

Remedy for Food Shortage

EDITOR "THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE":

In the issue of September 23 there was an article headed, "The Alleged World Food Shortage," by Alan McDiarmid.

According to Mr. McDiarmid the food shortage exists only in the minds of certain modern prophets. Mr. McDiarmid also states that there is plenty of vacant land in various parts of the world to take care of any increase of population. The writer believes that is quite true, if said land is brought into cultivation right away. Why then the high cost of living? Why do clothes cost from three to five times pre-war cost? Why does a meal, costing 25 to 50 cents a few years ago, now cost 75c. to \$1.50? Why do city dwellers say that they do not live as well as when wages were low? The writer believes it is simply because of an improper distribution of population between city and country. The high wages prevailing during the war drew the men and women from the land, and in consequence there is a greater proportion of the population living in the towns and cities than on the land. Well, what has that got to do with it? The most of our clothing and food comes from the farm, and just at present there are not enough people growing food and clothing, I mean the raw materials, to feed and clothe themselves and the urban population properly. Just here let us consider wealth and what it is. When most of us think of wealth we think of money. Now money, while it may be accepted as wealth, is in reality more a representative of wealth than it is real wealth. Farms, stock, grain, hay, implements, buildings, railways, steamships, are a few examples of real wealth, but money is only the value or a medium which makes trading easy. If one were to take a trip to London it would be rather awkward to bring some hay or potatoes, or grain, or some butter, and give it to the station agent for a ticket. So money is only a certificate for work or grain, stock, etc., which we can exchange for something else. Some six years ago the war came along, and immediately men were drawn from all walks of life to fight, and to make munitions, clothes, and supplies. Lives were lost and tremendous quantities of wealth in the form of metals, wool, cotton, food, and various other forms of wealth were destroyed on the battle fields or sunk at sea, besides being wasted. Probably not much actual money by comparison was destroyed, but the value of wealth consisting of lives and property destroyed, expressed in money terms, was staggering. So, while destruction of property went on credit was extended in the form of paper money by the various countries, and money became plentiful, but real wealth was destroyed, and in consequence all the nations engaged in the war came through the war much poorer than when they started, as far as real wealth was concerned, but vastly richer in money, or, more properly speaking, debts.

Well, why don't the people go right back to the land and grow food? For various reasons. One is when the war and high wages drew the help from the land we raised less grain, less cattle, less hogs, less milk, less horses, and, generally speaking, we haven't the work to do to use all available help right away—that takes time, two or three years, to build up our stock of cattle and horses. For farm help we need well-trained men. There are so many varieties of work on a farm that a green man would be more of a hindrance than a help, no matter how willing and energetic he might be to aid. Besides, the cost of labor just at present is so unsettled that we do not feel inclined to take the risk of hiring men. In the meantime, war-torn Europe has not yet adjusted itself to pre-war conditions of production, and, in consequence, financiers are waiting for things to settle a little before much exporting is done. Food and clothing are scarce, labor unsettled, railways in difficulties, and a great many lines of manufactured articles unsaleable, so it appears that there may be a great deal of suffering before we all become properly adjusted, no matter how willing we are to work. So while there is plenty of vacant land to feed everyone yet, before it can be brought into a productive state there may be very, very hard times.

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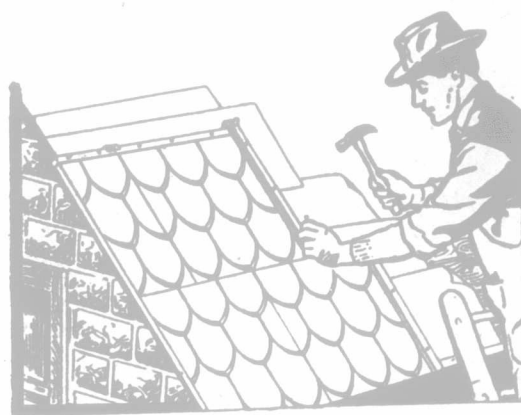
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