

LECTURE.

Miramichi Mechanics' Institute.

The following Lecture is published in compliance with the annexed Resolution unanimously passed at the Annual Meeting of the members of the Miramichi Mechanics' Institute, held on the 29th April last.

Resolved, That a Committee be appointed to wait upon JAMES A. PIERCE, Esq., and request Mr. P. to give publicity in the columns of the Gleaner, to the Lecture delivered by him in this Hall, on the Evenings of Thursday the 7th and 14th instant, this Lecture being esteemed as an interesting and lucid exposition of the past and present circumstances of this County.

That John M. Johnson be a committee to call on Mr. Pierce.

SECOND LECTURE.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,—

Now, let us take a look at our own Province, and see what has been done by the People, the Government, and the Legislature, to compete with other countries on the onward march of improvement, during the period I have resided in it—since the ever memorable fire of 1825.

The Government have extended large sums of money, and on the whole, no doubt, judiciously, in opening and keeping in repair the GREAT ROADS:—They have also devoted large sums in the opening and improvement of BYE ROADS, but until another system, or more correctly speaking, a SYSTEM be adopted in lying out the country for settlement, the beneficial effects, in proportion to the large sums expended, will be small indeed. In travelling, if we look around us, we see no order or arrangement—one settler is perched on a hill, another in a valley, and a third on the margin of a stream, just as their fancy or their immediate interests dictate. Those three persons must have bye roads to lead to their doors. Had the system adopted in Canada, of lying out to townships and settlements been adopted, half the bye road money would have sufficed to give every settler the benefit of a good road. This is amply illustrated in the Napan settlement—it being blocked out in the first instance, agreeably to the plan pursued in Canada.

To the enterprise of Mr. Whitney, and to parties in Boston, the people of St. John have been indebted for Steam boat accommodation to Boston and Portland in the United States, to Windsor and Annapolis in Nova Scotia, to the Bend, Shediac, Dorchester, and Sackville in this Province. This has been of great service to the commercial community, and the inhabitants generally, in keeping up a safe and speedy communication with those places. There has also been kept up a regular communication by steam-boat between St. John and Fredericton, and during the last season, with Woodstock. The Government have built in the vicinity of St. John, a Penitentiary and Lunatic Asylum, both of which have been of great service to the Province. Here, I believe, I must pause, as no other matter bearing on the subject of IMPROVEMENT, presents itself to my observation.

Unfortunately for the general prosperity of this fine Province, its geographical position is such, that the Northern section is cut off from the South, as far as water communication is concerned. One portion is intersected by the Bay of Fundy, and the other by the Gulf of St. Lawrence. There is but a narrow neck of land about 15 miles in width which separates them, lying between the Bend of Petitcodiac and Shediac. The connecting of them by a Canal, has been from time to time talked of, and two surveys were made—one reporting the juncture practicable, and the other the reverse. That the opening of such a Canal would be attended with the most beneficial results, there is not a difference of opinion. In the first place, it would open up this section of country to a free intercourse with the city of St. John, and the ports on the other side of the Province; vessels from Quebec and P. E. Island, would be saved the long, tedious, and dangerous passage through the Straits of Canso, and along the Nova Scotia coast; but situate as we are at present, in consequence of this barrier, we have no trade, no intercourse with our fellow Colonists on the Bay. Our interests, to a very great extent, run counter to the other. The prosperity of one section of the Province is looked upon as detracting from the interest of the other—one code of commercial regulations is considered beneficial to St. John, and detrimental to us. They being more numerous in population, have greater numbers to represent them in the Legislature, and are therefore enabled to swamp all measures brought forward to promote our interest, if that section of the Province is not interested in them. This was very strikingly evinced when the Quebec Electric Telegraph Company of Quebec, desired the right of way through Restigouche, Gloucester, Northumberland, Kent and Westmorland to Halifax. This was denied them—and negotiations were entered into to induce them to take it to Fredericton, and then down to St. John, which the company refused. For some time the people of Quebec relied on the American lines for communication; but experience taught them, that on them there was no dependence. No sooner was the arrival of the mail steamers telegraphed, than further communication ceased for a day or two—and the next news reported was, that the wires were down at some convenient distance from the Canadian frontier. This could not be submitted to, and the Company at length decided on building their line by the Tanasquata and Woodstock, a rather round about way it must be admitted to get to Halifax.

We have recently had another instance of this narrow-minded policy in the refusal of the Legislature to allow the Miramichi and Richibucto Company to increase their capital to enable them to extend their operations, except on such conditions as would be detrimental to the Shareholders to adopt.

The same spirit actuated the Legislature in dictating the mail route to Canada. Before I came to Miramichi, Mr. Howe, then Postmaster General for the two Provinces, informed me, that he and the Earl of Dalhousie, as well as Sir James Kempt, had used their best endeavours to establish the mail route from Halifax to Canada by the north eastern section of this Province, as it was the safest, most direct, and consequently, the shortest; but every obstacle was thrown in the way by the Legislature of this Province, who were anxious that it should pass through Fre-

dericton, and then down by the Temiscouate lake. To accomplish this object, large sums of money were annually expended on this road which traverses a long tract of the most forbidden country, while not a shilling could be procured for opening up the road between Bathurst and Dalhousie, and but little for the road between Miramichi and Bathurst. He said they were at length compelled to yield the point, and then the public purse strings were unloosed, and money granted for the roads than being opened between the Miramichi and Restigouche. This shows how local feelings have been brought to bear to retard this section of the Province. We have before us another sample of the same kind in the conduct of the Government and the people of the Southern districts respecting the great trunk railway. While there was a prospect of its coming this way, they opposed it with vigour, but no sooner did our Government decide on the valley of the St. John than they gave it their hearty concurrence and support.

But while I am blaming, and very justly so, the narrow minded and selfish policy of the people and their leaders on the other side of the Province, our people and legislators are to blame themselves, in many instances, for the success of their rivals. That Union is strength—is an axiom—it cannot be gainsaid—but the want of this has had a most withering effect on the interests of this section of the Province. Were I, Mr. Chairman, standing on another platform, and allowed to speak of the party feuds, local jealousies, engendered and kept alive to serve the purposes of particular men and parties. I could tell you where the seat of our weakness has laid, and how it took its rise—but this is forbidden ground. There are persons present who have only to take a retrospective glance at things that have occurred, and recount scenes in which they at different times took a part, and they will comprehend what I mean.

As I am unable to trace the sources of our weakness. I shall endeavour to point out a few of the evils which have long existed, and which, to a certain extent still exist, and suggest some remedies, without, I trust, infringing on the rules of this Institute. In alluding to them, I do not wish to create any ill feeling, or to harrow up feelings calculated to annoy or to keep alive those unhappy differences, but on the contrary, I am desirous in alluding to them, to set them up as light houses are placed on sunken rocks and shoals, to warn the navigator of the dangers that surround him.

When I came to Miramichi there was but one Institution of a Literary kind in existence—the Miramichi Library. To become a subscriber thereto, it was necessary that you should pay £1 for every year the Library had been in existence, and an annual subscription of £1. Several persons who wished to become subscribers, endeavoured to obtain more liberal terms; they so far succeeded that the entrance money was reduced to £5, an annual subscription of £1. This was considered too high. An opposition Library was started on a more liberal basis, £1 entrance money, and 10s. yearly subscription. This was in great favour for a few years—but the subscribers did not pay—annual meetings were called, and the only persons who attended were two or three office bearers; consequently the Library was shut up, it having lost about half of its works from the negligence or dishonesty of its members. The old Library which comprises a number of valuable works, is also closed, but what become of its funds, or what the parties who have it in charge intend doing with it, I am unable to say—perhaps some gentleman present may be enabled to inform us. The works of the Union Library, you are aware, I hand over to the Chatham Mechanics Institute, they having been some time in my possession as the librarian.

Immediately after the memorable fire of 1825, a Joint Stock Company was formed for the purpose of purchasing a part of the Peter Henderson Lot in Chatham, with the avowed intention of lying it out in building lots, which were to be given away without any consideration, to such inhabitants of the town of Newcastle who would abandon their leasehold in that town and build in Chatham. The sale was effected, but I believe no person accepted the offer. The Company then proceeded to sell their lots from time to time at public auction, to the highest bidder, and it turned out a very lucrative speculation. I do not wish to cast any blame on individuals, but I cannot help remarking, that it was singular that a company which had been started with the avowed intention of increasing the population of Chatham, and to render facilities for building up the town, that they should immediately alter their views, and endeavour to make money out of the affair. What did they do for the town? Was a block reserved for a market house—town house—engine house—for public schools—or any other public building?—Was a square reserved for safety in case of fire, or for ornament? No, the selfish principle prevailed on this occasion, as it has done on many others. I may be told that they did set apart a frontage for a public landing, a square for public use. The former I admit, and it will some day become a great accommodation—but the latter—look at it—a bog, the worst piece they possessed, and in a most ineligible position for such a purpose. Thus was lost an opportunity which can never be recalled, for benefitting the public of Chatham in a most essential manner. I forgot to say, they put up a shed for a market house—this was praiseworthy, certainly, but they forgot the most essential part of the business to establish a market, they never drew up, or got the Legislature to pass a Law, regulating the same.

The next Joint Stock set on foot, was one for opening up a direct trade with the West Indies. This Company was formed—a brig built—which performed one or two voyages. Personal feeling crept in—discord ensued—the affairs of the company were badly managed or some persons thought so—and as the profits were not so large as some of the stockholders anticipated, and others fearful that it would prove a losing business, it was broken up.

The next public enterprise entered into, was one to establish a steam communication to connect Quebec with Halifax, embracing Miramichi. I will give the people of this County credit when they deserve it—and in this instance they did subscribe liberally. The Royal William was built at Quebec—she was put on the route—and made several trips to Halifax, and entered into our port, just as it suited the Quebec managers, or the caprice of her Captain. It was a failure—a natural consequence—as there was no economy in the expenditure, or oligitude manifested by the managing directors to fulfil

their arrangements or to accommodate the public.

To facilitate the growing trade that existed between this port, P. E. Island and Pictou, Mr. Cunard put on the Cape Breton, steamer. To this the three Provinces, Nova Scotia, P. E. Island and New Brunswick rendered substantial support by public grants. She ran for several years, and was a great accommodation, but was at length withdrawn, in consequence of an alteration made in the Resolution of the Legislature, which the proprietor said the traffic would not allow him to comply with.

Her withdrawal being felt a very great evil, a Company was formed on the Island—the St. George was put on the route—but owing to the wording of the Resolution of our Legislature, which conferred on her a Provincial grant—compelling her to call at Douglstown and Newcastle on her arrival and departure each trip, a larger amount was expended in the additional quantity of coal consumed, and the delay it occasioned than the grant amounted to, she was speedily withdrawn.

The delay and inconvenience experienced in crossing the river at Chatham by ferry-boats and scows, was for many years felt to be an annoyance, in fact, I may say—a nuisance, as the numerous strangers who visited us were loud in their complaints. To remedy this evil a joint stock company was formed for building a steam ferry-boat. The subscription list was speedily filled up, and a boat was put on the ferry. It was admitted, and sensibly felt, to be a great public convenience; but owing to local jealousies she did not receive the patronage anticipated, and this coupled with the trouble and delay experienced from the want of proper slips, the parties who owned her ceased to run her. Having once experienced the convenience and comfort of a safe and speedy conveyance, the falling back to the old, slow and dangerous process of scow-riding was more sensibly felt, and loud and deep were the complaints in consequence. She has now fallen into the hands of a man of energy, and as he has obtained privileges which were not possessed by the former owners, I sincerely trust he will receive that amount of patronage his enterprise deserves, and such as will enable him to keep her constantly employed.

The next, and last Joint Stock Company formed, was one for the erection of an Electric Telegraph, to connect Miramichi with the Bend. The stock was speedily taken, but no sooner was the shareholders called together to organize the company and elect office bearers, than those old enemies to our peace and prosperity—Messrs self-interest and personal-feeling stalked into the room—took a prominent part in the proceedings of the company—and as usual, created considerable strife. The consequence was, a number of the shareholders, after having paid a portion of their shares withdrew, and forfeited what they had paid, and the Richibucto people would not amalgamate with us. The line, I am happy to say, has notwithstanding, been erected and works admirably. Every well wisher of our prosperity must wish it success, and as far as in him lies contribute to its support. I was pleased to hear a gentleman of Richibucto say, who has a large stake in the concern, that he was confident it would ultimately pay;—but if it only defrayed its working expenses he would be satisfied to lose the principal, because from its erection the facilities it would afford him as a merchant in conducting his business, would amply repay him for his investment. This, I consider, a correct principle. There are other returns of as great consequence as money, to be derived from works of this nature, which is unfortunately lost sight of generally in the Colonies, which in other countries, are the main incentives for embarking in undertakings of great public utility.

Having pointed out what we have done, and the causes which have led to the failure of many of our undertakings—personal feeling, local prejudices, and a parsimonious disposition, which has led us to hazard nothing for the public weal, without a certain personal gain; I will now proceed to detail what I consider ought to be done, if we wish to keep pace with the onward march of the present age.

We are loud in our laudatory comments of the resources of the district of country in which our lot has been cast. We are constantly boasting of the capabilities of its soil, which are borne out by the successful operations of our farmers, in the yield of wheat, oats, potatoes, hay, &c., and confirmed by practical men, such as Professor Johnston, who has paid us a visit, and examined our soil and modes of culture. We boast of the unrivalled facilities we possess in having our shores laved by the waters of one of the finest Gulfs in the world, and our country intersected with noble rivers, all of which abound in fish of almost every description. Our forests are unrivalled for their wealth in wood—for the manufacture of square timber, deals, boards, ship-building, fire-wood, and almost all domestic purposes—in the export of which we have almost solely depended for subsistence. Coal abounds, and is reported to be cropping out in various directions. Geologists inform us, that there are indications of Iron, Copper, and other minerals; Manganite is to be found in various localities; Brick Clay is abundant; Marble, so valuable for agricultural purposes, is to be found in many districts; Lime abounds in the neighbouring County of Gloucester, situate on the sea shore, affording every facility for shipment, Grindstones are abundant, and easily procured—and as for Free Stone, the hill in the rear of Chatham may be considered an unbroken quarry. Granite is to be found in large masses; and I am informed that Fullers earth has been discovered, as well as Pipe and Potter's clay. Half the resources I have enumerated, are enough to build up any country, and nations have grown great and powerful, without possessing a tithe of them.

But what is the use of all those sources of natural wealth if we do not avail ourselves of them.

Can the Farmer expect to reap an abundant harvest without he toils and labours diligently? What to him will be the use of the genial influence of the sun—the former and the latter rain—which a kind and beneficent creator may bestow on him, if he does not plow his land, put seeds therein, and watch diligently the growth of weeds for the purpose of eradicating them, and be prepared at the proper time, to reap the reward of his industry?

Can the would-be Fisherman expect to have a successful season, if he be not diligent in spreading his nets and attending to them at proper seasons; or if he will not apply himself with assiduity to his calling, with hook and line, and endeavour to acquire a thorough know-

ledge of the art of packing and curing his fish when caught?

Can the Lumberman expect to derive a profitable business if he idles away a large portion of his valuable time in visiting taverns, fiddling, dancing, drinking grog, and having, as he calls it, a glorious spree?

Do our Merchants anticipate to drive a lucrative business, while they content themselves in standing behind their counters, dealing out small wares to the passing customer, and do nothing to encourage the enterprise of men who lack only the means to bring to market the latent resources of our country?

What are our Mechanics doing? How many of them have a stock on hand where a person can call in and purchase what he wants as they can do in other places? The Ladies are equally at a loss in this way as the gentleman—as there is not a Millinery Establishment on the river, where a Lady can call in and purchase, a Love of a bonnet, a cap, a collar, a mantilla, a — but I better stop for fear I may commit some *faux pas* in endeavouring to enumerate the hundred and one articles which constitute a Lady's wardrobe. Surely there ought to be sufficient encouragement for such an establishment.

It seems to me to be a singular thing, that while we have competent men in the country to perform the work, we are constantly importing from Britain, the neighbouring Colonies, and more particularly from the United States, various articles which could, and should be, manufactured at home. I shall enumerate a few of them—scythe-sheaths, hay rakes, hay and dung forks, horse-rakes, ploughs, harrows, and various other articles of husbandry, household furniture, chairs, buckets, lucifer matches, blacking, candles, soap, crackers, hard bread, boots, shoes, &c. All these certainly, could, and ought to be manufactured here, and I feel persuaded, if parties would apply themselves with assiduity, and with a determination to manufacture good articles, and they should be able to make them as cheaply as they can be imported, when the freight and duty is considered, I think there is a sufficient amount of public spirit to give the home manufactured article a preference. If not there ought to be. There may be difficulties in the way, if so, I should like to hear them stated.

There is another matter that has surprised me not a little—it is this—That while our merchants pay a large amount of money yearly for freight, for many years not a schooner was owned in the port. Surely, when such men as Captain Watt can keep his vessel constantly plying between this port and Halifax, save money, and obtain a large property, a person residing in the place could do the same. We have a large trade with Quebec—strangers are engaged in the business, and pick up yearly a large amount in money. To Newfoundland we have a growing trade, and also to French St. Peters; and merchants are frequently put to considerable trouble to procure vessels. I believe if a schooner was put on each of these routes—say to Halifax, Quebec, Newfoundland, and St. Peters, they would pay the parties. And when we consider the trade that is growing up with Boston, a vessel might pay also on this route.

These are matters of moment to us as a people, having but a small capital in comparison to the trade we are carrying on; and it is our interest to consider how we can retain that capital, and not allow it to be taken away by strangers.

We frequently hear that some person is building a small craft, and that he intends putting her on some particular route. She may perform one or two voyages during the season, but no sooner does she fall arrive than she is purchased by some one of our merchants, and shipped off to Britain with a cargo of deals. Not one of said vessels, I believe, ever realized a profit when sold in Britain—several were lost, a fortunate circumstance for the owners, as they were generally insured.

It is admitted—the great evils exist in the manner in which the Laws are administered. I admit this—but the fault does not altogether lie with those to whom their administration is more immediately entrusted. The People themselves, are much to blame. Who feels disposed to extend a finger, much less a helping hand, to support and encourage the Civil Functionary in the faithful discharge of his duty. If you have been a Commissioner of Poor, Commissioner of Roads, a Fireward, a Constable, or more particularly a Hog Reeve, as I have been, you will have a ready response—*Nobody*.

[In illustration of this remark the Lecturer described the following scene enacted in Chatham. About four years ago, several persons (and I was among them) requested the Sessions to appoint them Hog-reever, as the town was infested with pigs, and we were determined to rid the inhabitants of the nuisance. We called out one afternoon, as was our custom, and had not proceeded very far when we discovered a pig ahead. We gave chase, and after a long run succeeded in making (to use a law phrase) a capture. I believe I pounced on his ears. I was accompanied by two young Lawyers, one of whom seized his right fore leg and the other his left. We had no sooner done so, when our right of possession was disputed by about a dozen women, who fastened on him also. While this unequal contest was going on, the owner of the pig, a woman, rushed out of an adjoining house, with a tremendous horse-whip, which she wielded with right good will. Down fell her blows—sometimes on our heads, across our hands, arms, shoulders, and frequently on the pig. In fact the lady did not seem to be at all particular where her blows fell. We were at length compelled to relinquish our prize. In the scuffle I lost my hat. When I left the office, Mr. President, it was a respectable beaver, for it had not been long in my possession, but when I picked it up, I could scarcely recognize it—for it was metamorphosed into a shocking bad hat. When I looked up the road, there was the pig, borne along in the embraces of about half a dozen women, and he, poor brute, squeaking most lustily but whether his squeals proceeded from the smart of the blows that he had received, or that it was a song of triumph on his part, I must confess I am not sufficiently skilled in that kind of music to determine. When I looked down the road they were congregated together about a score of His Majesty's liege subjects, enjoying the sport. Some of them were indulging in grins which would not disgrace Grimaldi the clown, and others were splitting their sides with laughter. The scene, certainly, was a most ludicrous one, and I could not refrain from joining in the general guffaw. But Mr. Chairman I thought then, as I think now, that they would