

Lectures.

A LECTURE BY M. L'ABBE TH. S. PROVOST.

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THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF AGRICULTURE.

Rural economy—Of capital—The extent of the farm—Should be in proportion to one's means—Concentration of labor—Cropping—Intensive farming—Extensive farming—Routine.—Economic management—Courage in business—Instruction in agriculture—Education—Judgment—Love of progress—Nature a great agricultural university—Utility of knowledge—Its importance in Agriculture—A good prospect.

Mr. President and Gentlemen,

I fancy you hardly expected to hear me treat of such a matter as that on which I intend to address you for a few minutes. Were it an adventurous expedition into distant lands, as yet unknown to the learned, I would say so at once. I would do likewise did it concern a rash and dangerous voyage to unknown regions, over a storm-tost immeasurable sea. But as, far from that it is the development of an important question that concerns every agricultural society, and which lies at the foundation of all the regulations instituted for the prosperity of the farmer, it is proper to take some precautions in announcing it and to keep back to at least the conclusion of a long drawn out sentence, the fact that it is in very truth a subject political in its nature.

I seem to see a quiver of curiosity pass over the lips of this pleasant audience, and to hear the low and anxious questions: "Whither he is going with his politics?"—Here, Gentlemen, is the point I aim at, without further preamble. There are politics and politics, as we shall see, or rather as we shall recall to our common memory. In its larger sense, and according to the most general acceptance, politics is the art of governing society by the maintenance or drawing up of just, equitable, wise laws, responding to the multiplied and constantly renewed needs of the various classes who compose it. Do not be alarmed, gentlemen, it is not that of which I am about to speak. There is another kind of politics, one that is peculiar to each of position, each class, each association of citizens; and that kind is the art of wisely directing the efforts of each individual toward the highest summit of desirable progress, and to open to each the prospect of a happy future. So in farming, as in every other business, there is a kind of politics to pursue, one founded in the laws of science and prudence, whose strict observance will ensure success. It is on this sort of politics, then, that I am about to address you, and as it naturally includes the search after the best things to be collected and the most profitable way of consuming them, it derives from these very operations the name that befits it so well i. e., "The Political Economy of Agricultural, or Rural Economy."

Let us then in speaking of political economy, select that specifically belonging to the art of agriculture. Let us study its principles, and make certain applications of them that may not be, perhaps, without some public utility.

I am very anxious to impress upon the farmer that it is not necessary to start with a large capital to be assured of a good prospect of success. Agriculture, in this respect, differs from trade. In manufactures, the amount of the profits results immediately from the amount of invested capital, and as this is increased, so the profits increase correspondingly, provided the business is well managed. Fresh capital, indeed, admits of the increase or improvement of the machinery, without an increase