

The Rural Canadian.

VOLUME IX. No. 1..

TORONTO, JANUARY, 1886.

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THE POTATO ROT.

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THE FAT STOCK SHOW.

This show, under the auspices of the Agricultural and Arts Association, was held in Guelph on the 10th and 11th December. The display of abnormally fat animals was about the finest that has been held in Canada. The commodious buildings were well-filled. Mr. Still, of East Oxford, showed an enormous ox, weighing about 2,560 pounds—a perfect giant among giants. Messrs. J. & R. McQueer, of Salem, had a five-year old steer, weighing about 2,500 pounds, a very symmetrical beast. They also exhibited a five-year-old roan cow, weighing about the same. Mr. John Kelly, of Shakespeare, had a three-year-old steer of 2,475 pounds. As might have been expected Messrs. H. & J. Groff, of Elmira, were on hand with a couple of magnificent steers only two and three years old, and weighing 2,280 and 2,275 pounds, respectively. These gentlemen are always to the fore with fat stock. Mr. George Keith, of Salem, exhibited a pair of good steers, weighing about 1,400 pounds, just the class of animals a butcher would delight in. Mr. Walter West, of Guelph, exhibited a grand white steer of 2,000 pounds. Mr. Simon Beattie had two splendid steers, two and three-year-olds, weighing something like 2,100 pounds each. There were not many better looking animals in the show than these.

Of pigs there was a good display. A Berkshire sow one year and ten months old weighed 700 pounds. Life was not exactly a pleasure to this poor animal, the property of Mr. Walter West, of Guelph.

The sheep were exceptionally fine. Mr. Rutherford, of Waterloo, had a Leicester ewe weighing 325 pounds, and a wether, of a cross between Southdown and Cotswold, 290 pounds in weight. The promoters of the show are to be congratulated on the result.

One of the saddest events in the history of Ireland was the outbreak of the potato rot in 1847. In that and two or three succeeding years the people of Ireland were in a state of famine, and only for the help that reached them from Canada, the United States and elsewhere, a large mass must have perished. In those days, and even at the present time, the potato is one of the chief articles of food in Ireland, and when for any reason the crop fails the consequences are very serious. On this side of the Atlantic, fortunately, we are not to any great extent dependent on the potato as an article of food. And well that it is so; for, although this edible is cheap, nutritive and healthy, it is not the kind of food that alone will build up a strong and healthy man. The average Irishman of to-day, fresh from the old sod, will hardly compare with the average Canadian in strength or endurance—at all events not until the potatoes are sweated out of him, as we once heard an Irishman say—and those who have studied the natural history of the race are of opinion that since the cultivation of the potato in Ireland the Irishman has visibly deteriorated. Here we have wheat flour, beef, mutton and pork in plenty, not to mention a large variety of fruits and vegetables that make up valuable parts of our daily food. True, we would greatly miss the potato, should the supply for any cause fail; but we could survive a failure of the crop without any fear of famine.

During the past season rot has prevailed over a large extent of territory in America. In our own Province it has extended throughout the whole southern ranges of counties from the St. Clair to the Ottawa Rivers, and northward as far as the counties and districts bordering on Georgian Bay. In the United States, too, it has extended from Minnesota to Maine, including Iowa, Wisconsin, Northern Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York and the New England States. In some of these States, and notably in New York and Michigan, millions of bushels have rotted, and the latest accounts show that there, as in Ontario, the disease shows no abatement since the crop was taken up and stored for the winter.

The nature and causes of the rot have been carefully investigated by Prof. Spalding, of the Botanical Laboratory, University of Michigan, and the results are given in the December Crop Report for the State of Michigan. The disease is stated to be identical with that which caused the great famine in Ireland in 1847, being due to a minute parasitic fungus, the *Phytophthora infestans*. It attacks the tops as well as the tubers, and often spreads from plant to plant and from field to field with great