

valuable space; however, I am proud to state that a large number in this district do subscribe to good agricultural papers, and while some are at times caught by frost, etc., still abundant proof exists that we are largely successful, being possessed of wealth, if not in the form of cash (our advance cannot be attributed to any demoralizing boom), it is of healthy growth and gradual increase.

The weather in this county has been this winter all that could be desired. I do not think we have had more than seven weeks sleighing. The wheat acreage will be large, a very large amount of plowing having been got through in the fall. With a favorable year and good crops we will indeed be a thoroughly satisfied community. There is not much vacant land in the immediate vicinity of Virden, but a few miles away there is abundance, of course there are always a few improved farms for sale, but those men who have good farms and improvements are not very anxious to sell, while the class that are to be found in every community, those that lay around saloons and stores all day and have not time to improve or means to buy agricultural papers, these are always willing to sell; more often these farms fall into the hands of mortgage companies, who are usually glad to sell them at reasonable prices.

The Greatest of Agricultural Societies.

Though its arrangements are far from faultless, the Royal Agricultural Society of England is beyond all question the greatest and most successful association of its kind in the world. It consists at present of nearly 11,000 members, and the prize money which (with extra assistance from outside), it offers for the great show to be held at Windsor, next June, amounts to £12,000. As it has always been a successful society, the details as to its management and arrangements may be interesting to those Canadian readers who are not familiar with it. Started in 1838 as the "English Agricultural Society," it obtained a royal charter in 1840, and altered its name to that by which it is still known. The main object declared by its founders was "the general advancement of English agriculture," and an "essential principle" of its constitution was "the strictest exclusion from their (the members') councils of every question of discussion having a political tendency." These terms were incorporated in the charter, which also sets forth the objects of the society in detail, which may be summed up as follows:—To publish information found by practical experience to be useful to the cultivators of the soil; corresponding with other societies in the endeavor to obtain information; to promote field experiments, and to encourage scientific men in researches likely to be useful to agriculture; to promote the discovery of new varieties of grain and other vegetables; to collect information relating to forestry and rural improvement generally; to take measures for advancing the education of those who depend upon the cultivation of the soil for support; to improve the "veterinary art;" at shows "by the distribution of prizes and by other means to encourage the best mode of farm cultivation and the breeds of live stock;" to promote the comfort and welfare of laborers, and to encourage the improved management of their cottages and gardens." Now, those objects have not been carried out at all equally. The last, at any rate in recent times, has been entirely ignored. The society has done something in carrying out or assisting experiments, but

next to nothing in promoting the improvement of grain and other products of arable land. What it has done for agricultural education does not amount to much, and except by its valuable and expensive Journal (6s. to non-members), it has done very little in the way of publishing information on its own account; but the reports of its council meetings and of its several committees are sent to the agricultural and other papers, and these often contain valuable information. To the improvement of our live stock its resources have been mainly devoted. Trials of implements have often been held at the annual shows, while a few medals are given for meritorious inventions, and there is always a great collection of implements and machinery at the shows, the society charging high fees for the space occupied, and reaping very large profits from the exhibitors. All but a miserable pittance out of the money devoted to prizes goes to breeding stock, extremely little being devoted to milch cows, as such, and to the products of the dairy. Every year, in the districts surrounding the place where the annual show is held, prizes are given for the best cultivated farms, and this is a very valuable branch of the society's work. In other respects the society has lately launched out in various directions. For some few years it has carried on valuable field and feeding experiments at Woburn. It has also caused enquiries into the agriculture of foreign countries to be collected for publication in its Journal. It has also given scholarships to lads from any school who pass its examinations. Another modern advancement is the establishment of a working dairy at the annual show, which has had an excellent educational effect. The shows of the society are models of good management, except with respect to the judging of implements. Lately, too, the society has endeavored to co-operate with provincial societies for carrying out field experiments. Heavy losses are often incurred when shows are held in districts not in the midst of a great population, for the society's arrangements are on a princely scale, and it goes to all parts of the country for the benefit of the agriculture of the several districts, even though a loss is fully expected. But the society has a great reserve fund to draw upon and never gets into difficulties. It is sustained by the subscriptions of its members and by the profits of successful shows, and does not receive any assistance from the State. The subscription of an ordinary member is £1 a year or £10 for life, entitling him to a copy of the half yearly Journal and a ticket for the entire show which lasts over a week. Governors pay £5 a year or £50 for life.

The management of the society is strictly oligarchical. At the annual meeting in May, the Governors and members elect the President, Vice-President, Trustees, and other members of the council, the principal officers sitting for one year, and the rest of the council for two years. But beyond the election of the council and officers, the members have no power in the management, the council having absolute power over the funds and arrangements. Governors may attend and speak at council meetings, but not vote. There are three general meetings during the year, at which ordinary members may make suggestions for the consideration of the council subsequently, but there is no power to insist upon the adoption of the suggestions. A standing committee is appointed by the council from

themselves for each of the branches, into which the several functions of the society are divided, and these committees send in reports to the council, and offer advice, which is usually adopted. The several branches are as follows:—Finance, selection, stock prizes, implements, shows, showyard contests, chemical, botanical, veterinary, journal, education. The only one of these branches needing explanation is that termed "selection." The selection committee recommend the election of members to fill vacancies in the council and the various honorary offices. One of the privileges of members is that of having analyses of feeding-stuffs and artificial manures performed at very low fees by the society's chemist; also examination of seeds by the society's botanist. The Queen is President of the society for the current year, the Prince of Wales acting for Her Majesty. There is one Secretary, Mr. Ernest Clarke, who is also editor of the Journal, assisted by the Journal committee. He has a staff of clerks under him. At the shows, the different sections are managed by stewards appointed for the occasion. The whole organization of the society is excellent in efficiency.

THE RYE GRASS CONTROVERSY.

A revival of the controversy as to the admission of *Folium perenne*, or perennial rye grass, in mixtures of seeds for permanent pastures, started six years ago, has broken out again in England. In 1882, Mr. Faunce de Louve denounced the grass as not really perennial and as not fit for permanent pastures, and Mr. Carruthers, Consulting Botanist to the Royal Agricultural Society, backed him up. But various trials with and without rye grass tended to support the old practice and to throw doubt on Mr. De Louve's theories. In the last number of the R. A. S. Journal Dr. Freave showed that in one of the best old pastures of various parts of the Kingdom rye grass was the "backbone" of the graminaceous herbage, and white clover of the legumes. Mr. Carruthers has recently reiterated his denunciation of rye-grass, in reply to Dr. Freave. But practical farmers will not be misled; they know that they can form their pastures more cheaply with rye grass than without it, and that the produce in the first two or three years, when this grass is sown, is so much greater than when it is left out as to pay for the whole expense of the seed, and often for the laying down also.

PRICES OF FARM PRODUCE.

The official statement of the average prices of the principal cereals for 1888 has just been published, showing that of wheat to have been 31s. 10d. per quarter of eight bushels, as compared with 32s. 6d. for 1887, and 31s. for 1886; the last price was the lowest yearly average of the last hundred years. The average for barley last year was 27s. 10d., against 25s. 4d. in 1887, and 26s. 7d. in 1886; and that for oats, 16s. 9d., against 16s. 3d. in 1887, and 19s. in 1886. Only three times before, in the last hundred years, have the yearly average for oats been so low, as it was in 1888.

Prof. S. W. Johnson, Director of the Connecticut Experiment Station, says: "I am astonished in looking over some of the agricultural papers, to see the character of matter they print, that their subscribers read and digest. But a few years ago all this would have been as unintelligible as Greek is to most men. The scientific feeding of cattle, the chemical constituents of the soil, and the practical discussion in print of kindred matters show how deeply farmers are thinking."

The Ontario act for prevention of adulteration of milk *ultra vires*.—A recent conviction in Eastern Ontario, under this act, was quashed on appeal to the Divisional Court at Toronto, one of the judges dissenting. It has, however, been carried to the Court of Appeal. The ground taken by the defendant was that it was a criminal act which is out of the jurisdiction of the Local Legislature. We understand, however, that a similar bill has passed a first reading in the Dominion Parliament.