

The Labor Problem.

HERE are, perhaps, few questions to-day which confront the average agriculturist and afford so much material for his serious consideration as that of obtaining a sufficient supply of laborers at the required season. Strange it is that in this day of agricultural writers, when so much is being said regarding the influences which hinder or promote progressive farming, very little has been brought before the public mind on this important subject.

Reports from the leading agricultural districts throughout Ontario during the last two years have led to the conclusion that the demand for efficient farm hands is much greater than the supply. To such an extent has this want been felt that in many sections farmers have not been able to complete the season's operations in as systematic a manner as desired. Then, too, this shortage has had the effect of raising wages to a point, in many cases, beyond that which the farmer could afford to pay. In this the laborer cannot be blamed. Supply and demand has always ruled the rate of wages and, indeed, the laborer cannot be said to have received, in most instances at least, more than he should. The principal difficulty, therefore, appears to lie in the fact that many farmers are not conducting their business in such a way as to make labor worth its cost.

The chief factor in creating a scarcity of laborers has undoubtedly been the opening up of the Canadian Northwest. Up to the time of the "boom" in that country, Ontario was fully equipped with bone and muscle of the right quality to make the wheels of agriculture turn with profit to the farmer. However, what the Ontario farmer has lost in this connection has truly been a gain to Canada as a nation and to those individuals who have availed themselves of so grand an opportunity of obtaining an independent home. The failure to get steady employment has also led a large number of our most ambitious young men to seek a broader sphere. In most cases this has resulted in an irretrievable loss to the Province. The tendency among husbandmen, generally, appears to be to so arrange their work that additional labor is only required for a short period during any season. No wise employee can therefore afford to linger long