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A LECTURE.

WANT OF CONFIDENCE IN OUR COUNTRY AND OURSELVES.

Delivered in the Mechanics' Institute of St. John, on Monday the 13th December, 1852, by WM. WATTS, Jr., Esq., of Fredericton, Barrister-at-Law, and Editor of the "Head Quarters."

But how was the Exhibition brought about?—was it the spontaneous tribute of the Districts sent up to illustrate Provincial pride in Provincial Prosperity? Far, far from it! A good deal of the philosophy we come to teach to-night, is very significantly indicated in the pain and labor with which this gathering was accomplished. For an entire year the New Brunswick Society, or rather the indefatigable or patriotic men at the head of it, traversed every portion of the Province with reports, handbills, circulars, printed and manuscript appeals, lectures, speeches, and what not, goading here, exciting there, moving every ambitious feeling of personal and sectional rivalry, coaxing, persuading, tempting, reasoning, threatening—in a word, using every influence which ingenuity could devise and industry execute, to bring the ends of the Province and their productions together. Without these exertions the Exhibition Building would have presented a beggarly array of empty counters. With all these exertions, the most sanguine did not look for such a show as at last rewarded them; and five days before the Exhibition opened, the first man could not have been discovered, who believed New Brunswick capable of such an honorable and rich array of Agricultural produce.

John Bluenose stood amazed, surprised, confounded, in view of the crops of his own farm and garden—thought at first it must be somebody else's—and when the great surprise settled at last into more glorious conviction, that it was all the fruit of Provincial fertility and industry—John fired up with new courage, cocked his hat, gave a tug to his shirt collar, and went home with larger faith, vowing he'd make the next show better.

But you must not suppose that Bluenose was led to this conviction by the evidence of his own eyes employed on these trophies of his own fields—that had been too bold by half for him. He had to wait till a gentleman who had just returned from the great Upper Canada Fair, then lately held at Toronto, had first declared that our farm produce was greatly superior to their's—till another traveller who had been present at many of the great Agricultural anniversaries in the United States had given the same testimony;—till Mr Sykes, the English railway contractor, had endorsed a similar opinion, and an Ayrshire Farmer, who had time and again seen the finest Agricultural shows in Scotland, repeated the same tale;—then, and not till then, the glad assurance settled down into the heart of Bluenose, that notwithstanding his little faith—his imperfect husbandry—his paucity of Agricultural implements—his wastefulness in manures—his carelessness in drainage—his disregard of systematic cropping, indeed of all the appliances of scientific agriculture—the simple fertility of the soil, and his own unskilled industry, had enabled him to gather on those shelves, a show of field and garden productions, worthy to be pitted against the best results of wealthy and systematic farming in the best agricultural districts in the old world or the new.

Apart from the Exhibition altogether, we have abundant evidence that God has given us a good country, and that our people are not deficient in ingenuity. Can the country be anything else than a just and generous country, which takes a laborer, a wideness, an axe, a little seed grain and potatoes, and in ten years gives you a farmer—a farm of from thirty to fifty acres, cropped and in meadow—a comfortable farmhouse, barns and out-buildings—a decent dairy stock—good working cattle—lots of heifers and steers—a respectable flock of sheep—pigs in plenty—poultry in abundance—a comfortable building within sight, which serves the double purpose of a church and a schoolhouse—and a healthy and happy family to sit at eventide beside the door step, and listen to the Old World stories of

the proud and chatty parents? I tell you friends, it is foul calumny to say of such a country it is anything else than good. Yet our country has done all this, is doing all this, will do all this—"can't begin to do anything else" but this, for every healthy industrious, thrifty man of mind, judgment and strong heart, who will take his land and stick to it. Such instances are to be found in almost every settlement in the Province; and mind you they are not cases of lucky men who have purchased valuable farms at bankrupts' or sheriffs' sales—nothing of the sort; they are instances in which downright industry and thrift, contending at first with much of fatigue, and much of privation, has in the lapse of ten short years been rewarded by the comfortable privilege of looking round upon smiling and fruitful acres, well fenced, well kept, well stocked, good not showy buildings, an independence which owes no man anything but good will, and husbands his convenient pound in the old stocking against the time of need.

But when I say such instances occur in almost every settlement, you must not understand me to intend that they are frequent in any settlement. The results I speak of exact all the rare qualities to which I have alluded in full measure and in friendly combination—vigour, health, untiring industry, indomitable courage, a just economy, not only of money but of time and labour, and strong, clear-headed common sense.—Wherever you find these qualities in this conjunction; devoted to agricultural employment, you will find them followed by comfortable independence in ten years.

Again at the Exhibition we were so intent on beeves and muttens, on farm and garden produce, and mechanical contrivances we had little time to remember the big and little Bluenoses, but from whom all these things would be of little value; and strange to say, after all their thought and preparation, with their Treasury docteur of £500 and long catalogue of prizes, the New Brunswick Society offered no reward for "honest men and bonnie lasses;" and they were quite right in the omission—even a penny prize would have exhausted their exchequer, for the truth is, that it may as well be spoken plainly, our men have as much intelligence, honesty, neighborliness and God-fearing and man-loving Christianity as any other men of any other country; and our mothers, wives, daughters, sisters and sweethearts, why they are just as good, and every whit as good-looking, as any other people's wives and sweethearts, find them where you will; but I am anticipating and must try back, to ask you, in the first place, if I may not fairly present our country as entitled to your faith?

Then what are we to say of ourselves? I have no hesitation in saying we are a great deal better people than we think ourselves. In native mother wit, in ability to accommodate himself to circumstances, and by some contrivance or other to overcome difficulties which must be overcome, I will confidently put a New Brunswicker against the world. The fact is, he has too much versatility of power and resource to become perfect in any one thing. If he farms it, he must of necessity in many cases—on, at any rate, he will from choice, or fancied economy—be his own blacksmith, carpenter, cabinetmaker, wheelwright, and shoemaker; he will likely trade a little, and lumber a good deal. Now, you may very easily argue that such a multiplicity of offices must breed distraction and neglect; but you will be compelled to admit that the man who can do all these things cannot be wanting in ingenuity.

When our people go abroad, they are not found to suffer in comparison with the people of other countries, whether as mechanics, or in what we call the politer arts—Our young men find free employment in all the industrial pursuits in the United States where their skill is put in competition with that of every part of the world. The youths of our schools and colleges are disparaged by no unfriendly contrasts in the Medical Universities of Britain or the States; they win their honours and wear them as soon and as often as candidates from other countries. Our public men hold their own on the platform or at the bureau against the foremost statesmen and orators; but we don't believe this, and we won't believe it till other peo-

ple tell us that it is so. A young Bluenose might paint grapes that the birds would peck at, or a screen so naturally, that an artist might attempt to remove it; he might construct an engine that would move, without fire or water, with any required velocity at small cost, and stop when it was told to, but nobody beyond his mother would believe in him here, and every good-natured friend would bid him turn his attention to something useful; but let him go as far as Boston, and be praised by a Yankee newspaper and then everybody would be ready with the exclamation, "I always thought that boy would turn out something!"

Look fairly and impartially at our profession—they all possess their quotas of imported and domestic parsons, doctors, lawyers. Does the home-made article suffer in a fair comparison? For my life I cannot see that it does; and while I would do no disparagement to the good and wise men from the Old World who do honour to their vocations, and are of great service to us, I must take the liberty to say that I think we have preachers just as erudite and eloquent doctors every whit as skilful, lawyers just as safe to advise, just as ingenious to plead, born of New Brunswick parents, as they can find among them.

In your commercial houses, in the public offices and your banks, I am quite certain no want of business talent is discovered in Young New Brunswick.

You must not suppose from the tone of these remarks, that I am here to teach anything akin to what our Republican friends call *Native Americanism*, or to institute any unkind comparisons between those who are New Brunswickers by birth and those who have become so by adoption. I should indeed, be even more unworthy than I am of the honors of this platform, if either in judgment or feeling I could entertain any such idea for an instant. I hail every man who brings the tribute of his industry and knowledge to the treasury of our country with the right hand of a heart-fellowship. He does honor to our country in selecting it for his new home, and I offer him free welcome to every honor and advantage he can fairly win and fairly wear within it. Hundreds upon hundreds of those whose first home was beyond the broad Atlantic, are now among the foremost men in our public service, and in every adventure of private enterprise; then have learned to love and serve the land of their adoption, the land which their children must inherit; their treasure is with us, their hearts are with us; and while many a lingering look of love will burn betimes to the old home beyond the sea, the fonder love will return at last to the new Provincial home, whose sacred roof-tree covers their wives and little ones.

Devotion implies no diminution in affection. The more a man lives, the more he increases his capacity to live. There is no earthly necessity that one should forget his father's fireside in order to love his own, and who is silly enough to suppose a man loves his wife the less when the babies come!

I would be a traitor to every opinion and feeling I have ever held, if I were in any way to disparage the merit and patriotism of the adopted sons of New Brunswick. I respect and love them; and without saying or meaning anything to their prejudice, I want to spirit up my brother Bluenoses of native birth, to emulate their courage, their self-reliance and their self-respect.

We must get rid of this nasty habit of belittling ourselves. Why should we stand behind other people's chairs, when we are fit to sit at table with the best of them? We have carried this mean disparagement too far by half already, and it has been practised upon too readily. It is high time we changed our policy; and while we think no worse of others, let us learn to think a good deal better of ourselves.

But bear in mind it is genuine self-respect I want to incite, and no sickly vanity and pride, of which, perhaps, we have over much already. What we want is a public spirit and public confidence which will keep step with every advance of public prosperity. At present we have more prosperity than courage—more pride than independence. As an evidence of this regard the fact, that while the prosperity of other countries is always indicated by the in-

creased use of luxuries among the people—by improvements in the character of their food and apparel, with us the very contrary is the case, and our "friends of the people" teach us we have all along been indulging in luxuries above our condition, wearing broadcloth, when homespun had been more appropriate, and eating the superfine flour of the United States, when country flour had been better and cheaper. This is because other countries rise to broadcloth and white bread with the increase of material wealth, obtained in the prosecution of the industries appropriate to them:—while with us these have been procured, in the first instance, by the gambling profits of our spoiled timber forests, while all the elements of permanent wealth were left unimproved and idle. Therefore it is, and therefore only, we are exhorted to try back from broadcloth to homespun, and from Genesee to home grown flour:—therefore it is, and therefore only, we are taught to feel that it is not only *unnatural*, but *unpleasant*, to go back from the *butterfly* to the *grub*.

The sense of littleness of which we have spoken, is by no means confined to those of our people who have vegetated at home: even our travelled Bluenoses, while they get their minds liberalised into an appreciation of the advantages which other countries enjoy from improved machinery in mechanics—superior agricultural implements—facilities to travel by land and water, yet retain, many of them, this same humiliating feeling, which has always been too prevalent in the Province, viz., that these things though all well enough for other countries, are quite *too fast* for us, they will tell us—*the time has not come*—we are not old enough, or rich enough for these aids to industry and enterprise. An evidence of this feeling just occurs to me: in other countries steam or water power is called in to aid almost all departments of mechanical industry, and with great advantage. Now, while we know this, while we can and do build steam engines, and good and cheap ones—while no country has suffered or is suffering more than our own from the dearth and dearthness of humane labour, skilled and unskilled—and so no country can feel a greater necessity for the assistance of machinery—there is not, so far as I know, a single engine in the whole Province employed for such a purpose. Yet it is beyond a question true, that in all our towns and villages one or more of these might very profitably be employed, and its strength distributed through many workshops of the different trades in the building in which it should be stationed.

Take the Railroad schemes and failures of the last ten years as an illustration of our want of confidence in ourselves, in our ability to execute and sustain these great material civilizations of the age. How slow we were to be convinced that even Great Britain, with all her wealth and power, could build a Railroad through New Brunswick, to connect the Provinces! No reasoning, or persuasion, or statistics from Provincial life, or pen, could ever have satisfied us that the idea was less than extravagant, mad, impossible; but we hoped for, believed in it, saw no earthly difficulty when Major Robinson and Col. Es court recommended it.

When the European and North American Railway was suggested by the Portland Convention, many of our wiseacres and the people generally, thought it a wild delusion, got up by Yankee fanaticism, practising on Bluenose gullibility. When Mr. Archibald sanctioned it, not only by his opinion but by pledging his money in it, the many were surprised, while they thought he was an Englishman; but as soon as it was discovered he was only a colonist, he was at once denounced as a knave or a fool. Enquiries were bandied freely—"Who is he?" "What is he?"—and the sovereign people became incredulous as ever.

When Mr. Jackson came—a Simon Pure John Bull, a man of unquestionable intelligence and wealth—passed along the line, approved of it—proposed to build it, and extensions with it, on easy terms, because it offered a desirable route, and promise of profitable travel—why, Bluenose had faith at once to remove mountains, tunnel rocks, bridge rivers and what not. He always knew this road was bound to go, and that we were to become a great people.