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AGRICULTURE.

REPORT ON THE AGRICULTURAL CAPABILITIES OF THE PROVINCE OF NEW BRUNSWICK.

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(Continued from our last.)

CHAPTER XIV.

4th. Like all other countries situated in northern latitudes, and covered with natural forests, New Brunswick has its share of swamps, morasses, beaver dams, boggy lakes, sluggish streams, rivulets arrested by windfalls, and hollows void of natural outlets, in which the rains and melted snows linger till the sun sucks them up from the unproductive soil. Every one knows the influence of such swampy and moist places upon the general climate of a neighbourhood—how they chill the air, produce fogs and mists, and more frequent rains,—and how they are not only useless for agricultural purposes themselves, but subject to early frosts and to rust and mildew the drier lands which lie around them.

But New Brunswick possesses another physical character which subjects it more extensively than other countries to this species of agricultural evil. Its surface is generally of little elevation, and it possesses extensive flats on which the rain water lodges, or from which it runs off with difficulty, slowly, and after long delay.

The injurious consequences of this stagnant condition of the surface water are not so great in this Province as in some other parts of North America. The singular healthiness of the climate prevents it from producing the fevers and agues and affections of the lungs to which it gives rise in Great Britain, and in parts of the American Continent which lie more towards the west. But the land upon these flat districts is made difficult, or altogether incapable of cultivation—the crops of the adjoining more elevated, sloping and drier lands are injuriously affected—and the climate is rendered colder, moister, and more subject to fogs and mists than it would otherwise be.

It is true, that if the country were once generally cleared, the increased evaporation from the surface which would necessarily ensue, would render many tracts of land dry, which are now incapable of profitable tillage in consequence of superabundant water. But there are many others, already almost bare of wood, on which rains linger and mists settle down, capable in some cases of being themselves reclaimed, in others of being so dried by arterial drainage as singularly to benefit the neighbourhood in which they lie.

In the coloured Map attached to this Report, in which the qualities of the soils are represented, spots shaded with Indian ink will be here and there observed. These dark spots represent flat bogs, swamps, and carriboo plains, more or less destitute of wood, full of water, and the sources of much evil to the regions in which they lie. These dark spots might have been more numerous had the information at my command been precise enough to have enabled me to fix their localities.

In the course of my own tour through the Province, I have among other places personally noted the carriboo plain north of Little Tracadie—the swamps in Sussex Vale and on the North River—the elevated swamps on the St. Andrews road, through which the Dead Water Brook flows—the deep, narrow, swampy valleys of the County Charlotte, and those which intersect the Harvey Settlement—the pine swamps behind the Harvey Settlement—and others, I might name. Those who live near the head waters of the feeders of the Saint John and Miramichi Rivers are familiar with marshes and bogs like those which lie at the head of the Pennack branch of the Nashua, and about the head waters of the Washademoak and Cocagne Rivers. The drainage of such tracts would be a benefit of no small value to the localities in which they lie. It would greatly improve lands already granted—would render worthless land, saleable and fit for settlement—and would gradually prepare the way for those further improvements to which I purpose to advert in the two succeeding Chapters.

I will mention another locality somewhat different in its character from the absolute swamps of which I have above

chiefly spoken, in which, as it appears to me, the introduction of arterial drainage would be of manifest advantage. The district of New Bandon, which stretches along the southern shore of the Bay de Chaleurs, comprehends towards its eastern part a considerable extent of rich red land, the quality of which, in my judgement, is such as in favourable circumstances to be capable of producing as large crops as any other soil I have seen in the Province. But it is flat and wet. Though presenting to the sea a bold cliff of from 50 to 120 feet, the rains and melted snows spread themselves over the flat table land, and for want of a sufficient natural slope, remains in the soil, and either renders it unremunerative, difficult, and inhospitable to the settler, or cause it to be covered with a stunted forest of worthless soft-wood timber.

The traveller who proceeds eastward towards Grand Ance, and who takes a glance at the country as it is seen from that elevation, will form a very good idea of what I have attempted to describe.

Relieve this valuable land from stagnant or superabundant water by large arterial cuts—which, crossing it in judiciously selected places, shall convey to the cliff what naturally flows into them—and the whole tract will at once assume a new agricultural character, and new capabilities. Were it so relieved, this fringe of red land would fall to be coloured light red in my Map of the soils. I should reckon it among the first class uplands, and after they shall have been respectively tilled for half a century, as scarcely less valuable than any other land in the Province.

I have spoken thus fully of New Bandon, not because it is the only case of the kind I have seen in the Province, but because there are many such cases—many localities in which arterial drainage would act, as I believe it would in New Bandon—improving the natural condition of the soil in the first instance, and enabling the skilful farmer to avail himself hereafter of the further advantages attendant upon thorough drainage, by producing main outlets into which his smaller conduits might deliver their watery burden.

I therefore recommend this subject of arterial drainage to the attention of Your Excellency, of the Houses of Legislature, and especially of the Proprietors and Surveyors of the several Counties of the Province. I believe there is no County of the Province in which much money might not be profitably spent in improving the outlets and channels of brooks, in draining marshes and bogs, and in providing main outlets for the water upon flat districts where it injuriously lodges.

The proceeds of a tax upon the unimproved lands of each County might form a fund to be expended in works of this description. The expenditure, while it benefited the country generally, would also increase the value of the estates of those who paid the tax, so that no reasonable objection on their part ought to be made to this mode of applying it. By forming a single fund of the tax levied in each County, and assigning the collection and expenditure of it to some existing County Board of district committee, no new machinery would be required, little new expense would be incurred, and both the levying of the tax and the expenditure of the proceeds in drainage improvements, could be commenced without delay.

5th. In the Chapter upon the Roads of the Province, I have inserted a tabular view of the new roads which have been recommended by the local surveyors, as likely to facilitate new clearings by opening up the better classes of land to the settler. These roads are coloured red in the maps of the soils attached to this Report. In a country where so large an effort has already been made for the formation of roads, and where their value must be so well understood, it is unnecessary for me to insist upon the benefit which the opening up of some of the wilderness lands would confer upon the Counties in which they are situated. I would only remark that to open up the best lands of the Province, must be followed by the most immediate and most beneficial consequences. The colours of the map indicate where these better lands are situated in the several parts of the Province. It will therefore be easy to select for the first additions to the existing roads, those proposed lines or openings which are likely at the least expense to make accessible the largest proportion of the most valuable land.

6th. An evil complained of very generally is the want of markets, and the control which the thinly scattered merchants are supposed to exercise over the farmer, in fixing the prices both of what he buys and of what he sells.—This alleged evil will in some measure be obviated by the establishment of fixed fairs or markets—annual, biennial, &c.—for corn, cattle, sheep, cheese, and wool, in certain and easily accessible parts of the Province. Such fairs would indicate to the seller where he was likely to meet with a purchaser—to the buyers where they would be sure

of obtaining a choice of the kinds of produce or stock they desired to meet with, while the prices given and received at each of these markets would influence the prices obtained and the transactions carried on between merchant and farmer in all parts of the Province.

7th. There are two classes of hinderances to immigration and settlement which have struck me as of serious weight, and as deserving the attention of the Legislature. The first is, the want of a sufficiently copious register of information in regard not merely to the ungranted wild lands belonging to the Province, but to the lands and farms belonging to individuals, which are to be sold or which may be more or less easily obtained by those who are desirous of purchasing. I am not sufficiently acquainted with the duties of the Immigrant Agent in Saint John to know what amount or kind of information he is expected to afford to Immigrants who arrive at that Port. But in the country districts I have often heard a strong desire expressed, that farmers from the Mother Country possessed of money enough to purchase old cleared farms, could be induced to emigrate to New Brunswick, in order that a better system of husbandry might through their means be introduced into the Province. I have upon enquiry, however, usually found that if a home farmer were to come into those districts in search of a farm, he could in general find more difficulty in ascertaining where good or desirable farms were to be had, and in procuring them at reasonable prices, than he would in any part of England. It has, therefore, occurred to me, that if local registers, containing the description of all lands for sale in the neighbourhood—their quality, and the price asked for them—could be established in convenient places, it would greatly facilitate the procedure and settlement of such immigrants as would prefer to buy cleared land in a peopled neighbourhood to hewing out farms for themselves from the forest wilderness.

Again, for the class of poor immigrants who desire to locate themselves on new land, it is a great hinderance that they must first seek out a spot they would like to settle upon—next have it surveyed—then sold at public auction,—when, after all their trouble and loss of time they may be out-bid by a third party, who has taken no previous concern in the matter. It seems to me that if a survey and plan of a district, which it is desirable to settle, were made out at the expense of the Province, and the price of land in the several parts of the district by competent parties, the inconveniences felt by the new settler would be greatly diminished, and the anxieties and delays he complains of for the most part removed. Such a system, while it would secure accurate surveys, made upon a uniform and more correct system than hitherto, would occasion no pecuniary loss to the Province, as a small charge per acre upon new lands, when sold, would defray all the necessary expenses. It is a recommendation also to the adoption of the plan, that it is in substance the same which long experience, on a larger scale, has pointed out in the United States as the best fitted to promote the interests at once of the State and of intending settlers.

8th. Connected with the more accurate surveys of new lands, which ought in future to be made, are the numerous sources of litigation which exist in the ill-defined boundaries of existing farms. This is an evil which is almost inseparable from the first settlement of new countries, and is only prevented by the later settlers after much loss and difficulty has already resulted to the successors of those who first made farms for themselves in the wilderness.—In the State of New York the boundaries of many of the older settled farms have been defined only by expensive litigation; and so it will probably be in New Brunswick, unless some steps are taken to prevent the numerous evils which arise from such a mode of procedure. It is beyond my province to suggest any definite measure by which so desirable an end as the avoidance of litigation may be secured, but I take the liberty of recommending it to the wisdom of the Legislature.

9th. As connected with economical considerations of an important, positive, and material character, I would recommend—

First, the completion of the Geological Survey and of the Geological Map of the Province at as early a period as it can conveniently be effected; and

Second, an analysis of the various limestones of the Province, in reference especially to their economical values for building and agricultural purposes,—and that of the Iron ores which are known or are stated to occur in many parts of the Province, which are still ungranted.

The only other points connected with the agricultural improvement of the Province, which occur to me as deserving of the direct attention of Your Excellency and the Legislature, are—the establishment of the Provincial Agricultural Society or Board of Agriculture—the employment