

We have received from Colonel Laurie the following judicious and well-timed remarks on

"THE FUTURE OF FARMING":

Sir,—I should wish to call the attention of your readers to a letter under the above heading published in the *London Times*, and trust you will find space to publish it, as I consider a great portion of it will apply to our own Province, although there is, of course, some matter irrelevant and therefore of no interest to us.

There are, it is true, a good many points in which there is great dissimilarity between the position of the English and that of the Nova Scotia farmer, and I do not hesitate to say that in each of these the Nova Scotian has the advantage of his fellow-agriculturist in England. We have not suffered loss of cattle in any epidemic; we have almost unlimited supply of land so that we need not fear of being cramped for room in our stock raising; economy of manures will render our present acreage more productive; our farmer *owns* his land, is therefore not restricted by any conditions of a lease, from developing it as he deems best, and further has the satisfaction that his improvements are his own property, and that his money invested in land is deposited in the safest bank in the world. By the importation of their thorough-bred stock, we obtain at once results in meat-making which the English farmers, in the struggle for existence, have spent lifetimes of energy and watchfulness and close study as well as large sums of money to compass.

And now take the points of similarity between the two, the profit of grain growing in England was checked by the repeal of the Corn Laws, and the opening up of distant grain-growing countries by steam being applied to facilitate communication, consequently the farmer who considered that all the profit of farming lay in producing wheat lost heart and lost influence—other causes, the actual failures of the wheat crop by rust, etc., produced the same effect here. I can well recollect when I began farming here, I was constantly asked if I could grow wheat, and when I said I did not want to, but was willing to let Ontario grow for me, the inquirers shook their heads and implied that my place was at Mount Hope. In vain I quoted the old saying that drought never brought dearth in England, as meaning that wheat wanted a dry climate. I pointed out that flour was portable, and we could not compete with the inland provinces, and maintained that nature had given us a climate for grass and roots, and that our wisest plan was to go into the fresh provision business where we should have the mar-

ket to ourselves without competition. No, I was told, if we could not raise wheat, farming would not pay, and with this constantly dinned into them, the young men would not follow their fathers on the farms but took to commerce, trades, or professions. The farmers naturally, as in England, lost influence both numerically as compared with the increased population engaged in other associations, and socially as pursuing a despised profession; but here again, as in England, the very disease has worked its own cure, the relatively enormous increase of population employed in pursuits other than farming, who are consumers without being producers and who are earning such liberal remuneration that they can afford to, and will have, the best of food, has caused such a demand for market produce, which has nearly doubled in value, that farming is again becoming a desirable and profitable profession. Those who, through evil report, stuck to their land, are now obtaining their well-earned reward, young men find that a farmer is no longer looked down upon, and are taking to the land; capital is being invested; neglected farms are being improved; fresh land is being cleared up, the tide is turned, and although the race of grumblers and doubters will never be extinct, I most warmly congratulate the Province on the improved hopeful spirit that animates the farmers who are settling down to their proper work as meat producers for the workers in the hives of industry that our mines, our manufactories and our commerce are building up in our midst—the farmer has no longer to seek a market, the consumer seeks out the producer. Looking, therefore, at the points in which the Nova Scotian farmer has the advantage, and those in which he is similarly circumstanced to his English brother, I would confidently say, and in Mr. Jeffrey's own words, that a great future lies before our farmers, that they will occupy their old position as the most powerful class in the country.

Your obedient servant,

J. WINBURN LAURIE.

Oakfield, Nov. 25, 1873.

The letter to the *Times* referred to by Colonel Laurie, is as follows:

Sir,—Sixty years ago the farmers were the ruling class. The towns then had not acquired their present preponderance, and the electors in the county districts, whether for county or borough, were entirely in the landed interest. Perhaps nothing so contributed to their loss of power as the practical introduction of steam and the consequent enormous development of trade. But, after half a century, indications are not wanting of the inevitable compensation which sooner or later follows human changes. The development of trade and manufacture caused a corresponding increase of population, until at

the present moment the demand for bread so largely exceeds the home supply that the imports of foreign corn are enormous in bulk. At first this reduced the political and commercial status of the farmer still lower; his produce was driven out of the market by vast consignments from abroad. But with the demand for corn came a still larger—a disproportionately larger—demand for meat. Corn could be imported, meat could not, (at least not in appreciable quantities or quality), and the immediate result, as soon as this was felt, was a rise in the prosperity and importance of the farmer. His attention was at once turned to the production of meat. The cattle, it is true, were not actually fed on the corn which should be human food, but in effect they were, since the vegetables and products upon which they were fattened were either manufactured from or took up the room of such food, thus still far reducing the real—though not, perhaps, the apparent—supply of English corn. Gradually, in fact, England is becoming a meat-producing country as opposed to cereal crops, and the land is turned into vast fattening stalls for the city market.

So closely does the actual supply of meat correspond with the demand that a very slight derangement of ordinary conditions is sufficient to cause an appreciable disturbance, and even a permanent increase in prices. Such a derangement was the visitation of various contagious diseases. The numerical loss from these inflictions was comparatively small, when arrayed against the tale of the vast flocks in the kingdom, yet it exercised a very decided effect, and prices took a rise which has ever since been lowered. Without taking an alarmist view of the question, it has become sufficiently clear to all that, if the population should continue to increase in its present ratio, the margin between an inadequate supply and the chances of a partial famine would be very small indeed. The consciousness of this state of things has been already making itself felt in attempts to increase the production of meat. Obviously, to do this requires an increase in the number of cattle kept. To a Londoner, who has seen the crowded dairies of Islington or Bayswater, this may appear easy enough. If a hundred cows can be kept in a building which occupies no more space than an ordinary garden, surely the farmers, with their hundreds and thousands of acres, can support a proportionable number. The number they now keep is ridiculously small in comparison. But these dairies are chiefly fed from the refuse of distilleries, and the result is milk, indeed—London milk—but the beast becomes skin and bone. There is no meat here, unless, indeed, the cattle are fed on artificial food; but, first, how is sufficient artificial food to be obtained to feed these contemplated additional millions of stock; and, secondly, how is it to be paid for? Where is the artificial food to be derived from? It must be grown somewhere, but if it is grown in exceptional quantities it must be by the use of exceptional and expensive manures. Where are these manures to be got from in such incalculable quantities? Another attempt has been made—by increasing not the number, but the meat-bearing power of stock—to so modify their shape and so increase their assimilating powers that one animal might carry the meat of three.* This has been attempted, and with considerable success, both with sheep and cattle; but the