

Canada's Parasites.

A Study of Economical Conditions in Canada
as Affecting Our Rural Population.

(CONTINUED.)

In a former article we have endeavored to trace, briefly, those causes which have led to the overcrowding of the non-productive occupations, with their effects in increasing the population of the towns at the expense of the country, and to point out how this has tended to reduce the total production of the community, and consequently to make it poorer. In the present article, taking for our text again our decreasing rural population, we would wish to deal with another set of causes, which have, no doubt, been instrumental to a very considerable degree, in bringing about the present undesirable state of affairs. In this paper, then, we will deal with those conditions which have enabled certain classes of our town population to enrich themselves at the expense of our agricultural classes, thus, by making the conditions of country life harder than they would otherwise be, tending to drive our population from the country to the town.

From a very early date, those who have been engaged in those occupations carried on in towns, have been organized for mutual help and protection. This system of organization, while probably as ancient almost as the custom of building towns, had its origin, as far as modern conditions are concerned, in the troublous times succeeding the dissolution of the Roman Empire in Europe. It was rendered necessary by the rapacity

and tyranny of the numerous lords who oppressed the people at that time, but was possible only to those who lived in the towns, and hence were able to act in unison against their oppressors. The country people were too scattered to offer any effective resistance to their tyrants. Hence we find, examining the history of these times, that the country people were in a condition of serfdom or vassalage to their lords, while the inhabitants of the town were rich, prosperous and free. But these times passed. The authority of the barons was swallowed up in the power of central national government, and the people of the country became as free as those of the town. The towns, however, still retained their systems of organization, but instead of using the power which they thus obtained, to defend themselves against their enemies, they used it to secure as much as possible of the wealth of the community for themselves, by restricting competition among their citizens and promoting unity of action, that they might exact more for their labor from the community at large, than they could obtain without such united action. The distinctive function of the town is to manufacture and distribute for the country. Hence we find among merchants and manufacturers, more than among other classes, these attempts to exact more than the just reward