

The Farmer's Advocate

and Home Magazine

"Persevere and Succeed."

Established 1866.

VOL. XLI.

LONDON, ONT., SEPTEMBER 27, 1906.

No. 731

EDITORIAL.

What's the Matter with England?

This summer, on one of the Atlantic Liners running between Liverpool and Montreal, an alert German-American, who had been abroad, might have been observed with a book in his hand, bearing the ominous title, "The Decline and Fall of the British Empire." Though published in Old London, it purported to be a textbook, written about a century hence, for use in the public schools of Japan, as a warning to the rising generation of that empire against the perils that had undone her old-time ally and the "Mistress of the Seas." It recorded the fulfillment of the Macaulay prophecy, whose New Zealander would stand on a broken arch of London Bridge and view the ruins of St. Paul; and traced the reasons for national wreck, as in the case of Rome, to the decay of agriculture, the love of pageantry and pleasure, self-indulgence, the crowding of population into the cities, the wane of industry, deterioration of manhood, and other disintegrating causes.

Despite the buoyancy of trade and growth of population, there is an uneasy feeling abroad that something is wrong with this beautiful Old Land. By this book, and in many other significant ways, it is finding expression. What is it? According to Joseph Chamberlain, industrial stagnation, needing protection from foreign competition. But his propaganda was stillborn. The toiling masses, to whom the loaf of bread means everything, will have none of it as yet, and British business men do not take his panacea seriously.

There is a prevalent notion that it is due to conservatism in her methods; but England probably gains as much as she loses on that score. It is also ascribed to national bumptiousness, expressed in the chest-swelling words: "This is a great and mighty England, on whose domain the sun never sets. She's all right!" But this is not a general characteristic of England at all, particularly of the dominant middle classes. Her statesmen, professional and business men are abroad in the world, and know what is going on. They are not asleep. Canada might well go to Old London to learn the rudiments of transportation and civic government, and England can grow some crops yet that put old Canada to shame.

But the roots of England's danger are real, and go deeper down. The evidences are visible in physical and moral degeneracy, and in poverty. One of the distressing sights of the streets there are the beggars, even opposite the very domain of Royalty—hungry men, women and children. In England and Wales, on Jan. 1st, 1905 (exclusive of private charity, or the multitudes that suffered and made no complaint), 932,267 persons, of whom 148,013 lived in London, were in receipt of poor-law relief. This is appalling! Surgeon-General Evat, of the British Army—a hard-headed military officer—in a public address this summer, in the writer's hearing, stated that, out of 11,000 recruits for the Army, 8,000 were rejected as unfit. He was advocating measures that would stay the rising tide of sallow, stoop-shouldered, hollow-chested youths, of grovelling ideals, and give the country a race of men. His remarks were based on an experience and observation of 30 years in all parts of the Empire. He branded the canteen as the graveyard of the British Army, heartily commending the United States in its abolition, and ascribed the deterioration of the Brit-

ish youth to the curse of conditions that drove the people from the land and massed 80 per cent. of them in cities and towns where vice and ignorance thrive.

The truth is that great masses of the lower strata of laborers in England are impoverished, befuddled and besotted with beer, and large numbers in the upper classes are bedeviled with alcohol in other forms. This is no dream. There are in London alone 6,684 saloons, and last year 60,899 arrests for drunkenness. One of the features of the London daily papers is the unsavory reports of endless divorce-court proceedings, largely because of shocking infidelities. What is their source? Sir Gorrell Barnes, President of the Divorce Court, on July 25th of this year, in granting a divorce, said: "If this drink habit, which is, unfortunately, so prevalent, could be eradicated from the nation, this court might close its doors; at any rate, for the greater part of the time. The great majority of cases that come to this court are due to drink." Coming from such a source, this evidence is startling and irrefutable.

For months, Rev. Father Vaughn, a fearless Roman Catholic priest, has been impelled to denounce the vices and follies of the "Smart Set." In a sermon this summer, Rev. Dr. John Clifford, a prominent London divine, scored drink, gambling and lust as the three deadliest foes of the English people. According to a report of the Select Legislative Committee, it is proven conclusively that "juvenile smoking has increased rapidly during the last few years, and that it has had a bad effect upon the general health and physique of the present generation, whilst it must have even a worse effect upon the future generations." One has only to open his eyes upon the all but universal use of tobacco among youths and young men to realize that this indictment is very mildly drawn.

Here, then, we have indicated in outline the wasteful causes which, coupled with want of proper food, insanitary conditions, and the impure air of the cities, are undermining the moral and physical stamina of the British people; and once this is lost, national virility follows.

But the situation is not without hope. England, fortunately, recognizes her perils, and thoughtful leaders in press, pulpit, school and Parliament are wisely addressing themselves to the solution of these problems; statesmen are proving their true patriotism to the Empire by legislating on social conditions; the slums are being cleansed, Christian organizations are getting down to real work with the masses, temperance is gaining ground, the drink business is losing caste; warned by decreasing profits, the Alsopps and two other big brewing concerns this season amalgamated, to reduce expenses; and the people, by emigration and otherwise, are being got back to the land, where they will be freer from the enslavements of those alcoholic and other poisons, and under the wholesome influences of purer air and better food. The Britisher is little restrained by political partyism, and he exercises, as of yore, his prerogative to grumble and ventilate grievances on the park and in the press without let or hindrance. This individual freedom safeguards England against festering anarchy, and once the masses get their eyes opened to the dangers that beset them, will powerfully aid in their removal.

The conditions are alarming, but not beyond redemption, and those who believe, as Rider Haggard once put it, that Good is still the mightiest power in the world, will never despair of a regenerated England, still leading the van among the nations.

Make a Good Show Better.

The detailed report published in the last issue of "The Farmer's Advocate," shows that the Western Fair, at London, is losing none of its old-time magnetism for the people of Western Ontario and of the capital of that unrivalled agricultural district. The very best of weather favored the management, and the great attendance left with the treasurer a handsome surplus, on which to base further improvements and a forward policy for 1907. The complaint is made that the citizens do not sustain the show as well as outsiders. How far this may or may not be correct, is not easy to determine, but the suggestion was volunteered that the city attendance could be swelled by giving more attention to the purely entertainment features—possibly a doubtful compliment to the aforesaid citizens. Good wholesome attractions have their place, and it is worth while putting considerable of the showman's "gray matter" into seeking out a few strong, effective features, rather than a multiplicity of minor novelties. But the great reliance of the show, as with the National, at Toronto, should be the instructive revelation which it makes of the industrial, agricultural, commercial and artistic development of the country and the town, the interests of which it is designed to promote. People delight to see processes and exhibits presented in new ways, and can be educated to appreciate with the keenest possible relish features that are instructive, as well as entertaining. Attention is directed to the need for the adoption of measures that will revive the waning display of agricultural products and fruits, for which good prizes are offered, but which, through sheer negligence or an idea that a few professionals will scoop in everything worth while, are being allowed to go by default. Farmers make a mistake in neglecting such opportunities. Farmers and fruit-growers generally should be encouraged to enter these competitions, and the securing of competitive exhibits by agricultural societies or farmers' institutes should be carefully considered before another show season. Large collections of fruit varieties are attractive, but there should always be encouragement and opportunity also in the prize-list for small growers.

The hot weather emphasized again the imperative need for refrigeration in the compartment for the magnificent cheese exhibit which our skillful Western Ontario makers are prepared to send up, but it is not fair to ask them to risk valuable products being converted into oil.

The poultry prize-list requires overhauling. Too much money altogether is devoted to a long list of Bantams and other newfangled fancy sorts, of no utility in the production of the staple foods—flesh and eggs. Of course, breeders have displayed a lot of skill and ingenuity in the evolution and fitting for show of these novelties, but the way in which the prize-lists are manipulated is absurd, and unjust to the vastly greater number of people concerned in the utility classes, where the most of the money should be distributed. A change should be insisted upon, either by the Fair Association, or, as a last resort, the Minister of Agriculture ought to make the grants conditional upon a reformed poultry prize-list.

Another reviewer, points out the defective construction of the cattle sheds from the sightseers' point of view, whereby the usefulness of one of the most instructive and interesting features of the show is largely nullified. This has become so glaringly apparent that the directorate will no doubt make some improvements at an early date.

The growth of the show has already been such as to make it evident that the grounds are not