

FARM.

How Best to Overcome the Present Agricultural Depression.

An address delivered by James Elder, of Virden, before the Brandon Farmers' Institute.]

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN,—I was somewhat surprised upon receiving an invitation to attend this meeting, and read a paper upon such a subject; because I care not whether you listen to the Manitoba orator, hear a report of the sayings of the Manitoba visitor to Ontario, or read the contributions to the Manitoba newspapers, the idea of an agricultural depression is the last that would enter the mind. Those who reply upon these sources of information will be led to the conclusion that the farmers of this province are simply basking in the sunshine of prosperity.

I have often been asked by newspaper friends in Ontario to write letters for insertion, but have not done so for the simple reason that I would write nothing but the truth, and had I written the plain, unvarnished truth I would be very apt to be dubbed as a traducer of this glorious land of the west. And I see ground for hope in the fact that men have begun to realize and are willing to admit that the farmers of this Dominion (for the present agricultural depression is not confined to the Province of Manitoba) are in a very unsatisfactory condition. I say I take encouragement from this fact, because there is no man so hard to rescue as he who does not realize that he is in danger; and had we realized a few years ago what we are now awakening to, the present agricultural depression might have been lessened, if not entirely avoided.

In 1882 this province was cursed with a boom, from the effects of which the whole Dominion is now suffering, and will suffer for years to come. This province was being opened up; the eastern speculator thought that he had only to secure property in here in order to be a millionaire in a few years. The eastern farmer thought that by securing a few sections he could solve the problem of providence for his family. The eastern merchant thought that by starting business in one of our rising towns, he, too, would be rich in a short time. The eastern manufacturer saw here a wide field for the sale of his high-priced machinery, and the consequence was that our province was flooded by hordes of fortune seekers, each viewing this modern "plain of Jordan" and "pitching his tent toward Sodom." The speculator, in many cases, invested beyond his means, and now finds the possessions with which he gorged himself an indigestible mass, and himself suffering from financial dyspepsia. The farmer, in many cases, mortgaged his farm for nearly as much as it was worth, feeling quite sure that long before the mortgages matured John, George and William would be able to send back the needful for its discharge. But on account of the exodus from the eastern provinces, farms there have fallen in value, in many cases below the amount of the mortgage, and the boys, instead of sending home money, are writing for more. The father has sent help to the boys till his funds are exhausted, and he sees nothing before him but to part with the farm. (This is no overdrawn picture. I know of one township in Ontario, and that one of the best, in which there are only nineteen farms that are not under mortgage.) And what about the boys? Is it not true that in many cases they are in a very pinched condition? And why is this so? Certainly the price of grain is unprecedentedly low, and yet prices in 1887 were not very much higher, but we did not seem to notice it so much then, because we had a large crop and fewer obligations. In 1885 many of us had to sell our wheat at thirty-five cents per bushel, but still we did not grumble much because we had still funds to fall back upon, and we hoped next year's crop would be a rouser—but it wasn't.

I do not think that the trouble lies entirely in the low prices, but mainly in the fact that we have been building "castles in the air." We have been working upon a false basis. The man with the means to cultivate a one-quarter section tried to cultivate a one-half section, and the one-half section man tried a whole section. We counted most confidently upon good crops, favorable harvests and high prices—dreams which have not been realized. During those days of illusory dreams, the smiling face of the machine agent was quite familiar to the settler—those gentlemen, with their plausibilities, persuading men who had twenty or thirty acres of crop that they must have a binder, and by a curious manipulation of figures showed them that it would be a paying investment; and as for the payment—Oh, well, it didn't matter about that; any time in two or three years would do.

The merchant, too, although less importunate, has been far too free with his unlimited credit. But, alas! the dreamer has awakened, the pleasant dreams of June became the horrid nightmare of November, and the smiling agent and salesman of the past has become the relentless bailiff of the present. But, sir, dark as this picture is, it is not without its ray of light. Herein I see the first indication of the dawn of a better day. We are told that "the darkest hour of all the night is the hour before the dawning." There was no hope for the prodigal till "he came to himself," and now that we have come to ourselves there is hope for us. We must look back over the past, note our mistakes and correct them. And, first of all, we must abandon the idea of forever drawing from our soil without returning anything to it, because there is no doubt that the small crop of this season is partly due to our continued cropping—at least, we find that the best of crops are on new land. I believe that we must go more into stock raising, and instead of

burning our straw turn it into beef, mutton and manure, and then when our wheat is frosted we will not be compelled to sell it at twenty-five cents per bushel. And, moreover, we will not have frosted grain so often, because the application of manure will stimulate our soil to the earlier maturing of the crops, as proven by Mr. Bedford and many others. In proof of this point I can take you to people of my acquaintance, who, from force of circumstances, were compelled to go into stock raising in conjunction with grain, and these men seem hardly to know that an agricultural depression exists.

The adoption of the above amendment will necessitate the adoption of another, viz: We must quit biting off more than we can chew. Instead of half cultivating a whole section we must thoroughly cultivate a half section, and we will find that although we may not make such a splash in public, we will have more profit and real satisfaction in the end.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Agricultural Exhibitions.

BY JOHN I. HOBSON, MOSSBOROUGH, ONT.

In the November number of the ADVOCATE you have an article dealing with the objectionable features of our so-called Agricultural Exhibitions. You have dealt with the question in a manner which will commend itself to many who take a real interest in our country's progress; and it is a hopeful sign, and a cause of satisfaction to the readers of the ADVOCATE, that a paper which reaches so many country homes and yields such an influence for good, should come out boldly and outspoken against what has become a crying evil in the land. You say, very truly, in speaking of our young people who attend these exhibitions, that "they are learning under the cloak of instruction at agricultural fairs, and are induced to squander their earnings and corrupt their morals by practices that are not countenanced under any other circumstances."

It is sure y time that a firm stand was made and some effective measure taken to stamp out the open gambling that is carried on at some of the smaller fairs. At some of the shows last autumn, not only was it connived at by the managers, but stands were rented to men when it was well known that their object was to carry on this nefarious work; in this way practically licensing them, and making it a source of revenue to the promoters of the exhibitions. It is bad enough that this sort of work should be carried on in places hard to reach by the authorities, but that it should be openly allowed at these exhibitions, to which, in the aggregate, large sums of public money is granted with the view of aiding what are supposed to be educational institutions, is simply disgraceful.

However, it would appear to be no very difficult matter to stamp out this sort of thing. It is so glaringly wrong that every right-thinking man would support the government in withdrawing all aid from societies that allow it. But what is going to be much more difficult to do is to eliminate from what otherwise would be good and useful exhibitions the horse ring element, which has now become a leading feature, with an ever-increasing desire for "special attractions."

By the time this number of your paper is out, the dust will have completely settled down, balances in most cases will have been struck, and those interested will be in a position to say whether from their standpoint the particular exhibition in which they are interested has been a success, or otherwise. Something like \$75,000 is paid over annually to the different agricultural associations in Ontario as government grants. That this money, if used in a way so as to advance the interests which should be represented at these exhibitions, is a judicious expenditure, no one for a moment will deny; but as they are now conducted, we may well raise the question, whether the time has not come when a strong effort should be made to try and stem the tide which has set in in the direction of utterly destroying the usefulness of institutions which in the past have done so much to build up the great agricultural interests, and other industries not purely agricultural, but closely connected with them?

To many who have known the good work that has been done in the past by our township, county and provincial exhibitions, it is a pitiful sight to see what many of them have now come to. It is not too much to say that these township and county exhibitions, conducted, as they were, on sound principles, were practically training schools, where our ambitious and aspiring farmers could and did acquire that knowledge which fitted them to compete in the greater field of the "Old Provincial," and that the education there acquired had no little to do in making Ontario what it is to-day—the premier province of the dominion in all that regards the excellence of its farming and the progressiveness of its farmers. It is the same schooling which has been the leading factor in bringing about that notable excellence in stock management, which places Ontario breeders far beyond all competitors in the great international contests which have been held at Buffalo, Detroit, Chicago, St. Louis, and all other points where strong men have met.

Mr. Kough, of Owen Sound, in a well-written article on the benefit to be derived from attending agricultural shows, which appeared in one of our agricultural papers some time ago, told us that his marked success as a breeder and an exhibitor is owing largely to the knowledge acquired in the show ring. That is also the experience of most of our eminently successful men in the same line.

If it is true that a well-conducted agricultural exhibition, where men can meet in friendly rivalry, where we find the choicest specimens from the farm, the garden and the orchard, where we can see and

compare and study over all that our skilled manufacturers are now producing from their workshops with the view of enabling the farmer to carry out the work of his farm more economically, thus placing him in a position to compete more successfully in the great consuming markets of the world, is an important factor in advancing the interests of our country,—it is our duty then to set ourselves against the rapidly growing tendency to turn these exhibitions into shows where, under the guise of what is termed speeding, the grounds are turned into little better than race tracks, with all the evil associations of the betting ring attached, with perhaps some acrobatic feats and a few performing dogs thrown into the bargain.

It may be said, Why does the government vote public money to keep up this sort of thing? for it is a fact that without that aid many of these so-called agricultural shows would die out. The answer would appear to be that within the past few years many of these associations have had a hard fight for existence; the government has been looked to to assist them, and such pressure brought to bear that it made it most difficult to withstand it. Our Minister of Agriculture has put himself unmistakably on record as opposing these abuses which have crept into the show ring, and it is clearly our duty to strengthen and support his hands in this matter.

Has the time not now arrived when it might be profitable to discuss the question as to whether it might not be well to have a show of a national character, on the lines followed out by the Royal, of England, and the Highland, of Scotland, which are similar in their general features to our "Old Provincial." There are many strong reasons that could be given why it would be well to have such an annual exhibition, free from all the objectionable features which are now found even at agricultural fairs which aspire to be national in their character, but which do, in reality, partake largely of the nature of mere shows and amusement centres. We believe there is a strong growing feeling in that direction; and if such is the case, it would be well if some of the leading men in our own line would speak out and express their views on the matter.

Agricultural Education in Wisconsin.

BY PROF. JOHN A. CRAIG, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN.

The agricultural college of the state is the centre of this work. Leading out from it there are two main lines of effort; these are the education of students, and the helping of farmers through the farmers' institutes and the agricultural experimental station. The agricultural college is the centre of these, and the success that has come to all of them is due in a large measure to the strength of the league.

The farmers' institutes, under the direction of Mr. Morrison, are very thoroughly organized. A grant of \$12,000 from the State Legislature supplies the funds to meet all expenses. These include the cost of securing the best lecturers on interesting topics, and also the publication of a forty thousand edition of the annual bulletin. Efficient organization and wise direction have given the institutes such a strong hold upon the life of the people that they demand them. The fact that such a large edition of this bulletin is needed is a very complimentary expression of the farmers on the work of the institutes. The bulletin, by the sale of advertising space, meets the direct travelling of the institute forces.

The Agricultural Experiment Station is a strong force in this work. In scope, it is chiefly confined to solving questions that bear upon the special lines of farm industry in Wisconsin. The experiments are under the charge of the professors, whose departments embrace them. In 1883 the state tax was increased to establish an agricultural experiment station, and in this way the station gets \$5,000. In addition to this it receives \$15,000 from the Federal Government through the passage of the Hatch Bill.

The Agricultural College receives its grant through the Morrill Fund Act of 1890, which provided that from the Federal Government the agricultural college gets \$15,000 the first year, with an increase of \$5,000 each year until the sum of \$25,000 is reached.

There are three courses of study offered by the college: A long course of four years, a dairy course, and a short course. Of these the dairy course and the short course enroll the greatest number of students. Last year there were in all 152 students in the agricultural colleges. The course in dairying begins January 4 and ends March 21. It covers cheesemaking, buttermaking, and the feeding and breeding of dairy cows. The equipment for dairy instruction has been made at an expense of \$10,000. It includes a special building, thoroughly equipped with the best machinery and apparatus used in cheese and buttermaking. The short course extends from January 11 to March 9 during two years. To assist students to take this course, Hon. John L. Mitchell has donated twenty scholarships of \$100 each. The equipment for practical work in this course is good, and includes representatives of various breeds of live stock. A strong feature of the short course work is the training of students in judging the different classes of stock. This is done in the early part of the course by means of score cards, and afterwards by the comparison of different animals. The livery stables in the city, as well as the live stock of the experiment station, are freely used for this purpose. As a stimulant to the students in this work, Mr. R. B. Ogilvie, a leading stock-breeder of our state, donates annually a gold medal, to be given to the student that proves to be the best judge of sheep and heavy horses. In other departments it is a kindred principle that guides the teaching. The student is trained as well as educated; he is taught by practice as well as by precept.