

PART I

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT.

Early in this century Thomas Robert Malthus, an eminent English political economist, endeavored to show the tendency of population to increase faster than the means of subsistence; and his reasoning caused some to fear lest the earth might, in the course of time, fail to produce enough to feed the hungry millions that would be found upon it. So far, the facts appear to be against this Malthusian theory. Population has rapidly increased; but the produce of the earth is relatively more and more abundant. Taking one part of the earth with another, there seems to be more bread, meat and other kinds of food than are really needed; and hence the low price of agricultural products everywhere.

DIFFICULTIES.

In this country, the price of farm produce is exceptionally low; and we have coupled with it the comparatively high price of manufactured articles. Generally speaking, we may say that what the farmer has to sell is cheap, and what he has to buy is dear. Therefore the agricultural atmosphere is disturbed. A feeling of unrest and dissatisfaction is abroad. The farmer finds it increasingly difficult to make a comfortable living; and something must be done to remove the difficulty, or the whole community will suffer.

Farmers often get credit for grumbling without any very well defined reason: but in this case the trouble is real and serious—so much so that no one can question its existence, and wise men will not minify its gravity. What shall we do? What can we do?

REMEDIES.

So far as we see just now, there are three remedies, and only three: (1) an increased yield of farm produce, (2) better markets, (3) a reduction in the cost of living.

First, *an increased yield of farm produce.*—This can be secured only by greater skill, the application of better methods, and closer attention to business. Those who would now succeed in farming must study the principles of agriculture, and learn the best methods, and give the same close attention to business as is given by successful merchants and manufacturers. Merely scraping the soil once over and sowing crops three or four, or perhaps ten days after the proper time, will no longer serve the purpose. Such a course can lead only to disappointment and financial ruin. There are many advanced farmers in this Province who plough, harrow and cultivate their land enough to keep it thoroughly clean; who understand the principles of stock-breeding and feeding; who take good care of all their manure; who do everything thoroughly and at the best time: but it is not so with the great majority. Very different language would describe the rank and file of Ontario farmers, not to speak of the worst in the list. Now, if the many could be induced to imitate the few first-class men who are engaged in this honourable profession, we should have good reason to expect a large increase in the annual yield of farm produce, without much addition to the capital and labour now expended on our farms.