



RIGHT HON. JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN, M. P.
An empire builder.

The Attitude of British Farmers to Canada.

BY ARCH'D MACNEILAGE, EDITOR OF "THE SCOTTISH FARMER."

This is not a subject which I would have selected of choice. It has been selected for me, and I must make the best of it. In the suggestion of such a subject there appears to be indication of a latent idea that the British farmer, in some sort, is jealous of his Canadian compeer. This is an entirely erroneous impression. The worst feature of British agriculture, in our view, is the indisposition of many farmers to learn from those who are ousting them from their own markets. Too many of our countrymen here are disposed to regard foreign competition as of little moment. They growl at the results, but they seem determined not to learn from the success. Canadian agriculture is fostered by the State in a fashion with which we have no familiarity in this country. If anything like the same amount were expended here on education and experiment, many farmers would ask the old question, "To what purpose is this waste?" Nor are the conditions in this country at all parallel with those which prevail on the other side of the Atlantic. Insular, and overcrowded in many parts, Great Britain must, of necessity, to a large extent rely on other lands for sustenance. By no possibility could she succeed in maintaining her population, even on famine rations. Foreign supplies must come in, and because they must, the political economist says it does not matter to what extent they make their appearance. The farmer's mood, too, largely coincides with this of the commercial citizen. He shrugs his shoulders when told that Danish butter sells in Glasgow at 114s. per cwt., while there is no quotation at all for home-made butter. His answer is, "Nothing can beat the fresh butter produced in Mearns and Eaglesham," and having so said, he regards the debate as closed. There is, however, prospect of the dawning of a better day. By pegging away, the advocates of dairy instruction are at length gaining a hearing. The Kilmarnock Dairy Institute has become too strait for its students, and the Governors of the West of Scotland Agricultural College are face to face with a big building scheme, entailing an expenditure of £4,000 or £5,000. In this there is an indication of advance in public opinion, of a

disposition to learn from the enemy, and although the leeway to be made up is enormous, anyone who looks back even ten years must acknowledge that the Scottish farmer, at least, is slowly learning from his competitors. This is the first view of the attitude of the British farmer to Canada.

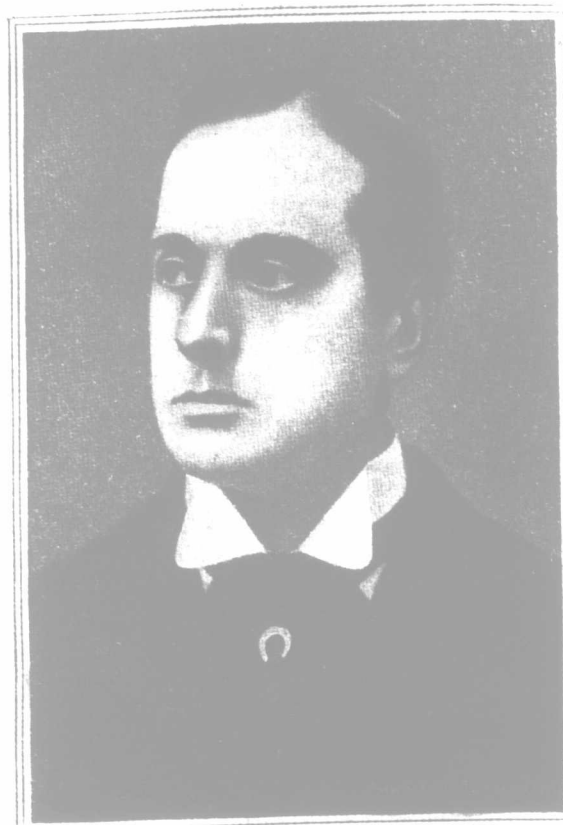
The second may be looked for in another sphere of action. Canadian farmers seem to cherish an idea that the ordinary stockman here has a grudge at Canadian stock. If the farmer cherishes such a grudge, it is because in the horse department such stock is so scarce. All classes of horse-owners here are loud in their praises of the animals which come from Canada. Those who take another view have not been found by me. The chief complaint is that horses so well adapted for labor on streets and in tillage are not more extensively bred and sent here in larger numbers. Ten or twelve years ago, the trade in Canadian horses was a flourishing item. Men made money who imported them, and men made more money who bought them up on arrival and put them into condition for doing hard work. Hardness of feet, soundness of wind and limb, and in general the presence of sound, substantial wearing qualities, were what enhanced the Canadian horse in the eyes of British farmers and horse-owners. Naturally, one may ask, how is it possible that British farmers are not jealous of such a trade? The answer is, that on account of the high rent of land on this side of the Atlantic, horse-breeding does not pay as well as horse-rearing when Canadians can be secured in our markets at from £30 to £40 apiece. What puzzled men here was to find out how it ever paid Canadian farmers to breed horses at that money. Such horses must have been sold by the breeders at not more than from £20 to £30 apiece, and many must have made a good deal less. It is to be presumed that the cessation in this trade is largely due to the fact that the trade did not pay the Canadian farmer. With its falling-off



A TYPICAL OLD-COUNTRY WINDMILL.

came also a falling-off in the demand for breeding stallions from this country. Unless the Canadian farmer is making his horse-breeding a success, he will not be a customer for Clydesdale stallions. Pure-bred stock is the one asset in which Great Britain enjoys something like a monopoly. What ever tends to enhance the demand for this will pay the British farmer either directly or it may be indirectly. He views with equanimity competition in commercial stock, knowing that, at least so far as horses are concerned, he holds the winning cards for breeding sires.

"How does this principle affect the cattle trade?" I imagine someone may now ask. Precisely as it affects the horse trade. It is not yet demonstrated that any country in the world can produce better breeding stock than Great Britain. From time to time, during the past thirty years, both horses and cattle have been brought over here, in some cases at enormous expense, and the feeling is universal that good as these animals may have been, they have really contributed nothing to the improvement of the stock in this country. In every case they were easily matched by home-bred animals, and while "Imp." means something before the name of a British-bred animal in America, it means nothing at all after the name of an American-bred animal in this country. Such as have been imported have entered the lists, and the cases have been few indeed in which the home-bred has been eclipsed by the foreigner. The drastic pedigree rules of the American Shorthorn Herdbook, so admirably fitted to hinder the progress and improvement of the breed to which they apply, only provoke a smile on this side. We are pedigree breeders here, but with this difference, that Amos Cruickshank taught us to regard the results of pedigree as of greater importance than the length of its record. If the veteran of Sittytton had followed the plan now regarded as a gospel in orthodox quarters in the States, he never would have made Sittytton famous. Nor is the Canadian embargo by means of the tuberculin test regarded as one whit more serious. This year its only effect has been to keep the pick of the bull calves at Cologne and



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Uppermill in this country. My opinion is that our breeders here take too little advantage of the tuberculin test. It is not infallible, but it is sufficiently accurate to be a guide in efforts to control and reduce tuberculosis to a minimum. Breeders here will, no doubt, in due time recognize this. Meantime, the abuse of the tuberculin test is too evidently before their eyes to make them enthusiastic in its praises. In this department the British farmer is not disposed to learn from his competitors, mainly because he sees, or thinks he sees, that these competitors have too readily given themselves over into the hands of theorists.

So far nothing has been said on the subject of this country's policy regarding Canadian store cattle, nor do I purpose saying much about it. In 1896 Great Britain, after varying experiences of other policies, adopted the principle and embodied it in legislation, that all sea-borne cattle should be shipped to this country for immediate slaughter. This policy was not adopted in a panic. Other policies had for years had a fair trial under the control of Ministers belonging to different political parties. The Act of 1896 was at the time opposed only by Harbour Boards which had erected expensive wharves and shedding for the importation of live cattle, the graziers of Norfolk, and a section of the cattle-feeders of the Scottish Midlands and the North-east of Scotland. All the rest of the country was unanimously in favor of the fixed policy embodied in the legislation of 1896. So matters continue until the present hour. The same parties have for about 18 months been agitating, at first for the repeal of the Act of 1896, now for its amendment so that it may be rendered inoperative in so far as Canadian cattle are concerned. The President of the Board of Agriculture has resolutely refused to accede to this request. He could not, in any case, do anything in the matter, but he declines to head the movement for the amendment of the Act. There can be little doubt that any attempt on his part to do otherwise would mean the defeat of the Government.



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