

THE following admirable account of the German system of Agriculture as it exists at the present time has appeared in *The Times* from the pen of the Rev. Barham Zincke, and is pregnant with lessons to our Nova Scotia farmers:—

I have now for some weeks been looking into the agriculture of the district around Dresden—on the west as far as Leipsic, and the north as far as Berlin—with the thought of seeing whether it be capable of throwing any light on the present condition of English agriculture. The facts I have observed, and the conclusions at which I have arrived, may perhaps at the present time interest some of your readers.

To understand the agricultural position here we must go back a little. Thirty years ago no part of the world was prepared for the abolition of our corn laws; our near neighbours, therefore, were naturally the first to avail themselves of the new opening and to profit by the change. One effect of those laws, with our limited agricultural area and dense population, had been to make our prices higher than those ruling elsewhere, and our neighbours, not having at the time any considerable surplus for supplying our wants, our demand, acting on their limited means of supply, greatly raised the price of agricultural produce in this part of the world, for even in districts that had no immediate dealings with us, prices went up to the new level. This, of course, raised the value of land. The wages, too, of labour were in consequence of these changes greatly enhanced. Everybody, therefore, connected with the land—that is to say, far the greater part of the population—came to have a great deal more money to spend than they had ever had before, and this gave to manufactures and trade an impulse they had never felt before. Every town began to expand, and the new houses were invariably and in a very conspicuous degree superior to those in the older part of the towns with which the predecessors of the newly enriched generation had been content. This recent outgrowth and improvement of the towns is not more noticeable here in Dresden than it is in Leipsic, Hanover, and almost everywhere else. This came of continental prices having been raised to the English level, less the cost of the transport of the commodities.

In the meanwhile, however, the greater world beyond the oceans, the United States—themselves as large as Europe—Canada, India, and even parts of Australia, were preparing to take part in the lucrative business of supplying the English market with the staff of life. Time was requisite for enabling them to do this. The wilderness had to be subdued; agricultural implements and machinery, suitable to the new requirements, to be

invented and supplied; and means of transport to be created. All this has now been effected, and American wheat can now be sold in Europe at 20 shillings a sack. This is a heavy blow to European agriculture. We are all sensible of the degree to which it is depressing English agriculture; and the questions I have been looking into lately are, How have the new conditions affected the agriculture of this part of Germany? and, Does the state of things here help us at all in understanding the state of things at home?

I find that, though the price of wheat is here reduced by the command America has obtained over the wheat markets of the world, agriculture is not in the suffering condition to which it has been reduced in England. The reasons of this are what it would be useful for us to know. My observations and inquiries have brought me to believe that the simplest expression of these reasons is that the land here is for the most part cultivated in farms of about 50 acres by their owners. I will endeavour to point out some of the most obvious and noteworthy consequences of these two facts. (1.) As the farmer and his family generally work on the farm there are about 1,000,000 land owners in Prussia) there is comparatively little expended in hired labour. To understand how this acts we must suppose farms in England averaging about 50 acres, and that on these 50-acre farms the owner and his family in most cases take the lead in work. On any thousand acres, then, there might be twenty families working with the will of owners, not for wages, but supported by what they could themselves produce. (2.) What hired labour is required is more efficient than hired labour is with us, because the labourer works with, generally lives with, and feels that he belongs to the same class as the farmer, and not to quite a different class made one in sentiment by the consciousness of all its members that they are all alike without property, all practically incapable of attaining to property, and that they all alike have nothing to fall back upon but the poor rate. (3.) The land is, I might almost say beyond comparison, kept cleaner here than it is in England. There are no hedges or ditches acting as nurseries for weeds and giving harbour to vermin. The heart of the owner is in his land, and every weed that appears upon the land is felt to be growing at the cost of the owner and of his family. (4.) The farmer has no rent to pay; that was paid once for all when the land was purchased, generally by some ancestor of the present owner. This, besides now annually securing to the farmer a higher reward for his labour, saves him in bad times from the anxieties and entanglements of having to borrow; advances, too, not being so

readily obtainable here as they are with us. (5.) I will only mention one more cause, and I regard it as a very effective one, of the strength of the agricultural system that obtains in this part of the Continent—I might, indeed, say over the greater part of the Continent. The land being held in small farms, a far greater variety of produce is extracted from it than is possible under our system. Potatoes are produced to an extent that surprises even non-agricultural Englishmen. The same may be said of fruit, vegetables, poultry, milk and butter. It would be interesting to know, if it could be ascertained, how many hundred—I might, indeed, say how many thousand—miles of fruit-trees decorate, and turn to good account, without the slightest protection, the margins of the roads and paths in this part of Germany. That this can be done is indicative of a very satisfactory trait in the character of the people, not only of this district, but of the Continent generally. Of course, it is easily explained by the general diffusion of property. In these small farms absolutely no space is wasted. In places where the surface appears to be pure sand and no agricultural plant could live, I have everywhere found plantations of Scotch fir and of birch, the only trees that could maintain themselves in such starving barrenness. It was necessary at first to set the young trees in deep furrows, that they might not be blown out of the ground, and that the rain that fell might be conducted to their roots. In all the plantations of this kind I saw, I noticed that every individual tree was carefully forested, and that no briars nor nettles or undergrowth of any kind were allowed to spring up on the decaying leaves, and so rob the plantation. On land not yet good enough for producing grain, though somewhat better than that appropriated to Scotch fir and birch, the yellow lupine is grown for forage.

What, then, I have seen here disposes me to think that in English agriculture grass will not take the place of tillage, the course that is now very generally recommended. On the contrary, with our limited area for supplying the wants of so large a population, it will be the plough, well used, and thoroughly preparing the land for a great variety of produce, and not the unbroken sward of nature, that will triumph eventually. With our more numerous and better markets, our incomparably better soil (I never saw a poorer soil under cultivation than a greater part of that between Dresden and Berlin), our moister climate—though this year, perhaps, that ought not to be insisted on—and our more widely diffused means of transport, there would, under the agricultural system of this part of Germany, be little or no agricultural suffering or depression in England. In these gloomy