized the unsatisfying character of urban attractions, and have returned to the farm with a high and true appreciation of the real dignity, possibilities and attractions of farm work and life. They will be, to a large extent, a progressive element, just as in the past the cityward migration has robbed the farm of much of its more progressive element, leaving the country population poorer in enterprise, poorer in average calibre, and deprived of that spirit of hope and enthusiasm always so necessary to keep an occupation out of the hopeless dead-level. Progress is cumulative; nothing succeeds like success. On the other hand, nothing so repels an enterprising youth as the prospect of an occupation—judged, as he must always judge it, by the examples around him—without future, without much emolument, and without apparent compensating advantages. This is how farm life has looked to many of our boys in the past, this is why it has not appealed. The new agriculture we are developing will change all this; it is gradually convincing our young people that it offers unparalleled advantages and opportunities to those who use and prize them aright. So we are keeping more of our best men on the farm, and will even reinforce their ranks from the cream of the city population. With the stimulus resulting, agriculture will develop wonderfully on this continent, and the new blood, the new hope, the new outlook, will give us power and courage to grapple with the onerous economic conditions which, since time immemorial, have deprived farmers, among other producers of much of the fruits of their toil. It has been estimated by economists, and they are probably not far wrong, that if no wealth in the world were wasted, and all effort were applied to good advantage, two hours' labor a day on the part of every capable man would keep all the world in comfort. We are not preaching socialism. We do not believe in all being recompensed equally, for such a regime would remove the necessary reward of effort. The time will never come—should never come—when all will share alike. There will always be a premium for ability, and those who think will continue to govern those who toil. But long before we reach the Utopian era mankind will have evolved a system of production, commerce and distribution that will prevent the hoarding of those outrageous billionaire fortunes hoarded, sometimes by legitimate, sometimes by illegitimate, but always by extortionate means, in the pockets of the hitherto nearly helpless producers, to whom some part of the wealth is, by the magnanimity, returned as clarity, though

much more is amassed to increase the leverage of the few, or to be squandered, mayhap, by a profligate posterity on wanton indulgence of a cultivated passion for criminally-extravagant luxury. As someone has recently reminded us, there are two classes in the world—those who farm (using the word in a broad sense as including all forms of production), and those who farm the farmers. The latter are a privileged class, who apply the screws for all their victims will stand.

The problem of the future will be to eliminate the abuses of extortion, and enable producers, especially farmers, to reap a larger share of the fruits of their efforts. The problem will be an enormous one. It will take ages of time and demand all the ability of our ablest and clearest philosophers. But there is no evading it, no standing still, no turning back; and the progressive element the new agriculture is attracting to its ranks are the men who will aid in its solution.

The Present Status of the Hog Controversy.

The conference in Toronto last month between the representatives of the Wm. Davies Co. and certain parties on behalf of the farmers, pretty effectually dispelled the suspicion that the above company were in collusion with other firms of pork-packers to control prices, and seemed further to indicate that a healthy competition exists among all Canadian pork-packers. The evidently sincere spirit in which the delegation were received by the management, will tend, also, to eliminate from the hog-marketing controversy the spirit of accusation and recrimination which, in the absence of mutual understanding, developed on both sides, so as to threaten amicable discussion. While all this is matter for congratulation, it will not do to lose sight of the original conditions which precipitated the discussion at the Winter Fair. There were three grievances there ventilated—the importation in bond of American hogs, the wide seasonal and yearly fluctuations in prices of hogs, and the fact that under the present system of buying farmers receive exactly the same price for culls as for selects. The objections to the bonding privileges were, first, the danger of introducing and spreading disease; second, the fear that the reputation of our bacon might be compromised on the British market; third, that it was unfair to the farmer to suffer the competition of American hog-raisers, seeing that, on account of the peculiar character of our trade, which demands a certain class of hog, the United States is never a market of any advantage to the Canadian swine producer; if there can be no competition by American with Canadian packers, there should be none by American with Canadian farmers, especially since it admittedly costs us more to raise our hogs. The importation of American hogs lent bitterness to the resentment of the farmer at the fluctuations in hog prices, and led to the natural suspicion that the periodic scarcity and consequent high prices following discouragingly low prices, kept lower than necessary, it was feared, by combination of packers, was partly due to the bonding privilege, which enabled the latter to maintain too independent an attitude on the matters of prices and non-discrimination. Just how far the inference was warranted we do not know; perhaps there was less in it than we commonly supposed, but we are strongly convinced that the abrogation of the bonding privilege was eminently fair, and besides tending to preserve the reputation of our bacon, has conducted to place packers and hog-raisers on a more even-handed basis.

The conference at Toronto left little room for

doubt that there is among packers a healthy competition for hogs, it being pointed out that the very keenness of the demand ordinarily resulted in each firm coming to the other's prices as quickly and accurately as possible, and it being further shown that the occasional difference in prices between one locality and another was due to particular stress of competition in one section or another where buyers at the same or neighboring points happened to be competing on behalf of their respective firms. The fact that in a great many localities there is no semblance of competition, was ascribed to the machinations of local buyers, and to the fact that in many of these cases prospects did not warrant the expectation of shipping more than one deck a week. The conclusion, therefore, was that, in general, prices are governed by the supply of hogs, the price of bacon in Britain, and a number of contributory factors with influence the keenness of the packers' desire for hogs. Under these conditions prices must vary, and, as was pointed out by Mr. Flavelle, nothing but a combination could preserve any more uniform values. He significantly added that no doubt but for the pride of some of those engaged in the business, the natural result would happen and a combination be formed. On the whole, we consider present competitive conditions are decidedly preferable to combination, even though they do permit extreme fluctuations in prices; and as we said in our report, with the bonding privilege rescinded, and with the assurance that competition exists among packers, we should have no kick coming on either of the first two points of controversy. The question of supply may safely—in fact, we believe, will necessarily—be left to work out itself, and one of the natural ways in which it will do this is for some of the shrewder farmers to consult their own interests by dipping into hogs heavily when they are down at rock bottom, and steering shy of the hogpen when prices reach top notch. Succeeding extremes of prices are as inevitable as the swing of the clock's pendulum, and when more farmers act accordingly, they will make more money and prove a powerful factor in maintaining regular supplies, and thus mitigating extremes of values.

As to a point that has been incidentally raised—whether the farmer gets as much profit out of the business as the packer—we may say that we do not believe he does, any more than he gets full value for other things he raises; but there is no immediate remedy for this condition of affairs, and there is probably about as healthy competition for the product of his hogpen as for the product of his dairy, his horse stable, or his cattle barns. The economic problems of distribution are alluded to in a general way in another column, but we have no faith in the efficacy or wisdom of any attempt to raise prices for hogs by means of periodic conferences of farmers and packers, useful as such conferences might be in other ways. If co-operation can be entered into successfully to cure hogs, well and good, but we incline to think it will require to be organized on a different basis than any such enterprise hitherto attempted in this country.

There is one point, however, on which we still take strong ground. That is the matter of non-discrimination in price for selects. The Wm. Davies Co. made it pretty clear that the main reason they do not insist on discrimination at the farms is to avoid embarrassment to their buyers. There is no doubt they would be subjected to considerable vexation and loss, particularly when hogs are high, and since a home market exists for a certain quantity of fat pork, it is not hard to understand why the packers are willing that the farmer be paid a straight price. Mr. Flavelle points out that they never got a higher propor-