

The Farm Laborer..

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### The Farm Laborer.

A farm laborer in this country is a person who works on a farm for hire, and he is not a person who has a tenant proprietorship in a farm. He is one of the necessary beings that is becoming so scarce on our farms today. It is he who is now puzzling the minds of our farmers all over this broad land. The farm laborer problem has become a difficult problem to solve. Why is it? The question naturally arises; Is it because the farm hand does not receive steady employment? Are the working hours too long or the wages too low? Or is the treatment received from his employer not satisfactory? The writer will try and solve this problem by a series of illustrations together with a recitation of his experience as a farm laborer.

It is a very general admitted fact today that one great check upon successful farming at the present time is the want of steady, competent and reliable help. Many who have invested their capital in lands and stock have gone out of the farming business because reliable help could not be obtained; and others have for the same reason deterred from entering upon agricultural pursuits.

The problem of securing good help on the farm is growing worse every year. But in some localities, especially where the foreign element prevails, many farmers are fortunate in being blessed with large families, the greater part of the work being done by the farmer himself with the help of his good wife and children.

However, in the western Kansas wheat belt there are seasons of the year when it becomes necessary to hire additional help to take care of the great crop, and many laborers from the corn belt further east travel westward to assist in harvesting the crop. But his work



lasts only a short time, while the expenses of getting to the work and returning home and the loss of time by unfavorable weather after reduces the net earnings until it can hardly be called a paying investment for the laborer.

Having spent the greater part of my life as a farm laborer, I can assure you that it is a very healthy employment, but at the present it seems not to be as profitable as it should be. The season of good wages does not last long enough and then after the rush of work is over, the farmer will try and skimp through by his own help if possible. I find that when the farmer wants to hire help he wants it, <sup>bad</sup> but when he can get along without help he is the most independent man on earth.

Let us look for a moment at the farm laborer from the standpoint of a farmer, if you please. Too often the farmer feels like this: I own the earth, you own nothing. It is only for mercy and favor that I hire you and keep you from starving, begging or stealing. Neither the farmer nor the hired man knows the value of an hour's work. Therefore, neither knows when the hired man has earned a dollar. Hence the farmer to be sure, wants longer hours and faster work, while the laborer usually wants shorter hours and more rest. The farmer becomes domineering and suspicious, and incurs the dislike of the laborer and consequently they lose all confidence in one another, and work at cross purposes. Finally they quarrel and the hand quits. The laborer secures a new place and the farmer tries to hire another hand. Each loses half of what might have been profit, happiness, progress, and adaptability.

It might be said that the fault is in the government which gives some man control of what all men must use. Just think for a



moment, eleven million men own land, while forty million men, women, and children are left without land, dependent upon the eleven million capitalist land owners for their living, and of every dollar worth of wealth which they produce, 83 cents must be surrendered to enrich the capitalist in the way of rent, tariff, tax, interest and profits. There can be no remedy until we learn the worth of an hour of labor, and that can not be ascertained for, no two farmers manage alike, no two workmen work alike, no two soils yield alike, and no two seasons are alike in productiveness.

Farmers tell us that it used to be an easy matter to hire good men who would do good honest work and take an interest in it. These men seemed to realize what it meant to possess a job and would do all in their power to please their employer lest they might lose their job.

My father relates how even in his younger days, hired men tried hard to please their employer so that their job might last longer. These men did not complain because the working day was long. I have heard him tell how he was obliged to be up in the morning at four o'clock and do the chores by lantern light and then chop wood by lantern light until breakfast. After breakfast he went to the field to work and at noon he took just long enough to eat and was soon back to the field to work until sundown. The milking and feeding was done by him largely after dark and after a hearty supper it was time to go to bed. The wages paid then were less than commonly received now for a shorter day and less strenuous labor, but the farm hand saved his money and usually sent it home to his parents for the home necessities. These men were contented, honest and earnest in their work, and were not given to tricks and subjected to bad habits as so many of our farm laborers are today. Yes, time has brought about a change, not because of the



independence of the laborer, but more because of his indolence. It used to be the rule that almost all farm hand were farmers' boys, but now the farmers start their boys out in life without forcing them to work for some one else to earn their start in life.

The laboring man of today is a different proposition from the man who did manual labor before the war. That he is more intelligent, more provident, happier, or better in any way, I sincerely doubt. That he is usually more restless, dissatisfied, and less efficient, I believe. That he is unreasonable in his demands, regardless of the interest of his employer, I know. But there are many exceptions to the rule, and to them I look for the ultimate regeneration of labor. I do not believe that an intelligent, able-bodied man need be a servant all his life, or that industry and economy miss their reward. Men can even now rise out of the net in which they have fallen.

The scarcity of the farmers' boys as hired laborers has compelled the farmer to draw his help from the villages and cities. This help is often indolent and worthless and yet they are the ones who will demand exorbitant wages and then kill time by doing as little work as possible and still hold their job. When you have them you have no assurance of how long they will stay with you. They may leave you at the most critical moment just when your wheat is ripe and ready to cut, or when you have your hay down in the field with splendid indications of rain. They are most sure to quit when they have earned enough to buy a package of "Duke's Mixture" with a bundle of cigarette papers. If this is the kind of hands the farmer is obliged to carry on his farm work with, we do not blame any one for seeking an employment that he can carry on without depending on the labor of others. I detest the indolent, worthless cigarette smoker and time killer. He is dangerous



about the barns and feed lots and a teacher of the young boys' bad habits. You will usually find him very disagreeable to have about, and he will be lacking in memory and always forgetting to do his work as ordered.

In a humorous way the following clipping from a local paper illustrates the present situation: "Farmers will provide automobiles for all help, and will serve as chauffeurs; they will eat at the second table, and sleep in the hay loft; they will rise at four, do the chores and serve breakfast to the hands in bed at nine; they will provide a phonograph and the current magazines; hands will supervise the farm work from eleven to twelve and from two to three; the earnings of the farm will be placed in a bucket every Saturday and poured through a ladder placed horizontally, with the end on two chairs; and what goes through, the hands get, and what sticks to the rungs goes to the farmer".

The farmer wants help in whom he can place confidence and who are honest in their work and dealings. He must have men who can be trusted to care for his stock. He should have men who will work just as faithfully when by themselves or during the employer's absence as if he were present. It is a great pleasure to the farmer to know that his farm work is being done right and his stock cared for even if he is obliged to be away from home for a time on business. But it is becoming more the rule every day, not how much can I do to please my boss, but how little can I do and still hold my job. There does not seem the tendency today as there was in olden times to work to hold a job, but rather a great clamor for more wages and less work.

Farm laborers are more discontented than they were in years gone by and of a more roving disposition and unsettled frame of mind. Is it not because the farm boys for the most part are farming for



themselves and the farm laborer of today is the restless young man from the city who is not interested in the farm work, but only in earning a little money to keep going on his way, he knows not where, and father time can only tell.

Modern farming is greatly handicapped by the difficulty of getting good help. I hope to solve the problem in this way by determining that the men who work for me should find in their employer a considerate friend who would look after their interest in a reasonable and neighborly fashion. Laborers should be well housed and well fed, and should have clean beds, clean table linens and neat surroundings, papers, magazines and books, and an attractive comfortable room in which to read them. The work hours should be reasonable and a few hours given for recreation, and in general every thing about the place should proclaim the dignity of labor.

And from the men I shall expect cleanliness, sobriety, uniform kindness to all animals, cheerful obedience, industry and a disposition to save wages.

The most important factor in a good farm hand is that he be suited to his work and he then will be happy and contented. My plan of hiring hands and fixing the wages is to start a man at twenty dollars a month for the first half year and if he prove satisfactory, raise his wages to twenty-one dollars for the next six months and then raise his wages one dollar a month for each half year that he remained with me, until his monthly wages shall reach a maximum of forty or fifty dollars per month.

It seems that many farmers do not reward their help as they advance in capability and rather than pay a little more for good honest help, they let him go and hire some green hand at less wages.



I do not think this is the right thing to do, when a laborer works for a farmer and is deserving of more wages, he should have the increase. I believe in promotion of farm laborers if he deserves it and that cheerfully. Many are driven to take up other professions because they never receive promotion on the farm. The wages are the same year in and year out. I know this can be remedied by the farmer, and the sooner it comes into practice, the better it will be for all concerned.

Farm laborers are variously treated by their employers. Some farmers treat their men the best they know how and others who might do better treat them like dogs more than like men. I have found in most cases, <sup>it</sup> is the more wealthy farmers who are careless about the treatment of their help, rather than the farmer in ordinary circumstances. Hired men are often obliged to sleep in the barns or other unhealthful and uncomfortable places. But the worst thing that they have to contend with is the board at many farm houses. Sometimes the food furnished is poor and scanty, while others have plenty of such as it is. This may not always be the fault of the house wife, but some house wives say, "Oh, they are only hired men; they can do on pork and beans and dry bread". It appears that some do not stop to consider that the working man must rest well and eat well to do his work in the best possible manner.

But there are exceptions and one may find a laborer's surroundings very pleasant, agreeable and home-like, but, however, this condition is not very common and we are in need of reform in this particular phase of the farm laborer's life.

The use of foreign laborers has tended to reduce to some extent the wages of the farm hand and this is true also with many other classes of laborers. The farmers want cheap laborers and he has them



in the Mexican and Itallian who will work for much less per day than our American born citizens. These people are usually ignorant and efficient laborers, and they can work at lower wages because they live cheaply, eating poorer food and dressing very plainly.

The Chinamen are good workers and do not aspire to be anything but servants and they surpass all others classes in doing just what they are told. One upon every farm, where more than one man is employed, would fill a place and an important one. "John Chinaman" can help in the kitchen or do the cooking; he can wash up the fine linen as well as any woman. He can be made generally useful in and about the house, and, when not needed there, would work in the garden or go into the field or help with the stock, and he will do precisely as he is told, which can not be said of all farm laborers. The objection to the Chinaman is that he earns money simply to take it away with him back to China. He is not, and will not become an American citizen.

The time is coming when farmers will not seek the ignorant class of laborers, but will prefer those who have received an education in agricultural pursuits want a much higher salary and then farm work will not only be more interesting to the laborer but to the farmer as well. To know the sciences of agriculture is now one of the important rudiments of successful farming. The modern machinery can not be run by any common scrub laborer. Such work requires skilled workmen who have applied to the study of the science of mechanics, and it will pay the farmer to hire experienced men to run his machinery and care for his stock.

In these remarkable times in which we are living, deep mysteries have been unraveled, undreamed of discoveries have been made and ingenious inventions have been sought out which have well nigh revolution-



ized our whole system of living and working, but in spite of all this marvelous development of mechanical genius, it is still found that on the farm the man behind the plow, like the "man behind the gun" on shipboard, is an indispensable <sup>factor</sup>, and the more efficient he is, the better will be the result.

Admiral Sampson, with his splendid fleet, could never have destroyed the Spanish navy without the men who fed the fires, and worked the ships and trained the guns. No more can the modern farmer with his complete equipment of labor saving machinery, successfully run his farm without his complement of men to operate the machines. Help we still need; help we must have or our expensive machinery will lie idle in the sheds, and our fertile fields will grow up with weeds and brambles.

When modern farm machinery began to come into use it was confidently predicted that the majority of farm hands would be forced to work at starvation wages. That such has not been the result, every farmer in this country can testify.

Here is a farmer of thirty years experience in farming, he says he can recall no season in which it was more difficult to secure good help than in the one just passed. Local causes added to the stringency in some places, it is true, but from far and near came the troubled wail echoing back through nineteen hundred years, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few."

Why this great scarcity of farm help? Have the men forsaken the country? If so, why? Is farmers' work more irksome or disagreeable than other employment? Are the days too long? or is it a question of wages?

I am aware that there is a tendency, and I fear a growing one among certain classes of country people, to look upon farm life as



being altogether drudgery, and to be called a hired man is little else than ignomy. I think this is a great mistake. What is a clerk in a mercantile house but a hired man or a hired girl? And why should the life of a bookkeeper who sits perched on an uncomfortable seat breathing the stifling air of a musty city office be preferred to the healthy life of the farm laborer. I say why should any spirited young man prefer such a life to the comparative freedom of the ever changing out door life on the farm?

I can discover no better way to hold our young men on the farms than to inspire in them a love for simple, pure home life, and encourage them to aspire to homes and farms of their own.

The help that the farmers now employ may be grouped into two classes, viz; good and indifferent. The average farm hand may be classed for the most part as indifferent. The good class of farm laborers are those men young men of good habits and of fair education, at least intelligent and ambitious, who start as hired men on the farms, or sometimes they are the boys of large families brought up on the farm, or the sons of some neighboring county. This class of boys make good hands, and many of these boys are sent to college and some become professional men, while others return to the farm better fitted to till the soil more scientifically and to promote the science of Agriculture in their vicinity. But when they have secured an education they scarcely ever hire out for wages but go to work for themselves to work their own farms and establish a home and livelihood for themselves and families.

Also, there is another class of laborers that the farmer will have to depend on for his future help. This may consist of those young men who are farm laborers because they cannot be any thing else.



They do not possess much education and little or no ambition and usually are afflicted with many bad habits, and sometimes of an evil and roving disposition, and for the greater part they are single men, yet there are many who are married and have families in the near by towns and cities.

There are many of this class of laborers that travel about following up the harvest season from place to place, and some of these men who follow the harvest are of good character who wish to do an honest day's work. Some are college boys just taking their college holidays and are out to make some money and will do good work. Others are out to see the country or to find some scheme to beat the honest working boy out of his harvest wages by some game or trick.

But the farmer needs steady efficient help on the farm at all seasons of the year, and it is becoming more important and necessary now in these days of extensive farming. In the western wheat counties it is hardly practical to keep hands all the year around, for after the crop is in there is no need of help until harvest time. But in central Kansas and the Mississippi valley where a variety of crops are grown, the farm hand can find work all winter especially when the farmer practices a rotation of farm crops. It is very easy for the farmers to keep the farm hand busy feeding, hauling manure, repairing, etc. As the increase of stock raising and the practice of fertilizing becomes more practical, the need of better skilled and well educated farm hands will become more necessary.

One reason why we have not kept good, steady, reliable help, is because we have not given steady employment. Another, and perhaps greater reason is the increased demand for skilled laborers in the many new branches of business that has sprung up in late years. Many say, how



are we to employ more men when they take nearly all that one can earn now? I answer we must change our mode of farming as circumstances will permit, and go more extensively into the raising of stock, and turn our attention more particularly to raising coarse products, such as corn, oats, potatoes or other kinds of roots for the feeding of said stock, and produce for market, butter, cheese, pork, beef, mutton and wool, etc., thereby saving freight and giving winter as well as summer employment to hired men. Each one of these branches of industry, stockraising, producing butter, cheese, wool, etc. has its turn in paying well and every farmer should be governed by his location and circumstances, as to which one, or how many lines of farming will he undertake.

Aside from the advantage of getting better help by thus keeping them for a term of years, summer and winter, our lands will increase in value by reason of better farming and also increase in soil fertility.

No man can or will hire another unless he can make a profit off of his labor. Therefore, the farmer naturally expects the hired man to do all he can, for that is why he has him employed. The farmer being interested in the business is anxious to get the best hand that he can procure at the lowest wages. And little is he interested in his hand as to how he fares in his daily life or where he sleeps, only that he is on hand and does all the work when he is placed on duty. The farmer in many cases does not stop to realize that the farm hand is a human and should be treated as such. Many farmers are so hard to please that you never can do enough for them. Some will scold and use profane language, which never struck me very favorable. But there are exceptions to all rules. I have worked for some very pleasant men who treated their hired help well, It always appealed to me that if the



farmers would be kind and considerate and give the help the respect due them that much more work might be accomplished, and the hired man would feel like life was worth living and that his work was not hard drudgery as it seemed.

It means a great deal to work with a contented mind, and when all works in harmony it is not so tiring and so wearing on one's system. The time goes sooner and work is done better and with less help and the farmer can afford to pay better wages.

I think it is proper to class domestics as farm laborers, their work is essential to the success and prosperity of the farmer, scarcely second to the work of men, the farm laborers are receiving small enough compensation, and are counted as "unskilled labor". However, unskilled they have been in the past, they now need to be experts to enable them to assist their employers in making a dividend on the capital invested in the average farm. Very many of them are experts, and in no other business do as many of the employees become proprietors.

Farmers complain that they can not find what used to be called the "hired girl" any more, and some of the letters received from them on this subject are quite pathetic. It seems the girls as well as the boys are leaving the farm to engage in city employment. The girl of the city cannot be persuaded to work in the farm house because of the long hours and lonesomeness of the place. Yet nearly every farm house now days has a rural free delivery and a telephone, and yet the girl longs for the pleasure and excitement of city life where she will not have to work such long hours. No American girl likes to be called a servant. Let us call them house girls, house maids, or house keepers. If this stigma of name could be removed a great stride would be taken in the direction of solving the hired girl question.

The girl can spend her whole life as a hired girl and never



receive a promotion or raise of wages. But she knows that girls in other professions get promoted and a raise in salary when they are efficient in their work, Is it any wonder we can not find our old time hired girl? I think we should teach the girls to be housekeepers and when they make housekeeping a business there will be no trouble in getting young women to engage in it.

The government report of 1901 says "That the Agricultural laborers are a decreasing element as compared with the entire farm labor of the United States. In 1870 it constituted nearly one half of the agricultural workers; while in 1890 a little more than one third." These statistics indicates the tendency of farm laborers to become farm tenants and farm owners.

The wages of the farm hands have decreased from 1866 to 1899 about 12%. But since that time there has been a gradual small increase up to the present time. But if the bank failure still continue it will cause a very noticeable decrease in wages due to the abundant help and scarcity of money.

We often hear men who are day laborers say, "The government owes me a living", as if to say if work does not come to them the government must provide. In many cases to a limited degree the government may provide food and fuel for poor people.

The socialists believe that all the people should work for the government and receive in turn a living and the necessaries of life.

We must all work to earn a living, and a large part of the people will, in the future, as they have in the past, work for wages in conducting the business of the world. There are plenty of men who would be as contented to live and spend their lives as farm laborers as to live in the city and labor in the shops and factories, if they were only provided with comfortable homes for their families in the country.



Some one has said why not organize the farm labor into a labor union? But it would be rather difficult proposition to solve the problem of wages so that the farmer could afford to hire. There seems to be no way in which to determine the price of farm hands' labor as to its real value per day or hour. But if unions could be formed, the laboring man would perhaps get more wages. But the question arises, can the farmer afford to pay more wages or would he let his crop go down to waste and ruin rather than pay more wages? This would leave both the farmer and the laborer in a difficult position. Both should work hand in hand and not oppose one another.

It seems as the only practical way of establishing a union is for the farmers and laborers to form a co-operative union, and in this way the farmer could realize the full worth of his crop and the laboring man his hire. Also the plan should be to do away with the middle man and let the profits return to the producer and the tiller of the soil, and not until this is done will the farmer be able to pay more wages. Nor can the farm laborers form unions until they can determine what it takes to raise a bushel of grain or to produce a pound of pork, beef or mutton, etc. Therefore, I believe the union will not under the present condition of affairs benefit the farm laborers.

Then as to the hours of work, while so many farmers begin work at four in the morning and do not quit until nine in the evening, is it any wonder that their men are mightily drawn toward the city factories where eight, or at most ten hours, constitute the day's work? The farmer himself, interested in pushing the work along, does not mind the long day, but the hired man, not having the direct interest in the business which the owner of necessity has, very naturally grown discontented under a system of labor which barely allows him time for sleep, but leaves no opportunity for recreation or sociability. To him



the allurments of the city life, with its shorter work day, offering such an abundant opportunity for recreation and social enjoyment, has a drawing force which is all but irresistable.

Now I am not advocating an eight hour, nor even a ten hour day, for the farm, for I do not consider it practicable or desirable to establish an inflexible rule governing the length of the working day on the farm, but I wish to ask if there may not be some where a limit beyond which the working day can not be advantageous extended either for ourselves or our men?

But doubtless the wage question is the critical one, The laborer looking for employment demands the price. The farmer answers "If you are a good hand, I will give you \$200 per year". But the city employer answers, "We can pay you from one to four dollars per day in the mill". Is it surprising that the farms are neglected and the mills and factories are filled beyond their needs? You will notice the farmer furnishes board, lodging and washing in addition to the price named with constant employment, while the manufacturies' offer includes nothing, but the value of the perquisite is usually under rated, if not wholly overlooked by the laborer.

There is also another cause that is doing much to deprive us of our farm hands. Since the government has so generously offered free homes to all who will accept them, there has been a constant drift toward the west of our most enterprising and energetic young men.

But there is a plan in which the farm hand can raise his own wages, by giving more faithful and intellectual service and thus become more valuable to his smployer, such services are sure to be appreciated and rewarded. Superior skill and experience commands superior wages, no less on the farm than in the shop. And it is conceded that the steady, faithful economical farm hand has a much better prospect



for independent living than the city worker, whose salary may be two or three times as large.

Most farm hands can, if they will, easily save a hundred dollars or even one hundred and fifty dollars per year. At that rate of saving he will be in a comparatively short time have saved enough to make a payment on the purchase price of a farm. After that if the man is careful and industrious, he will soon have a home of his own where he can bring a wife and rear a family with no dread of ejection and no fear of being thrown out of employment.

One of the recent state departments that have aided the farmer in securing help and the laborer in obtaining employment is the "Free Employment Bureau of the State of Kansas". This department was created in 1901 (May 15) as given in sec. 8 of the state laws. It is simply a labor exchange, designed to bring together those in search of work with those persons needing help in any enterprises in which they may be engaged. But for lack of means this department has not been able to carry its plans and provisions thoroughly. The last report of this bureau for the harvest season shows that in 1906 forty counties called for 20,000 extra men to assist in the harvest, and the bureau succeeded in sending out 1352 men, while large numbers went from other points that were not herein counted. The bureau has been the means of securing a cheap harvest rate on all railroads to the harvest fields.

The money panic is going to make farm help rather plentiful and the wages will be greatly reduced because of the large number of persons being thrown out of employment in the eastern factories, shops and mills, and unless there is an immediate change in the present banking system, the laboring man will find that it is indeed hard times for him.

One of the first things to do to better the condition of the



farmer and the working man is to do away with the gambling hell known as the "Board of Trade" of Chicago, which reduces the farmer's price and increases the consumer's price. The farmer is compelled to pay a dividend on watered stock for railroad co-operations, thus creating a hardship for him as well as the laboring man, the consumer of our products. Thus the few get the meat while the many get the shucks. So it is with the manufactured articles. The laborer is reduced to a mere pittance by low wages for his labor, while the farmer pays high prices for the articles manufactured. For instance, I know of a farm implement which is manufactured at an estimated cost of seven dollars each, when ready for use, and which was sold to the farmer for \$65 each. Where does the \$58 go?

If the farmer and his laborers would organize for mutual benefit and agree upon some plan that all can agree to and live up to, it surely looks reasonable that they would be benefited thereby. The farmers should ship everything they raise direct to market instead of hiring some one else to do it for them. The car must come back, and it could just as well be sent back loaded with coal or other commodities and consigned to the farmers. For as long as the farmer is obliged to give one bushel of his product for every bushel sold to the railroads for transportation, just so long will the farmer be obliged to pay low wages to his employees.

"The farmer feeds them all" and it is through his efforts that we all live and have our being. The farmer would pay more wages if he could afford it. Well then the first thing to do is to organize the farmers into an Educational Co-operative Union.

The farmers must organize so they will get the full returns for their farm products. As it is now the railroads get as much as the farmer, the middle men get a large share and Mr. Farmer is obliged to



take what is left. And he has to work hard to make a living under these conditions. The purpose of these co-operative unions is based upon the principles of equity, justice and the golden rule. To discourage the mortgage and credit systems. To assist members in buying and selling and especially to strive for systematic and controlled marketing and for more just and equitable prices, etc.

As soon as the farmer is able to get the just results from his products, then he will be able to treat his fellow laborers more justly and there will be a system of paying wages in proportion to what a man can do and what he is worth as a farm laborer.

The American Federation of Labor and the American Society of Equity have joined hands in a fraternal alliance. The farmers represent the organized wage earners of the country, and are to regulate wages and working conditions by controlling the supply of labor. While the latter represents the organized farmers and aims to regulate the price of farm products by holding back the supply. Both organizations have expressed their contempt for the law of supply and demand. The newly found alliance consists of a mutual pledge that each side, as far as possible, shall use the products of the other side to the exclusion of all producers not in the alliance. Impracticable as the scheme may appear at first glance, there are hard thinking men on both sides who believe that it is an epoch making event. That the spirit of the organization has taken a strong hold among the farmers there is no doubt.

The American Society of Equity has a membership now of 268,000 and it is growing rapidly. This membership is scattered principally throughout Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Nebraska with some members in Kansas, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Michigan. In the south-west the farmers have a strong union, especially



in Texas, working on the same lines, although independent of the American Society of Equity. In the state of Texas alone there are 160,000 organized farmers who maintain their own ware houses in distributing center where they store their cotton and hold it until they can get what they believe to be a fair remunerative price for it. The farmers in Texas have for two years been working in harmony with the labor unions there, exchanging fraternal delegates and jointly maintaining a lobby at Austin during sessions of the state legislature. They have pooled their interest and demanded legislation in the interests of both. Plans are now being discussed for bringing about an amalgamation of the unions of farmers in the south-west with those in the state already mentioned. The importance of such a movement can hardly be over-estimated.

The plan of the farmers, as outlined by their representatives who attended the convention of the American Federation of Labor at Minneapolis, is to eliminate the Board of Trade speculators and the commission merchants, and sell direct to the consumer. They point out that the farmer gets twenty-five cents a bushel for apples, not enough to pay him for picking them, while the same apples are sold to the consumers in the cities for as much a peck. The commission merchant, they assert, pockets the difference. Other products of the farm and orchard are bought from the producer and sold to the consumer at similar disproportionate prices. The farmers maintain that no man has a right to set a price on a product except he who produces it and he who consumes it.

This is in short a solution of the problem of the farm laborers and the farmers as we may see it in the near future, and it is organizing fast.

God intended no man to live in this world without working, but



it seems to me no less evident that He intended every man to be happy in his work. Whatever there is of greatness in this United States or, indeed, in any other country, is due to labor. The laborer is the author of all greatness and wealth. Without labor there would be no government, and no leading class and nothing to preserve. It is to labor and to labor only, that man owes everything of exchangeable value. Labor is the talisman of the savages, that has changed the desert and forest into cultivated fields; that has covered the earth with cities and the ocean with ships; that has given us plenty, comfort and elegance, instead of want, misery and barbarism.