

A Balanced Population.

EDITOR "THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE":

A place in the Canadian Temple of Benefactors awaits the statesman who clears the way to a satisfactory solution of the problem of Rural Depopulation. If clearly recognized and honestly faced the prospects for redress of conditions will be better than shutting our eyes in a policy of drift. In cattle rearing, a balanced ration is a consideration. So in the state a proper balance between town and rural people is essential. The abnormal and inequitable concentration of population in cities and towns is not peculiar to Canada, nor is it new. Although mitigated by improvements in the administration of civic affairs, the consequences, as in the past, are injurious. "Farmer's Advocate" readers are well aware that the war increased the volume and speed of the townward current. Existing conditions have driven up the cost of living in Canada for an average family from \$7.72 per week in January 1914 to \$15.30 in Jan. 1920. In nearly everything he buys the farmer feels the pinch. Fifty cities in the United States also report a further advance between Dec. 15, 1919 and Jan. 15, 1920. Curtailment resorted to in supplies of food like milk is especially detrimental to the young. The results of depletion in the ranks of those who till the soil do not end with the food question. Over pressure in trying to keep pace with the call for production when the farm is undermanned, impairs both equipment and worker, making it difficult to maintain rural institutions at a proper standard for the wellbeing of the country as a whole. Apart from the drift of men, young and older, the departure of so many young women from the farm home for professional and town occupations, is serious. Not to mention other considerations it entails heavier burdens upon the housewife left behind who requires more help and repose as her years creep on. She observes what seems to be the greater leisure of her town sister and so when John catches the fever to sell out and move in, she seconds the motion. Numbers who made this shift a few years ago now say they rue the day. Cities have always depended for re-invigoration by draft of fresh rural blood but we have passed the limit of what can be spared. In all directions towns are yet clamoring for more people and Municipal Housing Commissions are rushing up new dwellings, while rural houses stand vacant and farms double in size. We are not without warning of the peril of crowding population in towns. In tracing the downfall of once powerful Rome, the eminent French historian of past civilizations, Dr. Charles Seignobos, records that the old Roman people consisted of small proprietors who cultivated their own land. This gave the nation an honest and robust people. Later on many of them perished in wars. The lands fell into fewer hands, great domains were created. The state hired foreign soldiers to do its fighting and dragged home thousand of slaves who were sent in bands to cultivate the lands not devoted to grazing. As the farms were drained of their stock the city filled up and became corrupt and immoral. To relieve the tedium of lines given over to luxury, vast schemes of entertainment were devised, such as the circus, enlarged under Nero until it provided accommodation for from 250,000 to 385,000 spectators before who finally in combat games thousands of persons were slaughtered. The people lived chiefly to be amused and fed and the collapse of the nation followed. In a general way that indicates the tendency and history has a remarkable way of repeating itself.

Rural depopulation is not a Canadian peculiarity. In the United States it is probably more marked and menacing. A survey completed last year by Federal and State authorities showed that in New York there were 24,000 habitable farm houses vacant. From nearly all the agricultural areas of the republic come bitter complaints of insufficient farm help to produce the necessities of life for the towns. The States have not done so well in tenantry farm houses as in making city millionaires of whom our neighbor, Michigan, for example, has 150, while other states have still greater numbers. Californians are smarting under the humiliating experience of seeing their splendid lands passing into the hands of Japanese whom they detest and have been lately agitating for the importation of the more docile and less aggressive Chinamen to do the work that Americans will not perform because they want to live in town and share in its business. A similar issue has cropped up in British Columbia and the Dominion Government is asked to prevent orientals and undesirable aliens from owning, leasing or otherwise controlling lands in Canada. In England one of the first impressions of a visitor before the war, was the vast stretches of beautiful land unoccupied, while millions were huddled in cities. Nor has the trend ceased. Just lately a Manchester suburb contracted for the erection of 1,000 additional new houses. Across the Channel, France with all its superb natural advantages and its famous system of productive small holdings, which many Canadians have admired, is now experiencing rural depopulation. The other day the French Minister of Agriculture, deplored the stampede of thousands of agriculturists from fertile land for the ease of the city so that the republic was not producing half enough to feed its people.

Manifestly, it is not easy to prescribe quick cure remedies for an ailment so widespread and deep rooted. On certain aspects of this subject the views of Herbert Hoover deserve consideration. As American Food Administrator during the war, he had an extensive experience at home and in Europe and emerged with so good a reputation as to make him a Presidential possibility. Speaking recently before the Western

Society of Engineers at Chicago, he said unless Agriculture kept pace with Industry the States would be forced to resort to importing food stuffs. As the prime essential he laid it down that farming must be made so economically attractive that it will draw into its service its full proportion of American life. In other words agriculture and industrialism should fairly supplement each other. With that position, Canadians can certainly concur. In normal times the price of the farmer's main productions are adjusted along the Atlantic seaboard, in competition with other sources of the world's food supply. Notwithstanding his vast home market, he said the American farmer was getting less of the consumer's purchase price than the farmer of most other civilized countries. He, therefore, favored the removal of impediments to the free and speedy distribution of foods and incidentally the improvement of the St. Lawrence water way from the Great Lakes to the seaboard, and the development of co-operative distribution among producers. Freer access by the farmer to his supplies ought also to be beneficial, one might infer.

Coming nearer home a daily newspaper correspondent who probably has seen about as much as anybody of past immigrations campaigns puts the needs of Ontario alone at 200,000 farm workmen. Securing this help from Great Britain he dismisses as hopeless and looks to Europe for immigrants whose descendants will "remain on the land for two or three generations." If this country interposed no bars against disqualifications inimical to Canadian citizenship no doubt, thousands of Europeans would gladly escape here from their war-aggravated miseries. Coming with the understanding that they will conform with the laws and usages that have proven their value to a free people such as have made this country, then they should be made welcome and be generously used. But we have a right to protect ourselves from the ills that plague Europe. Canadians are averse to further augmenting foreign slums in the cities or duplicating un-Canadian farm groups as in the West. For Ontario, the writer referred to, advised the "continental system of intensive farming" but did not show how peasant habits and land tenure a century old are to be introduced here. Heretofore much of the immigration designed for rural Ontario simply re-flowed like water through a sieve into commercial and industrial centres so that farmers grew sick and tired trailing to employment agencies.

Relying more upon the increase and nurture of our own native-born population, growth will be less rapid but in the long run better. Sooner or later, by the stern experience of high prices and hunger perhaps, thousands crowding the cities will get over the idea that the "chief end of man" is ease and entertainment. The natural advantages and security of rural life, persistently set forth, will yet be recognized. Town and country need to work together. We had better set our faces steadily against the mistaken disinclination to physical labor necessary in the production of milk, cream, poultry, pork, vegetables, roots, fruit, etc. As the principles involved are understood, intelligent practice become less irksome. When young people of the farm reach the age and thought of embarking in other occupations, they should be accorded definite and liberal compensation for their services with an interest in returns as has been suggested in these pages. Still more important, arrangements should be devised that they will have early access to land and a home of their own, without those vexatious delays that have driven so many into other pursuits in the past. With the many modern means of recreation now easily available, rural farm home life can be made as it ought to be, the most satisfying and joyous in the world. Pending remedial measures in relation to food transportation and tariffs the foregoing simpler suggestions which people can themselves adopt, will be found practical and effectual in counteracting the alluring tinkle, tinkle, tinkle of the towns' golden bell.

Middlesex Co., Ont.

ALPHA

CANADA'S YOUNG FARMERS AND FUTURE LEADERS.

An Effectual Handicap.

EDITOR "THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE":

Under the title, "A Modern Handicap," a writer in "The Farmer's Advocate" asserted that one of the difficulties present day rural young men are meeting is lack of proper agricultural education. In his eyes practical experience supplemented by book knowledge is ideal equipment for a would-be farmer, and he deplores the fact that, in so far as book knowledge is concerned, educational facilities have not kept pace with agricultural development, in proof of which he points to the Ontario Agricultural College as a sort of oasis in a desert. There may be a good deal of truth in what he says, but as a real difficulty it doesn't amount to much. To my way of thinking, lack of modern dollars is a far greater handicap than lack of education, proper or otherwise, and no particular evidence is needed to support this statement.

As an example of what I venture to say is common to hundreds of rural young men, take my own case. The good fortune of being born and raised on a farm with the comforting prospect of unlimited help in the shape of live stock and implements from Dad when I staked my claim on a nearby hundred acres was not mine; and so, before I can make a start I must build up a

cash reserve. Building material, however, is very elusive and as yet no one has turned green with envy at my success in capturing it; but still, little by little I have raised a bank account to a point where, if it stretches its neck, it can view the promised land of respectability. At present, however, owing to the rising propensities of farms and farm necessities it seems as though it is going ahead backwards and the question, born of impatience, arises: Shall I borrow at six or more per cent. and pin my faith to pipe dream, bumper crops to square accounts?

I have viewed this question from a good many angles but I abhor debt, and consequently I have invariably sought to solve the problem by other means. At one time my blood leaped at the thought of a bush farm in New Ontario—"There", said I, "lies the solution!" After much cautious inquiry, however, and due consideration, I reached the conclusion that I wasn't born to be a pulpwood chopper where the mercury hibernates for the winter. I couldn't see any adequate compensation at all. Independence itself would be dear at the price. And then there came before my seeking mind the term, Golden West: Can't I help you? it seems to say. Without more ado I packed up my bag of tricks and hied away to where acres and bushels and dollars are spoken of in thousands; and where, according to some breezy Westerners I had met, an ordinary Ontario farm would merely pass for somebody's back garden.

Full of zeal and some C. P. R. box lunches I started in to canvass Western possibilities within the shadow of the mighty "Rockies" where the advent of the wheat farmer is, or was, bitterly lamented by the rancher—"an' sure it is the iligant country" with possibilities, especially climatic ones, as numerous as gophers, but—yes, but—I didn't boil over with enthusiasm. I always knew that the farming game was something of a gamble, but I found that Western farming is warranted to give you more thrills for your money. You back your money and labor against frost, hail, drought, wind, and more frost. Sometimes you win, and your creditors heave a sigh of relief. I also found that as "back East" you needed either a large sized nerve or a fairly respectable bank roll with which to begin operations. I had neither. I was a round peg in a square hole; and as a homestead a thousand miles from nowhere didn't appeal to me, the C.P.R. enjoyed the privilege of hauling me back to where apple trees grow, to face the same old problem in the same old way. I am still looking at it; still seeking some way to dodge round it—but alas! what else can I do? Can anyone tell me?

If anyone should, out of the largeness of their hearts, feel impelled to offer a few useful hints toward the solving of my especial problem I would have them bear in mind that, to me, Old Ontario is the finest place to have a farm and be a farmer; and also that, apart from the money question, I lack what some farmers assert is absolutely essential to a farmer—a wife. However, please don't advise me to marry, because, though it might prove a highly educative proceeding, if I have to furnish a house with a wife and furniture my farm dreams will suffer absolute extinction.

Wellington Co., Ont.

HIRED MAN.

Develop an Interest in Farming.

EDITOR "THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE":

You have a son on your farm. Has he ever expressed his ambition to abandon the occupation of his father for the mercenary gain and new interests of town life? Do you know definitely that his alert mind has never harbored such ideals? Few city boys dream of the luxuries of farm life, solely because they find sufficient interest and enjoyment in their several walks of life. Agriculture of to-day is undergoing a progressive revolution. Improved varieties and strains of grains and breeds are in popular demand, both as breeding and rapid money-making propositions. New local and foreign markets are being created and the necessary steps taken to supply their demands. Rigid enforcement of the Seed Control Act and the campaign in favor of the elimination of the scrub sire, are other forward steps in this new era. Heredity and environment are big factors in the life of all creatures, but we will surely be stretching the point by expecting our sons to successfully follow in our up-to-date foot-steps, if we take no pains to arouse their interest and ambition in things agricultural.

There are many ways of doing this. Your brood sow has a litter of eight pigs. Make the boy a present of two of these weanlings with the understanding that when they are full grown, finished, and sold, he will repay you the cost of their feed from their selling price. If his hogs are judiciously handled and fed, under his father's guidance, he now has a little capital of his own with which to extend his business of profit-making. He will also possess a working knowledge of feeding and handling pigs, which he will always retain, his business ability is cultivated, and, best of all, his hitherto dormant ambition is stirred to its very foundation, and sent soaring skywards.

Colts, calves, lambs, bees, poultry and grain and vegetable crops are admirably suited for this purpose. From the start, our young farmer should be taught the fundamentals of simple farm book-keeping and made to balance his accounts monthly. He will become familiar with our present banking system and develop an all-round business head and commercial ability, so essential in the agriculturist of to-day.

The small initial expense will be materially repaid by the eager and interested manner in which he preforms his various farm chores. This attempt to give the