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REPORT

of the Northumberland Agricultural Society for 1856-7.

[CONCLUDED.]

DISCONTENT AND ITS REMEDY.

It cannot have escaped the observation even of the most unconcerned, that grumbling and discontent have re-appeared among us. During the last twelve months, fretting about bad times, poor country, low wages, nothing doing, &c., have become nearly as rife as they were some years ago; the consequence has been that many of our Farmers and their Sons, Mechanics and other operatives, with purses pretty well lined, have left us to seek for homes in the far west, and more distant lands. Whether the grievances of which these grumblers complain are real or only imaginary, your committee are not called upon to determine, nor have they any desire to obtrude their opinion on the subject; but among the evils complained of there is one, which coming as it does within the range of their duty, they must not overlook: It is asserted as a plea for this discontent and disaffection, that this County does not produce food for its population: hence a reason why we should turn our thoughts to the gold fields of Australia and California, or that "fairy land," the Far-West. We are assured that gold is so plentiful in Australia and California, that like pearls dropt in shallow water, it may be pocketed for the picking up; and that in the "Far West," luxuriant crops are gathered, without the toil or cost of cultivation. Now, all this, as 'Jack would say,' may do well enough for the Marines, but Sailors won't believe it. It is true Northumberland does not grow food enough to sustain its population, but what of that; the greater its commercial prosperity, the less likely will any country be to supply food for its population. Indeed very few commercial countries do this. The population of this County though considerable, is not one-tenth of what it ought to be; we need population to develop our abundant natural resources, to force labour into its proper channels, to consume our Agricultural productions, and to increase our wealth.

Shall men of sense then, merely because the Agriculture of Northumberland is but in its infancy, be led to turn their backs on its healthy climate, its crystalline water, its ample though undeveloped resources, its liberty and laws, and all the cherished associations of home and youth, in order to seek homes among strangers, and amid diseases and discouragements, that are but little imagined by those who thus ignorantly talk. Nor does the fact that this County, or this Province, does not grow food for its population, imply any incapacity in the soil, or incapability in our farmers to accomplish this. Hear what Professor Johnston says, after he had investigated the subject thoroughly:

"On the whole, therefore, I think the result of this comparison of the actual productions of the soil of New Brunswick with that of other parts of North America, ought to be very satisfactory to the inhabitants of this Province, and is deserving of their serious consideration; so far as my knowledge goes, I am inclined to believe that the agricultural capabilities of New York are at least equal to any of the North Eastern States. If then New Brunswick exceeds New York (as he has shewn it does) in productiveness, it ought also to exceed all the States of New England. And if in this respect it will bear a favorable comparison, even with Ohio and Upper Canada, it becomes doubtful how far on the whole the other Western States are superior to it; at all events there appears to me to be sufficient reason for the Agricultural population of New Brunswick to remain contented with the capabilities of the soil they possess, and to give themselves up strenuously to the development of its latent resources rather than to forsake it for other parts of Northern or Western America, which appear incapable of yielding larger crops than they can easily reap at home."

If then our soil be good, and our resources abundant, what is wanting? Why, much greater energy and enterprise on the part of many of our merchants and monied men, (there are many honorable exceptions) and greater economy and industry on the part of many of our operatives and farmers. These lacking we need not expect to prosper as a people; nor should we presume to compare our advancement with countries that are distinguished by these noble traits of character. Contrast for a moment the habits of economy and industry which prevail in this County, with those which prevail in the most Northern States of the Union; and the wonder that we are poor and poverty stricken, and that there are amongst us grumbling and discontented persons will speedily vanish. While we are wasting our time talking about such grievances as the length of our winter, want of means, and all such imaginary evils, and doing little or nothing to improve our condition, our brother "over the border" is hard at work, fixing up "notions" for us in the shape of home manufactures, &c., for which we have as yet discovered little wherewith to pay him, but dollars and doubloons. While we—male and female—are pampering ourselves with superfine flour, with superfine cloth, superfine dresses, superfine everything—Brother Jonathan, Mrs Jonathan, and all the little Jonathans are luxuriating on their Indian Meal, Buckwheat, Oatmeal, Rye Flour, and homespun dresses. While the American farmer prides himself in his occupation, and despises all idle "dudlers" too many among us turn up their noses at the horny hand, the manly, ancient, and honorable calling of the husbandman. While the American

subject boasts profoundly of his "Eagle" and his enterprise, we, with advantages equal, if not superior to his, and with Institutions if inferior—the fault is our own—meanly slander our country, and are content to grumble on, year after year, in stoical subjection to difficulties, which to say the least of them, are more the result of our own follies, than the effect of any other cause.

About half a century ago the Northern States were in a condition very similar to that in which New Brunswick now is, and they were cursed with the same kind of disaffection and discontent that are so rampant among us at the present time. A whim, resembling the fever of our day, had seized the settlers of those States, and off they started in droves to the far-famed States of the West. But, like many of the money-hunters who have left Northumberland, they found that even in the "Far-West" gold does not grow on the trees, nor corn without cultivation; and to their cost they discovered that a rich soil and hot sun are but poor exchanges for bodily health and mental vigour. So, with greater alacrity than they had forsook their homes in the East, back they came, with purses seriously lightened, and constitutions sadly shattered, but with hopes as to gold hunting delightfully humbled, and their qualifications as farmers mightily improved. New life—such as was imparted to many of our most prosperous settlements by the calamity of 1825—was now imparted to the farming operations of the Northern States, better modes of culture were soon adopted, improved Stock introduced, education suited to their circumstances brought within the reach of all; and now, they who were once so fickle, and fond of gold hunting—or their descendants—have become, if not rich, at least a comparatively contented, happy and prosperous people.

Ah! but say some of our farmers, these Americans of whom you speak had means; give us the wherewithal and we will soon show you how to farm. Well, it must be admitted that money placed in the hands of the cautious, economical, and industrious farmer, might be beneficial to him in the way of enabling him to carry out more extensively—perhaps more successfully—the operations of his farm; but that money placed at the disposal of the heedless or indolent farmer, would prove advantageous to him is just as unlikely. From what source did the now most independent portion of our farmers obtain the capital with which they commenced, and have so successfully prosecuted farming? Ask them, and to a man they will tell, that some thirty years ago, they or their fathers set to work to stump and clear their lands, just with the same assistance that the farmers of Maine had done shortly before them, that is, with a stout heart and sturdy arm; but, as one of our now independent farmers told Professor Johnston, in reply to a question which he put to him—I had nought else when I began on this farm but two carts I bro't frae hame wi me, and twa or three sacks o' oatmeal.

For their present position then, our comparatively independent farmers are mainly indebted to their own industry, economy, and perseverance, and not to the aid of that capital, the lack of which is deemed by many to be an insuperable evil in the way of our agricultural advancement. Scotland, it is true, is greatly indebted for the exalted position she has obtained as an agricultural country, to the peculiar system of banking established in that country some 80 or 100 years ago, and the assistance which these banks afforded the cautious and frugal yeomanry of that period; but here the question must be answered, are those farmers who thus fancy that farming won't pay without the aid of borrowed capital—many of whom not long since laid aside the boat-hook and axe of the lumberer, for the spade and plough of the farmer—in moral circumstances, similar to those of the yeomanry of the mother country seventy or eighty years ago; if the habits of industry, economy, and frugality of these men equal those of the old country farmer at the period mentioned; then may it be presumed that borrowed capital would prove beneficial in the one case as well as in the other. If not, you might just as well expect that a parcel of maniacs would be benefitted, by placing a supply of razors within their reach, as that a district of improvident, extravagant, intemperate men, presuming to be farmers, would be benefitted, by lending them money.

There is a circumstance of a somewhat singular kind, which says a good deal in favor of Northumberland as an agricultural country, and the silliness of leaving it for more sunny, but less desirable regions of the earth, it is this:—our most prosperous and thriving farmers almost to a man, began to stump, clear, cultivate, and stock their farms, with very little or no capital, yet is it asserted, without fear of contradiction, that an instance cannot be pointed out, of a sober, industrious, and healthy man, who has stuck to farming and that only, who has not succeeded well; nor can an instance be named of any man who divided his time and attention between farming and lumbering, or farming and fishing, who has succeeded well in either capacity. Yet, with these facts staring us in the face, how very few, comparatively speaking, choose farming as the business of their lives. There is a mysterious restlessness visible of late in the minds of men, particularly of young men, an unconscious but irresistible eagerness for change, for something new, a keep-moving-to-the-West sort of impulse, which influences them so forcibly, that sooner than be tied to the plough, or go-ahead no faster than the jog-trot of a farmer, they would starve at home or beg abroad. Indeed, this strange spirit of restlessness, this keep-moving, never to be satisfied sort of feeling is apparent among mankind generally, but particularly apparent all over the Northern section of North America; and what is the consequence

Why, that a much smaller proportion of the human family are producers of food than formerly; that the annual crop from the soil is imperceptibly becoming less, and that the supply of food must ultimately prove inadequate to the demand for it, and the price become correspondingly high. The number of consumers is rapidly increasing, while the number of producers is decreasing.

To be a real farmer, ever since free-trade has rendered the whole earth a fair field for competition, something more than even contentment, frugality, and industry is necessary. We must endeavour to keep pace with the march of improvement going on in the world around us, for to lose ground now, or loiter behind, is to let slip every chance of success. Without an accurate knowledge of the composition of his different kinds of soils, and the precise mixtures as manures, that will best sustain and enrich these soils, the success of any farmer, so far as producing crops is concerned, is more the effect of good luck than of good management. To assert that this is untrue, or in other words, to argue that that man understands his business as a farmer, who is wholly ignorant of the nature of the substances that constitute his soils, and of those with which he would enrich them, is simply to assert that an individual unacquainted with the art of mixing colours, yet styling himself a painter, would be as likely to produce as striking a likeness of us as a Raphael or a Lawrence; or that a man, ignorant alike of anatomy and chemistry, and the art of compounding medicines, yet dubbing himself a Doctor, would be as likely to remove a malady, as an Abernethy or a Cooper.

Now, it is not the province of this Board to point out the means by which farmers or their sons may best succeed in acquiring the knowledge which is so necessary to the successful prosecution of their calling. That duty devolves upon men (our representatives in parliament) than whom none are more capable or more desirous to perform it aright—but this your committee may be allowed to do—they may be allowed to urge upon farmers the propriety of endeavoring in the mean time to acquire

EXPERIMENTAL KNOWLEDGE.

All the practical and useful arts are founded on facts. Agriculture is pre-eminently so; all true science in Agriculture is the process of induction; that is, it consists of inferences drawn from well-authenticated facts. Theories in this case, however plausible, are of no real value, unless the application of them lead to some practical rule or result. Now, it may not require a large farm, or a great capital, or a vast amount of intellect to make experiments from which the greatest of benefits may flow. Many questions still involved in uncertainty, relating to crops, seeds, diseases of plants, manures, modes of planting and of cultivation, of cutting potatoes for seed, of harvesting of saving manure, and of sheltering growing crops, are just as likely to be solved on a farm of ten acres as on one of a hundred and fifty. What indeed is every operation of the intelligent farmer, but an experiment. In preparing, manuring, and sowing his fields, he may be said to be making experiments, and if our farmers would carefully note each step in the process of cultivation, and the progress of vegetable growth; the facts thus collected might prove not only beneficial to themselves, and the districts in which they live, but they might elicit truths without the aid of science, calculated to throw light upon subjects still involved in obscurity.

ANNUAL EXHIBITION.

The Annual Exhibition of Grains, Dairy Produce, Home Manufactures, &c., took place in the Mechanics' Institute, Newcastle, on Tuesday, 13th inst.

The remarks of the Editor of the Gleaner, who was present on the occasion, are so appropriate, that the Secretary conceives he cannot better express the sentiments of the Board than by using these remarks in this Report:—"We have but little to say on this subject, and that little not very pleasing or satisfactory. The quantity of articles were the smallest in number we ever saw at any previous Show, and the number of members present were also extremely limited."

"The apathy manifested by our farmers in the operations of the Society is a source of annoyance to many gentlemen who have devoted much time in attending to the business of the Society, and if persisted in, will ultimately lead to their withdrawal."

"That the Society has done much good, and conferred many permanent benefits on our Agriculturalists, cannot be denied. It behoves them therefore, to manifest somewhat more zeal than they have done in attending its ploughing matches, cattle shows, and exhibitions of produce, and contribute more largely to its funds, otherwise its usefulness will be considerably curtailed, and possibly lead to its extinction."

"We hope these few hints will have the effect of arousing our Agricultural neighbours to a calm consideration of the matter, and create in them a desire to extend that support and continuance which prudence, and a sense of duty dictates."

The Judges of Grain were John M. Johnson, (President) George Johnston, and Bartholomew Stapledon.

The Judges of Domestic Manufactures, &c, Alex. Fraser, (3) Wm. Park, and Daniel Cook.

GRAIN AND GARDEN SEEDS.

Value and Prizes both included.

Best sample white bald wheat, 2 bushels, No 43, Michael Searle, £1 15 0
2nd do do do, No 31, Richard Coltard, 1 10 0