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IMMIGRANT LABOUR.

With the return of the season of immigration, it is well to see how far the different kinds of labour, liable to be added to the existing stock in this way, are likely to be in demand. The money paid in connection with immigration is, in fact, an outlay which goes to secure a supply of labour from distant countries. Such of the emigrating class as have not labour to sell would require little or no expenditure on their account; some little, in the way of supplying printed information only. This country is not at all times equally in want of labour, of any kind; the kinds of labour for which employment can be found are never very numerous, and of these some which are wanted at one time are not wanted at another. At all times, agriculture absorbs the largest share of immigrant labour, and as the area of cultivated land is constantly extending, there is always some demand for imported labour. But though this progressive demand is the steadiest that the country affords, it is not always uniform.

A short crop, or a considerable fall in the prices of produce affects the ability of the farmer to hire additional labour. The short crop of 1876 considerably diminished his ability to pay out wages. Between 60 cents and a \$1 a bushel for barley is a difference which affects his power to hire help on the farm. In 1876, the average farmer was, perhaps, thrown a little back, in this respect; and last year, he scarcely recovered his former position. It is pretty certain that, within the last few years, some floating capital has been drawn from agriculture and lost in commercial speculations; advances having been made by farmers to their sons for this purpose. To this extent, the capital applicable to the purchase of agricultural labour has been diminished. It is of course impossible to ascertain the amount, but it must be considerable. In 1876, the United States, for the first time in their history, sent to Europe as many persons as they received thence. This unwanted attraction

from the West to the East, was thought by some to be proof that the equilibrium of labour had, at length, been established between the old world and the new. But a temporary fluctuation of this kind, although it does look in the direction indicated, must not be taken as proof that such an equilibrium has been permanently reached. Nor do we think this result is possible, so long as there is a vast extent of fertile soil, in Canada, unoccupied. The future emigration from the States is more likely to be to our North-west than to Europe. The emigrating labour was not agricultural but artisan.

From whatever cause, there has come to be an excess of artisan labour, both in Canada and the States. To go out of our way to import an additional supply of this kind would be to purchase—since it costs money to place it here—what we have no need for; and if this class of workers were given to understand that there was employment for them, at present, a great wrong would be done to them. The time will again come—perhaps next year—when this species of labour will be in demand; but, at present, the supply is ample. Under the circumstances, no encouragement should be held out to this class of immigrants to come to Canada; and emigrant agents should be required to discriminate between what is wanted and what is not wanted. The demand for agricultural labour can never be exactly measured; but the several governments do collect information on the subject which forms an useful guide. We want, in our great North-west, something besides mere labourers; there is there the best field that now remains open, on the continent, for farmers with means enough to make a new start. These would soon become employers of labour; and both employer and employed would be mutually benefitted.

A movement of population similar to that which has long been observed in the United States—a movement from east to west—has begun in Canada; a movement of farmers, to whom the conditions of life, in their new home, will not be wholly new, and who will make the best settlers in that new country. These, carrying capital with them, will at once become employers of labour, and extend the field for agricultural immigrants. No English farmer would, at first, be so entirely at home, in the North-west; but if the two settled side by side, each could learn something from the other. Unless there were a movement of farmers with means, the limited market for agricultural labour would be soon overstocked. It is very desirable that a state of things should exist, in the North-

west, favourable to the transformation of the labourer into a capitalist. The chief condition on which this conversion depends is cheap land. Show the average labourer the road to independence, and he will not be slow to enter on it, with all his heart and all his strength. The settlement of Ontario is little more than a continuous history of this happy transformation. The change of an English, Irish or Scotch labourer into a wealthy farmer may sound little short of a miracle to old-world ears; but the feat is so familiar to us all, on this side of the water, that it excites no surprise. The voluntary emigrant, by the mere fact of pulling up stakes, and submitting to the severe wrench of breaking the connections of a life-time, gives an earnest that he is not devoid of the heroic spirit, that he is possessed of qualities that would win success where his less enterprising fellows would sink out of sight in the battle of life.

Canada offers a great field for immigrants; but it is necessary, at present, to discriminate between the classes that can hope to find employment and meet success, and it would be criminal in emigrant agents to neglect this distinction. Where emigration is not entirely voluntary; where it is influenced by what may be called undue persuasion and the offer of assistance in moving, it will happen that some of the emigrants will not be of the most desirable class. The labourers who elect to remain in cities generally do so to their own hurt. Some few labourers can find employment, in cities, but they can never do more than make a bare living, and must remain labourers to the end of the chapter; and they will be lucky, if when work is scarce, they do not, sometimes, find themselves on the verge of want. It seems to us that greater inducements ought to be held out to this class of labourers to try their fortune in the country. With some of them, we can well conceive, no persuasion would prevail; but others would gladly move if put on the way. Greater pains ought to be taken to point out to them where work and free grants are to be had. If a labourer could get a free grant, in the neighbourhood of an employer, with whom he could spend part of his time, his chance of success would be just as good as was that of the majority of the first settlers in the old settlements. It is a pity for a man to lead an aimless life, when his existence might be made cheerful by the daily assurance of success.

Our policy on the subject of immigrant labour, is in direct contradiction to the *laissez faire* system. To charge the public treasury with an expenditure for the encouragement of immigration is not objectionable, under ordinary circumstances;