

THE MONETARY TIMES, AND TRADE REVIEW.

[With which has been incorporated the "Intercolonial Journal of Commerce" of Montreal, the "Trade Review" of the same city (in 1870), and "The Toronto Journal of Commerce."]

ISSUED EVERY FRIDAY MORNING.

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE—POSTAGE PREPAID.

Canadian Subscribers.....\$2 a year.
British ".....10s. sterling a year.
American ".....\$2.50 U.S. Currency

BOOK AND JOB PRINTING A SPECIALTY

Office—No. 64 & 66 Church St. Toronto, Ontario.

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TORONTO, CAN., FRIDAY, JUNE 20, 1879

LAND AND LABOR.

The existence of a considerable number of unemployed persons in a country where there is lying idle for want of cultivators an extent of territory large enough to form an empire, is an anomaly to which sufficient attention is not directed. There must be something wrong in the social condition of a community in which the desire of a large portion of those who were bred to agriculture wish to escape to other employments. Before the wrong can be righted, we must find out what it is and how it came to be. Why do the sons of farmers wish to desert the farm; to exchange work in the field for work at the counter? When a desire of this kind is widespread there must be some active causes operating to produce it. There are probably several causes at work tending to the same result.

Farm-work is felt by many engaged in it to be exceptionally hard; and this no doubt is one reason why many desire to exchange it for lighter labor, or what they believe to be so. Every young man desires to obtain an establishment for himself as soon as he can. The average farmer's son finds his ambition checked in this direction. He works on, year after year, without getting much more than his food and clothes, and his ultimate fate is in the hands of his father. He expects, on the death of his parents, to get his share of the estate; but there are obstacles to his marrying at marriageable age, and his future, at the entrance into manhood, is obscure and uncertain. His dull round of labor is little relieved or diversified by rational recreations; recreations of which the parents, who have lived all their lives with their noses to the grindstone, do not easily understand the necessity. This state of existence naturally creates either indifference or a desire for change. The former is reaction against a too exacting drudgery; the latter is founded on the belief that town and city life has something much pleasanter to recommend

it. Storekeeping is strangely looked upon by some as being on a higher social plane than farming; and we fear the mothers and sisters of farmer's sons too often foster the delusion. In this way a large number of our young men become weaned from the soil; a much larger number than is good for themselves or the country; for it must always be best for both that these young men should remain in that occupation in which their exertions can add most to the annual wealth of the country.

If the social system is to blame, as there is reason to believe it is, an effort should be made to reform it. When the farmer's son arrives at manhood his individuality should receive suitable recognition, and he should be put into a way of doing for himself, upon land, as soon as possible. If this be done, the motive for deserting the farm will in many, perhaps a majority of instances, be removed; and the energies of the individual will be developed to the fullest extent. In this way a great waste of power will be prevented and commensurate results will be obtained. While the present condition of things remains, it is no use to tell the farmer's son to stick to the farm; not to leave the known and the certain for the unknown and the uncertain. Under no circumstances can all who happen to be born on farms be expected to spend their lives there. It is not desirable that this should happen; because all have not the same talents, inclinations and aptitudes. The desire to see something of the world is so strong, sometimes so uncontrollable, that an effort should be made by parents to enable their sons to indulge it to a reasonable extent. A young man of observant disposition will be sure to learn something by going to a distance from the place of his birth; and the knowledge thus gained will enable most young men to perform their duties on the farm better and to greater advantage.

If half the pains were taken to direct our own young men how to obtain land on which to settle that are taken to drum up emigrants in Europe, we cannot but think that a better result would, in times like the present, be obtained. In the province of Quebec colonization societies have attempted to perform this duty; but it must be admitted that they have had very indifferent success, as the constant stream of emigration which has for years been flowing to the States attests. It is not sufficiently recognized that movement of the population is a law of progress. From New England a westward movement commenced at a very early date. It has been calculated that, for a century and a quarter, after the year

1640, more persons moved out of New England than moved into it; the increase of the population being confined to the four thousand families who came in before that date. For more than a century, Lower Canada has been losing population at a rate very much greater than she has been receiving it. The subdivision of homesteads has been carried to an extent which has made the respective parcels too small for the comfortable subsistence of a family. The young men of the families in these straitened circumstances have not the means to take up land on their own account. If they resolve to strike out for themselves they must commence by earning wages. The bulk of the French *habitans* have no wages to offer them. The adventurous young men must therefore go to a distance in search of employment. Such of them as desire to try a change of occupation seek employment in the factories of Lowell and other towns and cities of New England. Hereafter, some of them may possibly find some such employment at home. But for the young man brought up on the farm the farm must as a rule be best. The Colonization Society of Montreal is trying to direct his efforts, so that they may be available in his own country; and it remains to be seen whether this Society will be more successful than similar ones have been before.

The products of agriculture are the only products that are always sure of a market. Prices may vary; but a market, at the current price, is always attainable. The farmers of France are complaining of what they call the invasion of their markets by cattle bred on this side the Atlantic; but it was officially stated, as late as February last, that, in spite of this invasion, the price of meat continues to increase, as the rates which the Government has to pay, in provisioning the troops, proves. This is a reason why, in a country where so much fertile land is running to waste, there should be no surplus labor; why all the available labor should be absorbed on the farm. There are obstacles in the way of this being done; and it is desirous that a decided effort should be made to remove them.

COMPETITION IN TRADE.

A correspondent writes us with reference to the excessive competition among general stores which prevails in his neighborhood (Oxford County), and asks, almost pathetically, "What must become of these shopkeepers who thus force their way and risk their money, if they have any, where they are not needed and can scarcely hope to make their rent? It is a sort of dog-in-the-