

Labor After the War

In Europe there is talk of restricting emigration, and on this continent of restricting immigration—to use two words which seem to have been invented by deliberate malice to confuse the simple idea of migration. Europeans, it is said, will seek to migrate, to avoid the crushing burden of taxation after the war, but Governments will seek to hold them.

While many millions will be released from military service to peaceful occupations, the problem of employment will be partly solved by the necessity for reconstruction in Belgium, Poland, Serbia, and part of France. Dwellings and factories will have to be rebuilt, even farms will have to be made over again. The tremendous convulsions to which the soil has been subjected will have effects that have not been measured.

If Turkish rule ceases in Asia, it is likely that there will be development on a large scale, which will give employment to a large population.

In Canada the return of several hundred thousand soldiers will create a problem of industrial readjustment. There will be a surplus of labor in some occupations, a need for workers in others. The chief scarcity will be of farm laborers. Returned soldiers, it is said, do not take kindly to farming; even those who were bred on farms now prefer city life. There is a theory that men who have been soldiering for two or three years will crave the outdoor life and the open spaces. But the fact is that the difference between trench life and farming is about as great as between farming and a city occupation. Probably the soldier's chief craving will be for comfort and society.

There has never been a great surplus of farm labor in England; and if the domestic production of food is to be increased, as seems likely, there will be a large demand for that kind of labor at home. Immigration from the Teutonic countries will not be encouraged; and if other countries prefer to keep their men at home, our problem will be acute.

Quebec, it is said, has no difficulty in keeping its boys and girls on the farm, and some of its surplus agricultural population may overflow into other Provinces. From the United States we receive rather farm owners than laborers; and though these owners and their sons are usually workers as well, they require help at harvest. The problem will therefore require careful study, and perhaps new organization.