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Nec aranearum sane textus ideo melior, quia ex se fila gignunt, nec noster vilior quia ex alienis libamus ut apes.

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AGRICULTURAL PURSUITS.

[We take the following extracts from an Address delivered by the Hon. Adam Ferguson, before the Provincial Agricultural Society for Upper Canada.]

Of all the pursuits, Gentlemen, which engage the physical energies or which rouse the intellectual resources of our race, there is none which can at all bear a comparison with the occupation of the husbandman. We know it to be the inevitable and righteous doom pronounced by an offended God, upon sinful man that "In the sweat of thy brow, shalt thou eat bread," and while we bow with humble reverence to the sentence pronounced, we cannot fail at the same time to recognize the wondrous mercy which distinguishes all his dispensations to man, and in humble gratitude to hail the blessings and enjoyments uniformly attendant upon a life of honest industry and toil. It would be unbecoming and unfair to exalt the husbandman at the expense of other avocations, though it is impossible to shrink from preferring his claim to one of the most useful and honourable among the employments of man. We have in all ages been too readily dazzled by glare and tinsel, or led astray by the noise and clamour of ambitious men: but it has been universally conceded by the wisest and the best, that the larger portion of human happiness will be ever found in the peaceful pursuits of rural life.

One characteristic feature of the farmer is indeed to be met with in every age and in every clime, and we doubt not that our Canadian brethren will sturdily maintain it as their right. Farmers must be allowed to grumble and to bemoan their fates, when ungenial seasons, low prices, or animal and vegetable diseases assail their equanimity. It will be well for them, however, in such hours of despondency, to consider calmly, and to put it to their convictions candidly, whether in the worst of times they feel any inclination to exchange conditions with any other class of the community to which they belong. During the early ages of civilization when might wielded an iron rule over right, and industrious classes were immersed in even grosser darkness than that of their imperial lords, and we find that every where recorded in the pages of history, as wretched bondsmen or miserable serfs. Agriculture was then in its rudest condition. The chest lands lay desolate and waste, and while the proud lord could revel in abundance during the seasons of pasture, even his baronial board was restricted during a considerable portion of the year to viands of the most homely and ordinary description. The great mass of the population existed in poverty and squalor, while fell swoops of pestilence and famine ever and anon ravaged the finest countries of Europe. In course of time the feudal system in a great measure disappeared, mercantile enterprise and maritime discoveries began to diffuse wealth, a new class in society arose, men, who, after realizing fortunes in commercial pursuits, retired to rural ease with a zest which all men feel who can command its enjoyments, and the services of rural labour found a new and advantageous resource. It was soon found to be impossible for these new lords of the soil to cultivate with ease or advantage the broad acres they had acquired, and from this exigency forthwith sprung that estimable class of men, a British Tenantry.

It is not our intention, neither would it fall within our scope to attempt any detailed account of the rise and progress of agricultural improvement in Europe or more especially in Britain. Its vicissitudes have been great, and its present condition in our father land deeply to be deplored. It is perhaps no exaggeration to aver that there exists in this hour in Britain and in Ireland a mass of disheartening perplexity and trouble among

those who are tied down by stringent agricultural engagements, which must fill the generous mind with bitter pain and regret. We are quite aware that in several cases even subsequent to the passing of the Free Trade Corn Bill, farms have been taken at equal nay at higher rents than before, but we feel pretty well satisfied that in a vast majority of such cases, the reason will be found to exist in some peculiar cause, such as local connection or attachment, a difficulty in obtaining a fair value for stock, or such like; and no man at all acquainted with the condition and prospects of the British farmer, can hesitate to pronounce it anything but cheering. Various causes may have led to this, and certainly the whole blame does by no means attach to the owners of the soil. Reckless offers made by reckless or by ignorant men, led landlords to give farms to those who were in all respects unequal to the task. Interested and plausible land agents and surveyors, misled many by attaching a value to land which it could not reasonably bear. Times altered, taxes increased, prices declined, and finally the removal of protective duties has left the farmer, to say the least, precarious prospects. Painful would it be to reflect upon such a state of things, did no prospect of relief present itself. Thanks be to a Gracious Providence, a vast alleviation, if not an entire remedy is within our reach to propose.

The unsettled portions of Canada, Gentlemen, offers to the farmers of Britain and of Ireland a rich and productive soil, a salubrious climate, a constitution and a code of laws which secure persons and property against all aggression, a schedule of taxes trivial in amount, and almost wholly raised by the people themselves to expend upon local improvements, an extent of water carriage unsurpassed in the whole world, and a population growing rapidly in numbers and civilization with every earnest of our sturdy adherence to the noble virtues of the Saxon race. The prudent appropriation of the public lands of Canada, when considered in its various bearings, is at this moment one of the most important subjects which can engage the attention of either British or Canadian Legislators.

Millions of rich and cultivable acres are at their disposal. Millions of British subjects are either actually starving or struggling for a bare subsistence at home. The problem to be solved is, how to bring the wants and the means of relief together. Probably no wiser course could be adopted than to consider the cases as one of an individual administering an affair of his own. What in all probability would be the course which a man of ordinary sense and forethought, in such circumstances is likely to pursue. Possessed of such a treasure, would not his first aim and object be to bring it into public notice, by affording to intending settlers an opportunity of inspection? Without such an inspection he can have no rational ground for hope that others than the veriest outcasts will come upon his land. Let him, however, open lines of road, which wheel carriages can in safety and some comfort traverse, and he may then with confidence and with assurance, expect to see a class of men coming in, who will afford him a fair price for his land and a remuneration twice told, for his outlay. When to such a mere pecuniary point of view the statesman shall add, as he is bound to do, a consideration of the immense importance, the sacred duty of applying such resources to the relief of an over-crowded population, and to the establishment, in at least comparative ease and independence of a valuable portion of the community, we feel it impossible to doubt, that the subject will be ere long taken into serious consideration. The moment, be it observed, is critical, and if permitted to pass without action, thousands of the most valuable descriptions of colonists will migrate elsewhere, and be irretrievably lost to the empire. As regards the class of men to whom we particularly allude, I mean the tottering farmers of Britain—men who can yet scrape together a few hundreds or thou-

sands from the wreck of capital invested in farms, and who can make any compromise with their landlords to set them free, the change will beyond doubt prove one of the highest advantage.—No doubt it is a momentous step, and may in some degree be assimilated to a hydropathic immersion—the shock of a moment—holding out a fair prospect of renovated health and vigour the debilitated frame. Neither in this transition in modern times to be for one moment compared with the hardships dangers, and privations of the olden times, still less with the embarrassments and difficulties from which these poor men desire to emerge. Let us, for instance, suppose a township opened up by Government in its valuable tracts, roads made, and facilities of information and purchase wisely given and arranged. Let an agent of known respectability, with the distinct sanction of the government, be sent to these impoverished men.—Let him submit for their consideration a faithful and unvarnished statement of the capabilities of the land, and of the difficulties to be encountered. Let one of their own number be encouraged and aided, perhaps, to visit and report, and we will venture to predict, that no long period will elapse, from his return, ere the whole who are interested, will be in motion, ten, twenty, nay a hundred families, might arrange to move together, leaving all the old and dear ties of friendship, of neighbourhood and relationship unbroken, bringing along with them valuable live stock and probably accompanied by industrious and sober dependants. Let a brief period of extra labour and of petty annoyances pass away, and we shall find these men comfortably and respectably established upon freehold of their own, clear of Tythe Proctors, Poor Rate Collectors, and almost of Tax-gatherers, free from harassing recollections of approaching rent day, and surrounded, in a word, with every rational comfort for their declining years, and the unspeakable enjoyments of a prospect of independence, even for their children's children.

I am perfectly aware, that the picture here drawn, will be considered by many as partaking rather largely of the "colour de rose," but I would admonish those who mourn over disappointed hopes in Canada, sometimes in a candid mood, to consider whether at least a portion of their discontent may not have arisen from expectations duly formed, or from glaring faults in their own management and conduct. Be that, however, as it may, we have still an overwhelming mass of living evidence to establish the fact, that Canada affords an unfeigned independence to the sober, industrious, steady, and rational husbandman or mechanic.

There can be no hazard in the Provincial Board, guaranteeing such an assurance, and it will be no trifling service done to the state, when it can procure the sanction of such a body to an extensive and well organized system of emigration. While the Board will feel at all times ready to co-operate in such arrangements, its own proper and immediate attention will be addressed to the improvement of agriculture as it exists among us. In time past, the great and almost sole object of serious interest to the Canadian farmer, has been to grow wheat as largely, and to repeat the crop as frequently as any decent return could be obtained. This system was perfectly natural, if not perfectly wise.—Wheat was found to be always less or more in demand, commanding a cash payment, while most other articles of farm produce were only to be disposed of in barter or in trade. Land was cheap and abundant, and when fields began to exhibit unequivocal systems of exhaustion, a new clearing was commenced and the old pretty much abandoned to nature. Slovenly habits necessarily result from such a course, and land which could readily have been made to produce 30 bushels per acre, frequently did not yield over one half. The Canadian farmer trained in such a school, feels some difficulty in giving credence to what he may be told of the capabilities of his own

soil. Yet is there nothing more true, nothing more satisfactorily established by long experience, than the marvelous effects produced upon land by an improved system of husbandry. Drainage, deep-ploughing, alternate green crops and grain, with a due attention to live stock, and other departments of husbandry, has made a garden of thousands of acres within the memory of living men which were quite as wild and unproductive as the rudest fields of Canada. An intelligent and well known agriculturist, whom I am proud to call a friend, (John Grey, Esquire, of Diltson, in the County of Northumberland,) states in an account of the progress of agriculture in that county, that from a superior mode of managing the land, and from the extra quantity of manure, arising from a full stock of well fed animals, the produce in grain has been increased to a degree almost incredible.—The Messrs Culley (names familiar of course to all who have given their attention to modern improvements in agriculture,) entered upon the farm of Wark in May, 1786. The crop of that season, belonging to the preceding tenant, was valued over to them, as is common and was estimated at 15 bushel per acre for oats, and nine for wheat. After being occupied by the Culeys for 15 years, certain family arrangements required it to be valued again, the estimate was 84 bushels per acre for oats, 62 for wheat, and 72 for barley, and it is reasonable to suppose, that the live stock and green crop would be in a somewhat similar proportion. It is proper to observe, that the above extraordinary crop was that of a remarkably favourable season, and the land upon which it grew, was some of the best in the District. Still there is no doubt whatever that the crops of that part of England have increased at least 20 per cent. in the first twenty years of the present century, and may be now safely averaged at from 28 to 36 bushels of wheat, 38 to 46 of barley, and 45 to 56 of oats, per acre.

Recent changes in the corn trade of England must necessarily (at all events for a time) effect the Canadian farmer. The removal of protection, however, to the manufactures of Britain, and the application of the principles of free trade to other items of consumption, will, ere long, bring with them some compensation. Neither does there appear in reality any reasonable ground for supposing that upon an average of five or seven years, the price of wheat will be ruinously low, while there is no doubt whatever that the farmers of Canada may, without any extravagant outlay, by improved tillage, and an economical management and application of manure, readily add one third (at least) to their product of wheat. It will be an important duty of the Board to lead our farmers to other agricultural products. Hemp and hops are both well adapted to many parts of the Province.

Pease, in any quantity, and of the most prolific quality, are within the culture of every farmer, and will form a growing article of export.

Should the potato disease prove incurable, it would be difficult to fix a limit to their consumption in Britain and in Ireland, where they would prove an excellent substitute for that esculent, probably more useful and acceptable for general use, than Indian Corn.

Canada is in general well prepared for Dairy husbandry, and when the freights to Europe become reasonably moderate, butter, cheese, and salted provisions, will yield fair returns. Great improvements remain to be effected in the manufacture of these articles, and it will be an object of much interest to the Board to convey instruction and information regarding them.

The rough condition of the farmers, with various concurring circumstances, have in times past precluded any due attention to the important department of live stock. We find everywhere a mongrel mixture of Devon, Herefords, Lancashires, and Normans, frequently indeed producing good milkers, and useful cattle for the yoke, but entirely devoid