

## The Rural Tragedy of America

ONE day in Mason county, about half way up to the Straits of Mackinaw, I noticed a peculiar wagon approaching from the north. It was built of wood, with closed sides and roof, and canvas flaps at front and rear. There were two glass windows in each side; and the wagon was drawn by a pair of not very smart looking horses. A man and woman and two children were in the conveyance.

Entering into conversation with the man, I found that he was a farmer. He had sold his land down in the state of Indiana, and had gone north into the "cut over" section of Michigan, attracted by the alluring advertisements of a land company. There has been considerable migration of this kind out of the Hoosier state. But this particular farmer had not "bitten;" and he was now on his way south, returning to his home section, where he intended to rent a farm.

When asked why he had refused to purchase, after having come such a long distance on a tour of investigation he said that in the first place, his suspicions had been aroused, as he entered the "cut over" region, by passing other farmers on their way back. These farmers told him that they had not been able to make both ends meet. But the man had kept on, determined to see the country and learn about conditions by first hand inquiry. On reaching the territory, he had met land agents who were expecting him, and who produced a contract, asking him to sign on the dotted line.

A little figuring, however, showed the prospective buyer, that the interest on the purchase price, plus taxes, plus freight rates on shipping his product to market, would not leave the right kind of margin for bringing up his family according to the American standard of living. Consequently, much to the disgust of the land agents, our farmer refused to have anything to do with the "proposition." I was glad to meet a farmer who really understood something about the land problem.

As long as these lands lie vacant and uncultivated, they are only taxed on a low-value basis. But the prospective farmer is asked to buy the land on a much higher valuation; and then, when he goes ahead and improves the land, he is immediately penalized by a heavy tax on his productive capital, assessed at a far higher rate than that levied on the land in its vacant or uncultivated condition. Under these circumstances, one agricultural "sucker" after another has taken a farm, and made payments on it for a season or so; and then the property has gone back to the land company, which pockets the former's payments and then "sells" the land to another victim.

This is a "close-up" view of the rural tragedy of America. Farmers leave the more populous and thickly settled regions because the present system of land tenure and taxation forces them out; and then when they reach the frontier they find themselves face to face with the same system

which favors the speculator and investor, but ruins the real producer, who actually does the work of farming. It is only a matter of time when this problem will give America as much concern as did the question of human slavery two generations ago.

LOUIS WALLIS in the *Evangelical Herald*

## Thoughts From Our Better Classes

"THIS slump in business is just what I expected, with all these thrift campaigns. People aren't buying half as much goods as they would if these penny-savers would leave them alone."

"The trouble with Wall Street is that people are spending so much money for motor cars, and all sorts of things they don't need, that they can't buy stocks."

"What this country needs is a sales tax on everything that people buy, something that will put up prices to the consumers and make 'em more economical."

"There's got to be a deflation in wages before we can get prices down to where the consumers will loosen up and buy on a big scale."

## Taxes That Cannot be Shifted

ALEXANDER HAMILTON rightly said taxes must be based on land or labor production.

As the expenditure of all tax money is reflected in the price of land, land is the true basis of taxation. And, as the late President Harding wisely advised, it is a tax that cannot be shifted.

Therefore the tax relief program offered by the bills introduced by Congressman Oscar Keller should become law, as—

It abolishes all nuisance taxes.

It justly discriminates between "earned" and "un-earned" incomes.

The inheritance tax is temperate.

The tax on the privilege of holding land and natural resources is just and moderate and will stimulate production.

It is a tax that cannot be shifted.

This program will presumably relieve productive business of about \$1,250,000 annually, and last, but by no means least, relieve the people of three or four times as much in inflated living costs.

These bills should become law in the interest of equality of opportunities and equal distribution of burdens.

W. E. JACKSON in *Philadelphia Record*

THE large additions to the wealth of the country have gone neither to profits nor to wages, nor yet to the public at large, but to swell a fund ever growing, even while its proprietors sleep—the rent-rolls of the owners of the soil.—

Prof. J. E. Cairn.