

English Letter, No. 15.

[FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.]

Liverpool, June 3.

Those potent damsels, Dame Fortune and Dame Nature, seem at last inclined to smile a little on the British farmer. Last season, as you will remember, was so persistently wet that he never had a chance of harvesting decent crops; and the excessive moisture generated the "fluke" which has played such havoc during the winter and early spring amongst his sheep. Then the whole spring has been one of probably unprecedented drought. From the middle of February to the end of May there were not half a dozen rainy days, and serious alarm was felt for the safety not only of the hay, but of the grain and root crops. Just in the nick of time, however, a plentiful rain has come, and a friend of mine who happened to visit a farming relative in the Midland Counties on the first soaking day says he was literally dancing for joy. A first-class hay crop, if there comes anything like a favorable gathering time, is now assured, for the knowing ones say that a cold, dry March, April and early part of May, with moist, warm weather to follow, are very favorable to the grass crops, because such early weather tends to the strengthening of the roots, and the formation of a close, compact sward. Then, when the change comes, it shoots up in a close, fresh, compact mass, full of nutriment, and yields the perfection of hay. On the contrary, a warm and wet early spring causes the grass to shoot up thinly, and if the moisture continue, the lower portions to rot, and the whole to be very inferior by mowing time comes. Wheat can stand drought better than any farm crop we have, but even that is looking wonderfully better under the rain drops. Moreover, the long spell of dry cold weather will have killed the fluke, and farmers will be able to save a remnant of their flocks. Fruit promises fairly well, though the dry weather has favored the development of grubs, or "bugs," as you call them, of all sorts and sizes, to an unwonted extent. Altogether, the English farmer has a better prospect before him than for several years past.

On the other hand, I learn that in Eastern Europe crops generally, and wheat especially, are promising anything but well. It might be supposed that there is no particular association between wheat and politics, and yet it is possible to conceive that a failure of the wheat harvest in Russia would be accepted by the most inveterate of Jingoese as a good reason why Russian designs on India, if such really exist, should be cooled for a time. A failure of crops in Russia is probably a more serious business relatively for her than for any other European country, for she has little else to depend on.

The first shipments of cattle from the St. Lawrence have now arrived, and I am glad to say have returned higher profits, all round, than probably were ever known before in the trade. The cattle have certainly been of extraordinarily fine quality; and it is highly amusing to notice the way in which those dealers who are solely connected with the import of United States beasts, and who consequently have to accept from 20 to 30 dollars per head less for their cattle on account of the compulsory slaughter, persist in stating that these cattle are States cattle in reality, and that they must have been conveyed over the ice, or in some occult way, into the Dominion. It is very gratifying to find that the efforts of your journal during the last few years, in impressing upon the farmers of Ontario the importance of employing a better class of bulls, and of employing every possible means to bring their horned stock up to the standard of our markets here, are now bearing fruit. This improvement tends not only to the

advantage of the farmers individually, but greatly to that of the country at large.

The sheep rot, or "fluke in the liver," has made fearful work in the flocks of our western and southern counties, and is now, I regret to say, showing itself in some of the hill districts of the north. The dry weather has checked its ravages somewhat, but enough harm has been done, I should imagine, to render the import of fairly well-bred sheep a profitable business for some time to come.

Live stock on the continent is, I hear, unusually limited in numbers; and this, added to the almost extermination of sheep and lambs in some districts of England, improves the prospects of your exporters. Let your farmers only pay as much attention to the improvement of their sheep as they appear to be doing in the case of their cattle, and they will not often lack a profitable market.

I understand that the Royal Agricultural Show, which will be held at Carlisle this year, is in future to be limited to exhibits which are of a strictly agricultural character. It is quite time that some check were put upon the universal element. It will be remembered by many of your readers that, of recent years, our principal shows have taken the form rather of a Nidgni Novgored, or World's Fair, where everything required by humanity from the cradle to the coffin can be bought and sold, than of the strictly class and professional character for which they were designed. The reason principally assigned, I believe, for thus curtailing the extent of the exhibition, is the need of more space for the genuinely agricultural exhibits. Agricultural interests certainly will not suffer by the change.

Mr. Richard Gibson, of Ilderton, Ontario, a member of your agricultural commission, has returned to Canada by the Cunard steamer Scythia, which sailed on Saturday last. Mr. Gibson whilst here attended the sale of Mr. Henry Lovatt's Shorthorns, held by Mr. Thornton at Low Hill, Bushbury, Wolverhampton, and secured a very handsome heifer, Lady Oxford Barrington. There were about 250 gentlemen and breeders present, and those cattle which were in good breeding order made very fair prices. The top price was paid by Lord Bective for Lot 30, the Countess of Oxford, 530 guineas.

I notice that large quantities of potatoes are coming from Prince Edward's Island, whilst the supply of new ones is being drawn from Malta, Northern Africa and Portugal. This proves how truly cosmopolitan the English table is in its character.

A prospectus has been issued of a scheme for sending frozen vegetables from Australia to India, the Australians believing that, when thawed, they will be as good as anything which can be bought in England. In India, it seems, turnips, carrots, peas and even potatoes speedily change their character when cultivated, and become useless. If the Australians succeed in this venture, there is no reason why Canada should not try the experiment to some of the tropical countries to which her ships trade.

Those of your readers who hail from the Mother Country will be interested to learn that the new Government are endeavoring by means of their bill to enable farmers to kill hares and rabbits on their own farms, to effect a compromise on the much disputed question of the Game Laws. It remains to be seen how far they will succeed; but if the bill passes, as no doubt it will, there can be little doubt that one speedy result will be a great reduction in the head of ground game; this will tell on the markets, and if you have hares or rabbits to send, they will be sure to meet with a cordial reception.

The great contest of the English racing year took place at Epsom on the 26th of May, and by way of a change, the blue ribbon of the turf was won by the first favorite, Bend Or, the property of the Duke of Westminster. The jockey was the famous Fred Archer, who won the French Derby on the Sunday previous. The aggregate income of this king of the turf, or, as he is termed by the sporting fraternity, "the Demon," is estimated far to exceed the official salary of the Prime Minister of England.

Recreation.

The farmer, his wife and his family are all benefited by an occasional holiday. The Queen's Birthday is the first suitable day for out-of-door gatherings, and is generally loyally and merrily observed by the majority. Dominion Day, occurring at a warmer season, is often more generally observed. Occasional special picnics and our agricultural exhibitions are all tending to improve, instruct and cheer us onward, that we may enjoy and profit by the blessings granted to us. We hope that every one of our readers make it a particular point to give all in their charge an occasional holiday.

The largest gathering that has taken place in this vicinity has been the annual Farmers' Picnic at Port Stanley. It was commenced twelve years ago, and the numbers in attendance have increased every year. The gathering this year was variously estimated at from 5,000 to 15,000. The attractions were numerous. The dance appeared to draw the greater number of young men and women, while the steamboat ride, and walks and talks drew thousands that desired a more quiet way of enjoyment; the children enjoyed the swings, elevators, tramways and acrobatic sports. A smaller number of thinking people, office holders and office seekers listened to political and other addresses. Mr. Johnston, the late Principal of the Agricultural College, delivered the only address that was devoted to agriculture; it was the only suitable speech delivered for such an occasion, and he deserves great credit for his masterly address, though we must dissent from some of his statements. He spoke of the fertility of the Provinces and the great improvements made in the country. He dwelt on the problem at present occupying the attention of agriculturists in Canada—the competing in the markets of the world with France, the United States, Egypt, India, our own great Northwest and South America. He said the Province is producing at too great an expense. With regard to the cost of production, he took a farm of 150 acres sown in succession, for example. Land is worth say \$60 per acre; the implements and stock cost \$3,000. That amounts to \$12,000 capital invested, or \$80 for every acre. What is the cost of production for that acre? Including wages and labor, interest upon \$80 at 7½ per cent., the cost of seed and cattle, the cost of production is \$20 per acre. What is the return for that amount of expenditure? Thirty bushels of peas per acre, or 1½ tons of hay, or 40 or 50 bushels of oats per acre. You will find that your products will only bring \$18, an absolute loss per acre of \$2—a loss of \$150 on the one hundred and fifty acre farm.

We do not agree with Prof. Johnston in his calculation. Farmers are not such fools as to labor on for many years at a dead loss annually of \$200 on every 100-acre farm. We know farmers have accumulated wealth by agriculture. It were easy to point out the fallacies by which he arrives at his conclusions—the supposititious capital, the over-rated expenditure, the light produce, but we hope the question will be taken up by some of our agricultural readers. To