

which comprised all civilised Europe and part of Asia. The northern barbarians, who dispossessed the Romans, caring little for agriculture, and it has been asserted that the ignominy thus attached to the pursuit of agriculture—which had previously been held in the highest honour—has continued in a greater or less degree to the present day, and is not yet totally effaced. Indeed I think this assertion is borne out at the present time in some of the Southern States, where none but Negro slaves are employed in Agriculture, and no white man can work at it without degrading himself in the opinion of his countrymen. How different from the opinion of the ancient Romans, amongst whom “the greatest praise which could be given to an industrious character, was to say that he was an industrious and judicious husbandman!” And this degradation has been held to be one principal cause of the tardiness of any improvement in the art. There are many other obvious causes for its slow progress, some of which I may refer to hereafter. But after considering all the reasons which I have heard or read, or which I can imagine, it must still remain a wonder and a mystery that after so much necessary practice and experience, Agriculture should be considered at this day to be but imperfectly understood.

I would briefly refer to another State paper recently published, which contains some startling statements in reference to the imperfect system of agriculture in our own country. I mean the report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly on the State of Agriculture in Lower Canada. The following is one extract from the concluding summary:—“The soil and climate of Lower Canada are favourable to Agriculture. The people are laborious and intelligent; but they do not, however, derive from the soil more than *one-fourth* of what it can produce. The cause of this is that the system of cultivation is bad.” It is certainly a melancholy conclusion that a whole community of laborious and intelligent farmers should be labouring year after year for one-fourth of the produce which they might obtain by good cultivation.

Agriculture, as it is the most ancient, is also the most important, and the most useful worldly pursuit of mankind; and in claiming for it this high distinction, it is gratifying to be able to do so without feeling or exciting the slightest degree of jealousy or rivalry between that and any other pursuit or calling whatever. If there be any pursuit in life which depends for its success upon the ruin or deterioration of some other class or calling, and can only thrive as others suffer, that pursuit is certainly not agriculture. On the contrary, the more agriculture flourishes, the more will commerce, manufactures, the arts and sciences flourish. And the prosperity of commerce,

manufactures and science, will always have a beneficial effect upon agriculture. In fact there is no other useful pursuit or calling, that does not receive benefit from the prosperity of agriculture, and does not again, directly or indirectly return a portion of that benefit to the source from whence it sprung. It would be interesting to trace the various ways in which the interests of other pursuits are identified with those of agriculture. If by judicious attention to his business the farmer can grow twenty-five bushels of wheat on the acre of land, which formerly produced only twenty, how many parties will share in the benefit of the additional five bushels, without diminishing the profits of the original producer? The labourer, the merchant, the cooper, the miller, the forwarder, the sailor, the consumer,—and who is the loser? No one. That additional produce is taken from no body. It is so much gained and added to the general stock. If the man of science, by some useful discovery in chemistry, enables the farmer to grow other five bushels, the same round of benefits will result. If the mechanic or manufacturer invent a plan to reduce the expense of conveying a bushel of wheat across the Atlantic, or to any other market, or reducing the expense of converting it into flour, however much he may thereby benefit himself or his class, a considerable portion of the profit will go directly into the pocket of the agriculturist. And even if the improvement does not in any way relate to agriculture, yet if it be productive of benefit to other classes, the farmer will either directly or indirectly, come in for a reasonable share of the good. This reciprocity of interests precludes the possibility of envy or jealousy between agriculturists and other classes, in their respective pursuits.

Some idea of the great importance of agriculture may be formed by observing the general interest which is taken in the prospects of the harvest in Great Britain and Ireland. From the time the seed is deposited in the ground, the progress and ultimate fate of the growing crop becomes a subject of the most intense interest, not only to the British farmer, or the British people, not only to the farmers of Europe—of America—of Canada, but to men of all pursuits and callings in every quarter of the globe, and this interest never ceases until the crop is harvested and safely housed, and its quantity and quality carefully ascertained. Intelligence of the progress of the plant from its first sprouting to its final deposit in the stack or barn, is continually sent to all parts of the world. “Every frosty night that might injure the young shoot—every suspicious-looking swarm of flies that may hover about the filling ear—every cloudy or rainy day that may retard the harvesting—every