

Our British Letter.

The British Dairy Farmers' Association May Come to Canada Next Year—Canadian Products at the Dublin Show.
(From Our Special Correspondent.)

London, Eng., May 9, 1898.

Every year the British Dairy Farmers' Association holds a conference or tour in either a different part of Great Britain or the Continent. In this we have copied other nations. The object is for the farmers who "do" the tour, etc., to see for themselves the system of farming followed in the different localities and to apply on their own farms any of the practices they may deem desirable. By the time this communication reaches my readers, the annual tour for this year will be over, commencing, as it does, on Monday, May 23rd, and winding up on Saturday, May 28th. The number of those who on each occasion set themselves out to gather information in this way is, roughly speaking, about one hundred; and, of these, a great proportion are, so to speak, regular annual travellers. I fear the bulk of the "tourists" regard the affair more as an annual holiday than as a means of gaining instruction. A few, however—a sort of residuum—are unquestionably knowledge-seekers, and to them the tour possesses, of course, a certain value. I am not aware, however, that a single farmer has yet convinced himself that he has, during the ten or more years that the tour has been established, been able to pick up much, or anything, that he could apply on his own farm in his daily practice.

As I have indicated, this year's tour will be from May 23rd to May 28th. It will thus be just before the hay harvest. We begin cutting hay in June and July in this country; and our wheat is cut in August and September. In Scotland one sees it cut in October, but the months first mentioned are the usual ones for cutting in England. Next year it is hoped that the British Dairy Farmers' Association may visit Canada. There are a few energetic spirits in the society who last year tried to bring this off; but somehow the matter fell through, and the touring party went to Denmark and Sweden instead. I am quite sure if we came to Canada we should meet with a hearty reception, and it would be pleasant to hear "God Save the Queen" and "Rule Britannia" sung on your shores by the united voices and from the lusty lungs of the peoples—kith and kin—of the two hemispheres. I cannot, however, persuade myself that any such treat is really in store. You see, practical farmers would find it difficult to be from home for four or five weeks or more in the spring or summer months. Of course, some of our "experts" could afford the time (and money) to take the journey, and, after all, they are perhaps our teachers of advanced methods. It is quite understood here that the Dominion affords a good illustration to-day of "advanced methods." No serious man in any position of responsibility can fail to observe and appreciate what co-operation has done and is doing for you all. There is thus a possibility that some of our people—our "experts"—may cross the "herring pond" in due time.

I ought to add that the British Dairy Farmers' Association consists of some ten to fifteen hundred members, nearly all of whom are in some way or other connected with the dairying interests of Great Britain. It is the only national body of the sort in Great Britain; its council is extremely energetic; and the work of the association is unequalled, in my opinion, by any other agricultural body in this country. There are a number (a dozen or twenty) of smaller dairying societies, which confine their operations to the interests of those farmers residing in the area or areas they (the societies) respectively cover—which is generally one or two counties of some 700 to 1,000 square miles each.

A fortnight or so ago I was in Dublin at what is known as the Spring Show. It consisted of live stock and implements chiefly, but at it were, as is usual at British agricultural exhibitions, a number of miscellaneous "stands." At the particular show in question there was this year a fine stand of Canadian produce which, I am able to state, at-

tracted a great deal of attention, though some of the "Paddies" objected to it as tending to lure the strong and healthy bone and sinew of the country away from home, i.e., to emigrate. The truth, however, as regards Ireland is that young men and women will not remain in Ireland if they can possibly help it, as there is no encouragement given either to agriculture or to manufactures; whilst the rail rates are most prohibitive. The Canadian government agent told me that two cases of goods cost just as much to carry them by rail from Liverpool to Dublin (about sixty miles) as from Canada to Liverpool by boat. As regards "encouragement," the government believe that self help is the best form of help, and that the less paternal a government is the better. That is so in the case of established industries, no doubt, but not otherwise. Anyway we are going to give a Government Board of Agriculture and of Industries to Ireland all in due course, though in farming matters from a legal standpoint Ireland is, I am bound to say, far and away better off than England.

Illustration Stations for Farmers.

Agriculturists will appreciate the more explicit statement of the Hon. Sydney Fisher before the House Committee on Agriculture a week ago regarding the proposed plan for "Illustration Stations." Though the original proposal as outlined by Professor Robertson was sufficiently clear to show the nature of the work proposed, yet we must confess to having had a little doubt as to the exact meaning of the term "Illustration Station." The Minister's explanation has thrown some further light on the whole subject, and yet the claim that these stations are not to be at all experimental in their nature is open to question. However, whether they are experimental in their operations or merely illustrative is neither here nor there; what is important is, will they do what is claimed for them; are they necessary for the development of our agricultural resources; can they be operated successfully, and is the expenditure justifiable?

In regard to the first we have not much to say. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. The scheme is an entirely new one in this country. We know of no similar line of work in any other agricultural country, excepting it be in France, and until it is put into operation and has been tested for a year or two it is not possible to say definitely what the results will be. The Department of Agriculture is adopting a wise course in deciding to make the venture tentative in its character, and to operate only a few of these stations at the beginning to prove whether the scheme is workable or not. The Minister in his address referred to the varied conditions existing in the different agricultural districts of the Dominion, and to the good services small illustration stations would render in showing the special lines of cultivation, etc., necessary for these respective localities. We would suggest that in making a trial the first year, as far as possible a station should be located in each of the districts in which the agricultural conditions are largely dissimilar. This would require about ten or twelve stations, and would give the scheme a fair trial.

As to the necessity for such a scheme in order to develop our agricultural resources very much more can be said. As we pointed out a couple of weeks ago there are many farmers badly in need of instruction of a kind that will enable them to make the very most out of their farms. There are many farms to day, especially in the older provinces, that are almost unproductive because of improper methods of cultivation, and because a system of farming has been carried on that has taken all the fertility out of the land and put nothing back in its place. If the establishment of local illustration stations in sections where the farms are pretty well run down will help to improve them and enable their owners to produce one quarter more grain per acre than they are doing now, the necessity for such stations is fully established. We are still in doubt, however, as to the wisdom of the Dominion Government under-

taking much educational work of this kind when the Provincial Governments are doing a large amount of work along agricultural lines. As we have previously stated there should be a definite understanding between the Dominion and Provincial Departments of Agriculture as to the particular line of work each one should follow in developing the agricultural resources of the country. There should be no overlapping of work, and we are glad to know that the Department at Ottawa fully recognizes this, and, as Mr. Fisher states, this new scheme will not be allowed to interfere with work carried on by the Provincial Departments of Agriculture.

Can these stations be successfully operated and is the scheme a practical one is what many persons are asking? To operate, control and direct the work on one hundred and fifty or two hundred illustration stations, which number, the Minister says there will be if the scheme is carried out in its entirety, is no small task. The first and chief task we think will be to secure a sufficient number of farmers who have experience enough in such work to make the illustration station sufficiently attractive. Notwithstanding what the Minister says in regard to the work now being carried on by the Ontario Experimental Union being entirely dissimilar to that of the proposed scheme, we think with very little modification the work of the Union could be made of a similar nature to that involved in the new scheme, and we would repeat what we stated a couple of weeks ago that it would be well for the Department to co-operate with the Union and utilize its members for conducting the stations in this province. There would be a two-fold advantage in such co-operation. It would enable the Department to utilize men with some experience in conducting experimental or illustrative work and add the knowledge of the various methods of cultivation and the various kinds of seeds obtained at the Ontario Agricultural College to that obtained at the Experimental Farms and from other sources. In fact, as we have previously pointed out, there should be the active co-operation of all the various institutions connected with agricultural training in making the scheme a success and where a Provincial Government has already an experimental farm or station the information to be obtained there should be utilized as far as possible in helping on the work in that province. One thing which commends the scheme and which is a sort of guarantee that it can be successfully operated is that it will be under the direction of Professor Robertson. If there is anyone in Canada who is able to push it to a successful issue, he is the one. The one doubt there is in regard to this is whether his other important duties will allow him to devote sufficient time to the new scheme to make it a success. We believe the first duty of the Dominion Department of Agriculture is in connection with transportation and the opening up of new markets for our food products. These special lines of work come under the Agricultural and Dairy Commissioners' Department, and should not be sacrificed in any way in order to further this new scheme. It would be a serious and an irreparable mistake at this juncture to be anyways lax in our efforts in regard to providing sufficient and suitable cold storage facilities on board the cars and boat to convey our perishable food products to the British consumer in the best possible condition. Then our export trade in these products, with the exception perhaps of cheese, is only beginning. Our butter export trade needs looking after; the export fruit trade has hardly made a beginning and much is to be done yet before it can be said to be thoroughly established; the dressed beef trade needs all the time and attention that can be given it, and the same might be said of many other lines of trade. We therefore speak plainly in regard to this whole question as we believe it is in the interests of our trade in farm products to do so.

There can be no two questions as regards the justifiableness of the expense if the scheme proves successful in improving the system of farming carried on by many of our farmers. Anything