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THE PROVINCIAL EXHIBITION.

The history of the Provincial Association in its relation to our annual Provincial Exhibition is full of interest to Canadians. It is the narrative of the rise and progress of a national institution from which immense benefits have sprung, and many more are expected for a long series of years to come.

The Provincial Exhibition is one of the tests of our improvement in all that relates to material wealth and solid progress. It is an annual examination of the state of our industry, intelligence, activity and knowledge. It enables us to compare our condition as a people with that of other nations; to discover in what respect we fail to attain to the standard of excellence at which others have arrived; in what particulars we excel, and how we may best improve the natural advantages by which we are surrounded, and ameliorate the disadvantages which are inseparable from our geographical position.

No event of equal importance to the Provincial Exhibition occurs during the year in Canada, out of the field of politics; for good government stands at the head of all national interests, and the desire to be governed wisely and well is superior to all aspirations towards excellence in agriculture, art or mechanical skill.

Politics cannot be broached within the walls devoted to the objects of the Provincial Exhibition. All allusions in the annual addresses to subjects of a party or political nature are necessarily forbidden by tacit consent. Early in the history of the Provincial Association was the caution given by the Hon. Adam Fergusson, on the 22nd October, 1846, at Toronto, where the first Exhibition was held:—"I feel, gentlemen, far more intensely than I can possibly express, *that our very existence*, as a useful institution, must altogether depend upon a firm and scrupulous exclusion of all such topics from the Board. Thank God, we have a great and magnificent arena, upon which every man in Canada may contend, in honorable and patriotic competition, untainted by party jealousies or strife; and most devoutly should we all pray, that party feeling or party intrigue, may never be known amongst us."

The first Provincial Exhibition was held in Toronto, in October, 1846. It extended over two days. The whole amount offered in prizes reached nearly £400, and the number of entries were 1,150. Ten years

later, the amount of prizes was £2,309, and the number of entries 3,791, or more than three times as many. It is curious and instructive to compare the thoughts and opinions of men at that period, based on what they saw around them, with the condition of things at the present day. The Hon. Chief Justice Robinson, now in the progress of events in Canada, where merit paves the way, Sir John Beverley Robinson, Bart., said at the first Exhibition, "There was no country possessing the advantages—advantages almost illimitable—that Canada does. Looking to the great waters at her feet, and the innumerable rivers leading thereto, and the water power afforded—he would ask, where was the country that could boast of like advantages with Upper Canada? Even with London and other towns far removed, the inhabitants had the advantages of good plank roads, by which the produce reached the great waters, on whose surface it was to be borne to Europe."

The Association began its existence boldly—it relied upon the country it was to serve. It has served it well, and well has it been sustained. It commenced its career wholly without funds, relying upon members' fees and on "contributions," particularly from County Societies, to enable it to pay the premiums offered by itself, and the expenses incurred in its own nourishment and growth.

In the second year of its existence, the annual Exhibition was held at Hamilton, when not less than 550 more entries were made than in the previous year, and premiums to the amount of £750 offered; but the Association found itself £300 in debt at the close of the year, but still full of hope. Col. E. W. Thompson, the President of the Association, a household name among farmers in Upper Canada, spoke in the annual address of the near completion of the internal water communications in the Province; but, he continued, "railroads, plank and macadamized roads must follow in every direction." He saw the necessity of progress—manufactures accompanying progress in agriculture—for he warned farmers of "the necessity of cultivating flax and hemp and the finer kinds of wool." Lord Elgin, with eloquence so natural to him, said of our country at that meeting: "Canada springs at once from the cradle into the full possession of the privileges of manhood. Canada, with youth's elasticity in her tread, has the advantage of all the experience of age. She may avail herself, not only of the capital accumulated in older countries, but also of those treasures of knowledge, which have been gathered up, by the labor and research of earnest and thoughtful men, throughout a series of generations."

When three years old, the Association determined to hold their Exhibition at Cobourg, and notwith-