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AGRICULTURE.

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

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(Continued from our last.)

These are the principal evils of a trade and industrial kind which this trade has from time to time inflicted upon the Provincial population. But it has exercised a most retarding and injurious effect also upon the practical husbandry of the Province generally, and especially upon the average produce, health, and economic condition of the land. Thus—

1st. In the process of the small farmer who endeavours to get his hay into the stack, and thus to diminish the quantity of manure which might have been enriched by had the hay been conserved upon his farm.

2nd. In his selling or carrying off his hay, has made it necessary in numerous instances to sell the cattle on the starving point during the winter, so that in spring they had become mere skeletons, too weak for their work, if they were labouring oxen, and probably short of provender.

3rd. It has carried him away, not infrequently half the summer, attending to the sale and delivery of his lumber, to the manifest and ruinous neglect of the operations upon his farm, and of the general tending and welfare of his family.

4th. In many places where water power existed upon his farm, it has tempted the small proprietor to erect mills, to contract debts, and to incur mortgages, to the neglect of the sure though slow gains of husbandry, and to the ruin of him and his children.

In the County of Albert, in which small streams abound, the number of mills of this inferior kind has been very great, and I am informed, that not only have great numbers of the farmers in that County been seriously injured in their fortunes by the late failure of the lumber trade, but that both the breeds of cattle and the modes of culture have retrograded in that County and in the County of Saint John, in consequence of the exclusive encouragement given to the lumbering.

5th. It has not only carried off the best labourers, and distracted the attention of the farmers, but it has raised the price of labour beyond the general ability of the farmer who gave his whole attention to the land, to employ paid labour profitably in the operations of husbandry. And—

6th. Lastly, the land on which the lumberer had been to cut his lumber, instead of being improved, was deteriorated by his operations, so that it was a more difficult and costly operation to the settler to clear it than when it stood in its original state of nature.

It is unnecessary here to inquire whether the lumber trade has necessarily or only incidentally been the source of so many evils, or whether the evils themselves may not be somewhat exaggerated. It is safe, I think, to conclude, that the actually slow progress and the backward condition of the agriculture of the Province, and the unprosperous, desponding, I may almost say hopeless, condition of many of its cultivators, has arisen from the too eager and universal prosecution of this trade. It is not surprising therefore that the friends of agriculture in the Colony, who have considered it fitted for agricultural operations, and have regarded them as a surer and more permanent source of wealth and general comfort than the occupation of the lumberer, should have looked with regret upon the continuance of the trade, and should have expected ultimate good to the Province from the late depressions and reverses to which it has been subjected.

In so far as regards the general prosperity of the Province two things I think will be desired by its most disinterested well-wishers: First—that the lumber trade should be prosecuted to that extent, and with that degree of spirit, which shall neither exorbitantly raise the price of labour, injudiciously waste the resources of the Province, nor by awaking too much rivalry and competition, unnecessarily lower the price of lumber in the home markets; and second—that a more distinct division of labour should hereafter be introduced; that the farmer should only farm, and the

lumberer live by his lumbering only. This would be ever aided by the effects of the trade upon the Province in general, the farmers would be enabled to share in the benefits of its vicissitudes. When it is depressed, the price of produce would improve; when it is depressed, those prices would fall. So far all would partake of its vicissitudes; but debts and mortgages incurred in its depression would not have like depressing effects upon the necks of industrious men, making their State poorer, and their debts go less deep, and weeds in their paths spring up to impede their progress.

I do not understand the subject of Trade Berths sufficiently to form a satisfactory opinion on the matter; but it seems to me that the extent to which grasses for cutting timber are sold, and the manner in which they are cut, might be made to control the individual farmer, and the rapid destruction of the finest timber, by the trade has of late years been increasing, and the resources of the Colony diminished. These are wise and judicious measures, and I hope the Hon. the House of Legislature, and again from their own experience, the local interests of individuals and of Agricultural Societies, and the conviction now gaining strength, which I hope this Report will tend to confirm, that the Province is not content with its agricultural capacities to many new sources of wealth and that, as one of the means of its improvement, it should be encouraged to a surer way to independence—these measures, if judiciously applied, not only to the down existing, but to the rising generation also to prefer the plough to the axe, the tilled field to the wild forest, and the comfortable fire-side of a snug farm-house to the rough abundance of the temporary camp.

II. Want of markets.

The want of good markets is much complained of as an obstacle to agricultural progress in the Province; as well as the way in which farmers are compelled to make their sales at the markets which do exist.

1st. The absolute want of markets can scarcely be said to exist in New Brunswick. This is shown by two facts:—

a. By the comparatively high prices which, according to the Tables of prices already given in this report, (Tables XIV. and XV.) are usually received by the farmer. Were there a want of markets, absolutely speaking, these which exist would be glutted, and prices would necessarily fall below the rates which the returns give as the averages of the several Counties.

b. By the large importations of bread stuffs and salt provisions which are annually made from the United States and from Canada. "In the year 1847, the quantity of wheat, and of flour reduced to its equivalent in wheat, imported into the Province, was equal to about 62,000 bushels, besides large quantities of other grain and meal, amounting to the estimated value of about £280,000 currency."

The importation of so large a quantity of foreign food, admits of different interpretations, according to the kind of produce of which we speak, and to the habits and circumstances of the people.

a. In the case of wheat, oats, and other grain, it may mean, either that the quantity produced at home is insufficient for the home demand, or that its quality is inferior to the foreign. But the grain of all kinds grown in the Province in good seasons appears to be of superior quality.—The importation, therefore, must be occasioned by a deficiency in the home growth, and where such a deficiency exists there must be a more or less ready sale at one or other seasons of the year.

b. In the case of wheaten flour and oat-meal, the importation may imply either a home scarcity of these articles, or an inferior quality in the flour and meal produced from good grain by the home millers. It would appear that some unfounded prejudice has hitherto existed against the quality of Province-made flour, which prejudice the letters introduced into a previous part of this Report may possibly have a tendency to allay. As to oat meal, the numerous mills now erected, or about to be set up in various parts of the Province, will, if properly conducted, render unnecessary any future large importation of oat meal, and will provide a readier sale for the excellent oats which so many parts of the Province are so naturally fitted to produce.

c. As to salt beef and pork, the importation of these articles at a time when fresh beef in the home markets is selling at 11-2d and 2d a pound, shows that the Colony does not produce enough of the quality of beef and pork which, for shipping and curing, is constantly in demand. The defective market, or low prices obtained for the articles of produce, and the large importation, are both to be remedied by an improvement in the system of feeding, and consequently in the kind of meat which the farmer can offer to

those who wish to buy. I shall return to this point in a subsequent part of the present Report.

2nd. The distance of markets and difficulty of access to them, which are real evils, in many of the newer settlements especially, may be remedied in some degree by each of three methods:—

a. By the general improvement of the means of communication. This is of great importance to the general welfare of the Province, as I have already at some length remarked—and it has given me much satisfaction to find its importance every where so generally acknowledged and understood.

b. By the public establishment of new markets or fairs—quarterly, half-yearly, or annual—for corn, cattle, wool, and dairy produce, in central situations. General meetings of this kind are eminently adapted to the wants of a young and thinly scattered people. They have been in existence from the most remote periods in almost every country of Europe, and I can speak from my own knowledge of their great value at the present day in Scotland, both to the Scotch and English farmer. They bring buyers and sellers easily together, and thus save time, labour and money to both—they establish a tariff of money prices which serves as a standard for all transactions during three six, or twelve months—they thus put both buyers and sellers in remembrance on a level with each other, and prevent the one from gaining an unreasonable advantage over the other—they encourage attention to the production of good samples of grain, cheese, wool, or latted stock, by the ready sale which these are sure to find—while they afford an opportunity to the farmer, if he have good articles to sell, of procuring money on a fixed day, and of thus meeting engagements which, relying on the market, he has not scrupled to make—or if he wish to buy, of bringing upon his farm at the proper time the kind and quantity of stock which the state of his hay and root crops at the different seasons demand.

The attention of the Legislature, and of Agricultural Societies, therefore, cannot be too strongly directed to the establishment of such leading, regulating, and central markets in the Province, at proper periods in the year, and in proper situations.

c. By the establishment of Agricultural agencies or factorships at the seats of the principal markets. If instead of himself going with his team great distances, which detain him a week or ten days from home, and thus having to seek a buyer for his produce from house to house, or from merchant to merchant—the farmer could transmit his stock or grain to a trust-worthy agent in the market town, he might not only realize better prices, but save the money also he used to spend in travelling, while he would be able at the same time to devote a closer attention to the business of his farm. In England and Scotland such agencies are not only very useful to the farmers, especially in the disposal of his stock, but they prove lucrative also to the skillful men who undertake them.

3rd. The custom of paying in kind, or the want of cash markets, is much complained of in the remoter districts, and especially among the smaller farmers. This is no doubt an inconvenience, and in some respects an evil, but it is almost inseparable from the still youthful condition of things in most parts of the Province. The produce of the farmer must ultimately be converted into the wares of the merchant. Whether this is done by means of one or two transactions—by first selling to one for money, and then with this money, buying from another, is of no consequence to the farmer, provided he obtains as much tea, sugars, or other merchandize for his produce, by the one way as the other. In places where the traffic is small, the merchant is unable to obtain money from his customers, and is obliged to take grain or other farm produce, and with this again to pay his own debts to the wholesale merchant. But he buys his goods at a fixed price, and has to pay for them in articles the price of which varies very much in different seasons of the year. He is thus compelled in self defence to take the farmer's productions at a very low rate, so as to avoid the risk of loss when he sends them to the varying market.—Thus the farmer has often just reason to complain that his market is bad, and prices too low, while the merchant is only doing what prudence dictates, and what, to avoid the risk of bankruptcy, he is bound to do. At the same time it is in the power of the merchant often to take undue advantage of that power, and this no doubt is frequently done. But for such a state of things competition is the most certain cure. Such competition will naturally arise as the local traffic increases, and it is seen that money is made by the merchant—or it may be raised by a combination of the aggrieved parties themselves—or by an improvement in the means of communication with other markets. I have heard many persons in the Province sometimes unrea-