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An Eight-hour Day for the Farmer

Editor "The Farmer's Advocate":

I fancy the farmer who reads this head-line will say, "Well, now, what fool thing is this?" Fact is, the farmer is liable to be so taken up these days by the (to him) pleasant reading in the mar- ket reports, he will not notice anything else unless we put a striking head to it. But why should an eight-hour day for the farmer be considered out of the way? Is there not now before both Houses (and almost all over the world) a move- ment going on to secure an eight-hour day for the workman (with a full day's pay)? Surely a farmer should be considered a laborer. Some, in- deed, have to do all the work on one hundred acres, and that is surely going some.

Has the urban laborer degenerated so he can- not do over eight hours a day, or does he want more time for sport? The farmer surely is en- titled to as good a time. Or is the purpose of an eight-hour day to give more work to others; that is, make work for three men what two ought to do? I don't see as the farmer can kick at that, because he will have three mouths to feed, instead of two. But perhaps the eight-hour-a-day-man expects to live upon two meals a day. But whether he intends to or not, that is what it must come to.

The Good Book says, "He that will not work, neither shall he eat."

Farmers have been working from twelve to six- teen hours a day; some of us, indeed, have put in our eighteen hours a day—testing cows, and trying to do work a little above the average.

This is all foolishness, according to the latest lights. If a farmer would only work eight hours a day, and produce half as much as he does—and if he keeps stock, he would only get one-third as much—he would get better prices. Yes, double and treble the price. And surely that would be good for the farmer. It seems getting to be, "Every man for himself, and the Devil take the hindmost."

But the farmer would rather produce more and till his farm properly than see it overgrown with weeds; and that is much better for all. But how is he to produce more without more help? That is his trouble now. By making the urban laborer's days shorter, and keeping up the full day's pay, no one but a fool can be expected to be had to work on a farm, and they are no use. As it is now, though many laborers are brought into the country to work on farms, yet help gets scarcer. And no wonder; it is just like trying to fill a barrel at the spigot with the bunghole open. It is no wonder that prices for food- stuffs are rising. And they will continue to rise. Every town and city in the country is trying to add to its population, as if the natural increase was not enough.

The movement of population is naturally from the country to the town and city. Man—and wo- man, too—likes to be in a crowd. The wild beast and domesticated, alike, congregate in herds and flocks. The native and civilized people alike want to be together. Why talk of the peace and quiet of the country? Man's nature craves excitement. Man, from the boys on the street, to the boys in Parliament, does not want peace. It is jungle and quarrel.

"Next to nature!" Not much! Man is not a hermit (only when disappointed in love); he wants to be with the crowd. There is only one thing strong enough to keep people scattered, and that is man's desire to get "next" to the dol- lars. For the hope of gain, man has braved all risks and hardships, from clearing this country and making it habitable, to the almost inacces- sible parts, after gold.

Instead of, then, seeking to build up the cities, more attention should have been paid to keep the people on the land. We find towns and cities housing manufactories, giving free sites, loaning cheap money, and exemption from taxes. What is done for the farmer? Nothing. Business has been protected by tariff laws. Trusts and mergers have been formed in order to pay big dividends on watered stock.

What protection has the farmer had? None! To keep him quiet, he has been told that building up these industries would give him a better mar- ket for his produce. And it has, sure. The farm- er will now surely get his innings. But now he is about getting good prices, what a "howl" is be- ing made. But five years from now the prices of to-day will seem mighty cheap.

No power can stop this mighty sweep. Irre- sistibly will the consumption increase faster than production. It is much easier to get people into town than to get them back upon the land. It is natural for man to love excitement and the crowd, and the country is too tame for one used to the excitements. Soon there must be many unemployed. Indeed, there are now in the cities of the older countries, but of what are the unem- ployed. Naturally, business men want the best they can get, so that the unemployed are the in- dolent, careless and physically unfit. It is not from these a farmer can get any benefit. And there is no use looking for increased production for some years; when prices get good and high

for farm produce, and there is more money in farming than anything else, then, at least, we may expect the flow from the country to town of those born in the country to diminish. But by that time the urban population will have so great- ly increased that production of food cannot over- take consumption, and we may be very thankful with things as they are. If there is any consider- able area stricken with poor crops, there will be many that will have something to howl about.

Labor unions will be "cutting a whip for their own back," or saving their muscles and starving their belly, if they get an eight-hour day. It will not injure the farmers, but make prices high- er. Labor unions can do a lot of good if wisely directed. And they want to use their influence to lessen the middleman's profit. It is he that has been making his money most easily. Business methods are crude, as shown by the ability of the departmental stores to outsell the small stores. We are getting too many wealthy men for the common good. He who makes his money by in- dustry and business ability is of a benefit to the country, but he that makes his money by com- bines, trusts, etc., robbing people by laws in his favor, is no better than a highway robber. And they who make such laws are accomplices. Some who pass now for statesmen will be known to history as time-serving politicians. Laws they have made have built up the urban places at the expense of the rural, and a hungry people will curse where others have praised. Is it any won- der that General Booth thinks the world must come to an end soon? Poetic justice would be that the eight-hour-a-day man should die of slow star- vation; the hoodlers and grafters choked with money down their throats; combine and trust promoters drowned in their own watered stock, and so on and so forth. And this is called an enlightened age. Some one had better turn on the light. GEO. RICE.

Cost of Living.

The current issue of the Labor Gazette gives a statistical statement as to the wholesale prices of animals and meats from 1890 to 1909. Averag- ing the prices for all meats, the statement shows that during the year 1909 wholesale prices were approximately 48 per cent. higher than during the ten-year period from 1890 to 1899, and that, com- pared with 1906, they were fully 77 per cent. higher. The issue also contains a table showing the prices of thirty-four commodities which enter into cost of living at the more important centers of population throughout Canada. It is the in- tention of the Department to publish quotations for a similar list of commodities from month to month in the Labor Gazette, thus making it pos- sible to ascertain by comparison the changes in retail prices and the cost of living in the various parts of the Dominion from time to time.

Surprise was expressed from Washington last week that no steps had yet been taken by the British or Canadian Governments looking to the determination of the question as to whether Canada, in view of her tariff treaties, was entitled to the minimum tariff rates under the Payne-Aldrich Act. Apparently, the Taft administration is reluctant to allow the maximum tariff rates to come auto- matically into force on March 31st, and wants to be shown some good and sufficient reason why it should not do so. It is a neighborly spirit, and does the United States Government credit.

The appointment of a Royal Commission to in- vestigate the conditions governing the fruit-grow- ing industry of the Province was urged by the speakers of a deputation which waited upon the Ontario Minister of Agriculture, Hon. J. S. Duff, last week. The commission, it was pointed out, would be able, by reports, to give statistics and other valuable information showing fruit-growers what could be done to improve the industry. Hon. Mr. Duff thought that the object could be better served by the Departmental bulletins than by a commission, but promised to bring the matter be- fore the Government.

The news that the Standard Oil Company is behind the big scheme for creating power by dam- ming the St. Lawrence at the Long Sault Rapids should be all that is needed to incite every pa- triotic Canadian to most strenuous resistance to a project that would not only alienate from public control a great natural resource in water-power, but would place an important section of our great waterway system in the control of a foreign cor- poration.

"For the information of hon. gentlemen," an- nounced Sir James Whitney, in the Ontario Legis- lature, last week, "I may say the time is not far distant when the Government will take drastic steps to stop the careless driving of automobiles. These chauffeurs must be taught that they cannot, with impunity, drive with utter recklessness over the streets and highways in this Province. The rights of the people must and shall be protected, and this reckless conduct shall cease."

Why Boys and Girls Leave the Farm.

One of the most important questions to farm- ers, and to all those who have the welfare of the country at heart, is the vexing and much-discussed one of "How to keep the boys and girls on the farm." Many remedies are suggested—all good ones, more or less—yet ineffective, one and all, be- cause they do not touch the root of the evil.

There is much of ambition in the young heart, much of the desire to get rich quickly, much of the resolution to see more of the world than the little piece bounded by one's own county lines; but it is not all that that allures most the youth and maiden to the cities, although each has a drawing-string of its own, being part and parcel of the higher plane of civilization which is the lode-star of all great cities, for here is the base—plain truth. The boys and girls leave the farm because of the rudity of country life. Youth is the time of life overflowing of ideals, illusions and aspirations; the time of life when we are most apt to not give due weight to the enduring qualities of the heart against the more showy ones of mind and manners; the time of life when we fall most easily under the captiva- tion of what pleases the eye and flatters the emo- tions. The country swain who goes to the city with his load of produce feels out of place and awkward as soon as the shadow of his wagon de- serts him. It is all very well to sing of the no- bility and independence of the farmer's calling, but all the same, the young fellow envies with bitter- ness the easy style of speech, manners and dress of the city man, while at the same time his mind belittles his condition of life, while it exalts, in comparison, that of the man to whom it permits dress and deportment, showing at his best at all times. The same feelings apply in a larger sense to the country maiden, for the little niceties and refinements of life are still more important to her feminine heart. She does all her shopping in the shops adjoining the market square for the pitiful reason that she cannot bear the idea of showing herself in the large uptown em- poriums in her shabby, dusty hat and frock, and just here is a point for Women's Institutes and Country Periodicals: Teach the country women some wisdom and taste in the matter of dress. If, when travelling long dis- tances on country roads, they would wear some such cap and all-enveloping coat and veil as the motor-lady finds indispensable, and which could be removed in the city, if necessary, they could then feel fresh and neat, instead of having to smart under the disapproving or wondering look of even the shop-girls and dudsish salesmen from whom they have to buy, and who could not be where they are were it not for the farmer's money.

Remember, that I am not writing this in a spirit of criticism, but of helpfulness. Eschew for travelling all fripperies, fol-de-rols and artificial flowers, and stick, if possible, to a good tailor- made of dark material, which will never be out of place, no matter where you go. The well- dressed men and women have confidence in them- selves, and inspire confidence and respect in others. This seems a digression, but in reality it is not, for this matter of dress is a vital part in the rudity of farm life which, as I have said before, is the first and foremost reason drawing the feet of the younger generation citywards.

Young people read more nowadays than they did even a score of years ago, and reading, as well as catching every now and then glimpses of city life, they come to despise, in spite of themselves, their own rough manner of existence. The farm- er's daughter, on the city street, seeing the deferen- tial courtesy accorded by the well-bred city man to his lady companion, who takes it so naturally and unconsciously as a matter of course, feels a lump rise to her throat and a mist to her eyes, that such things are not for her. Alas! she thinks, what is she not missing of the little things of life, which, after all, are the very ones that make life worth living. And it is not the young only who are affected thus, but the old, also, for is it not an open secret that old age is more sen- sitive than youth? The farmer's wife, withered and worn, will note the attentive helpfulness of the elderly gentleman as he hands his dainty little old lady in her low coupe, with the bitter reflec- tion of how her own spouse unconcernedly allows her to scramble, unaided, with a basket on each arm, to the high wagon seat, where he sits peace- fully smoking his pipe.

I know a country woman who has passed her whole life on the farm. Some time ago came the long-wished-for trip to the Capital of the Do- minion. After she came home, I was most eager to know what had most pleased her of her new impressions.

"I am almost ashamed to confess it," she said, as a flush suffused her gentle face, "still, I must tell you. It is this: In the afternoon I had occasion to go to the Bank Street Chambers and to take the elevator for the upper floor. When I stepped in, the other passenger, a man of about fifty, for he was bald on top and gray at the temples, took off his hat, and remained uncovered until I stepped out again. It was the first hom-