

about a tenth of the value of their receipts. No fraud existing, the rest of the subscriptions are obtained by distributing gratis, seeds of forage plants, paid for out of the grant; and, if the required sum is not completed by this means, the absence of fraud being always presupposed. the begging-box is carried round from door to door; to the Senator, to the two members, to the Priests, to the shop-keepers; and the tavern-keeper must not be left out of the list, at whose house the grand dinner, with which the Directors repay themselves, and their friends, for all their trouble, always out of the Government grant *bien entendu*, is to be given. Thus are matters carried on in sixty societies of agriculture out of the eighty which exist! It is only right to add, however, that, of late years, the societies keep, at their own expense, a few stallions, boars, &c., the use of which is allowed to members at a nominal charge. And this, with the gratuitous distribution of forage-plant seed, is by far the most useful expenditure incurred by them, always, again, presupposing that honesty presides over the distribution.

In 1869 there were, in the Province, only 7,000 men of French origin who were members of the County Agricultural Associations. Since then, the endeavours which have been made to circulate, gratuitously, the Journal of Agriculture have resulted in doubling the number of members; but, in spite of every thing, it appears by the report of the Committee on Agriculture of the Legislative Assembly of the 27 February 1878, that about one third of the parishes in the country do not reckon one member of the societies, each, and that of the rest, many can only reckon ten, each." It adds: "The greater part of these parishes neither benefit by the money granted, nor by the Journal of Agriculture. As they are among the less advanced of our parishes, they need, in a great degree, the encouragement, and the aid, so freely offered by Government.

I have, I think, sufficiently shown that little improvement has been made by our societies since 1850, although the grants of each year have been large. Still we must not, on that account, decide that the agricultural associations are useless and ought to be suppressed; for there are certain societies in the Province which, especially during the last few years, have done a vast amount of good. Thus in several counties, prizes are offered for the best cultivated farms; for the best ten acres of autumn ploughing; for the best kept meadows, and pastures; for the best orchards, and for the best practice in preserving manure, &c. There, the purchase of good seed-grain is rendered easy, and good male animals are kept for the use of each parish. The result? The members of the societies of agriculture, since the introduction of these improvements, amount to 500, 600, and 700, in each of these counties. The subscription list is higher. This, joined to the revenue derived from the stallions &c., and to the government grant, enable them to hold, every two years, exhibitions which are attractive enough to induce the presence of foreign purchasers; thereby, not only exciting emulation among the exhibitors, but converting the show into an agricultural fair. This is what has been done, in many places, by those societies which have been wise enough to listen to advice. We cannot, it is true, expect such success everywhere, but, in the majority of instances, if the people were well looked after, and guided by an organisation, the chief of which was a man in whom the country had confidence, a man who understood its wants and was thoroughly up to his work, much might be done. What, indeed, could not be done by such an one possessing the power, as well as the desire and knowledge, requisite for his part, devoted to the interests of agriculture, and imbued with a heartfelt wish to improve the condition of the farming community.

We must proclaim it aloud: what is wanting to the whole

of our agricultural organisation is a wise head, a head, responsible indeed to the Legislature, but entirely free from any danger of being embarrassed in his free action by the trammels of politics.

Could the Minister of Agriculture & P. Works, situated as the country now is, act as this much to be desired head? In reply, I can only say, that no one acquainted with the exigence of politics in this Province can expect, generally, from the Statesmen who may be called upon to fill that office, the special qualifications which are indispensable to the proper discharge of the duties of superintendent of the farming interest.

The Commissioner of Agriculture and Public Works is, it must be confessed, so overloaded with business that it is impossible for him to fulfil even his proper functions.

He has the sole management of the Q. M. O. & O. railway, and all that belongs to it, an enterprise that, costing, as it will, eleven, or twelve million dollars, demands enormous attention and watchfulness on the part of its manager. The Commissioner has to superintend the new buildings for the public departments, the expense of which will exact constant supervision and care. The repairs and preservation of all the prisons, courts, and other public edifices, are in his charge. He directs the distribution of grants in aid of colonisation, and has the management of the colonisation roads, from Pontiac, in the west, to the Saguenay in the north; from Compton, to Gaspe. The direction and control of the immigration agencies in Europe, as well as of the grants to seven, or eight railroads, are all in the hands of the same Commissioner, and how much more I know not! What time can one so overburdened brain have, when these duties are discharged, to spend upon the other branch of his office, agriculture? Is it not too much to ask of him, even if he had no other work to do except what I have mentioned, that he should meddle with it? And yet, this is not all, he, the same functionary, is also Prime Minister of the Province! Now, it is clear that the Premier is bound to give the best and greatest share of his time to the general affairs of the country, in fact, the occupations of a constitutional minister often trench upon the affairs of his department. It is then, I think, proved beyond a doubt that this personage cannot and ought not to undertake the control of the agricultural affairs of the Province.

But, it may be said, why, if the commissioner is not able to conduct the agricultural business of the Province, is not that duty entrusted to the Council of Agriculture? We have already seen that, in reality, that duty has been assigned to the council since 1869. Before that time, for more than 30 years, the Board of Agriculture of Lower Canada had the sole control of the matter. After Confederation, the Council of Agriculture was instituted to replace the Board, which was judged to be inefficient. But it produced no beneficial change; the present system has been in actual operation for 40 years, and with what result we have seen from the testimony of Mr. Browning, and of the Assistant Commissioner himself. The former, one of the most active and devoted presidents that the Council has ever had, has expressed himself clearly on the subject; and we think no one can now doubt that it has been sufficiently shown that the improvements which have supervened, during the last 30 years, in the state of agriculture in this Province, are due neither to the old Board, to the Agricultural Societies, nor to the Council.

Let us now see of what elements the Council is composed, that we may the better judge whether it is, or is not, capable of conducting our general agricultural organisation.

According to law, the Council should consist of twenty-three members, named by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, and they are supposed to represent the different territorial divisions of the Province, or nearly so. But, really, they do