

Since no attempt has been made in Canada to defray the cost of administration by direct taxation upon the people, leaving imports free, the average citizen, and more especially the Canadian farmer, may ask whether the burden of this indirect taxation is fairly distributed among the different interests of the country. When the question is applied more specifically the farmer may ask whether he should be excluded from the full benefits of protection when those benefits are accorded to other classes of the community. It will be for the reader to judge whether the record proves that the exclusion of the farmer from the advantages of this protection through the tariff laws accounts for the decline of the sheep industry of Canada, and accounts, at the same time, for the decay of the woollen industry; and, still more important, whether it explains why this country is still without a worsted industry, which forms the chief branch of the woollen trade of other great manufacturing countries, and which is peculiarly adapted to the character of Canadian wools.

The foundation of a woollen industry is wool, and, so far as Canada is concerned, it is a native industry only in so far as it is based primarily on Canadian wool. The records of the French regime in Quebec and Nova Scotia and those of British colonization in the other Provinces of Canada show that the hand-woven and hand-knitted fabrics of those early days were made almost entirely from wool grown on Canadian sheep. As it began, so it developed natively down to the time when the factory system and tariff legislation combined to deprive it of its true native character, and by divorcing the interests of the farmer from the interests of the manufacturer, brought about the decline of both sheep-raising and woollen manufacturing.

To be independent, a nation should be able to provide within its own borders the prime needs of the people, such as food, fuel and clothing, and it will not be denied that in a country like Canada wool clothing is a prime necessity. This was understood so instinctively among the early settlers of Canada that the first industries planted were the manufacture of clothing and boots and