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Omnium rerum, ex quibus aliquid acquiritur, nihil est agriculturâ melius, nihil uberius, nihil homine libero dignius.—Cicero: de Officiis, lib. I, cap. 42.

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PRIZE ESSAY BY DUNCAN CAMPBELL, ESQ.

“Tenai musam meditamur: avena.”

HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF AGRICULTURE IN NOVA SCOTIA.

It is a characteristic of the aborigines of all countries, where no progress has been made in the science of government, that they pay little attention to the cultivation of the soil. Man, in a savage condition, has an almost unconquerable aversion to the prosecution of steady labour within a limited sphere—a disposition which is strengthened by constant dread of attack by hostile neighbours, and by the fascination and excitement of the chase. So deeply rooted have roving habits become in the case of the aborigines of Nova Scotia, that they may be regarded as constitutional and hereditary, as proved by the fact of the comparatively rare instances where the aborigines apply themselves to agricultural work, even when the most favourable opportunities are presented for comfortable settlement. Hence, when the first European settlers landed in the Province, they found the country in the wild luxuriance of nature—without even the semblance of cultivation.

Among the first European settlers who initiated cultivation in Nova Scotia were two Frenchmen, Poudrin-court and Lescarbot. They sowed seed at Annapolis, which grew speedily and vigorously,

attesting the fertility of the soil in that region. But, passing from mere individual efforts, we come to the more systematic and extensive labours of the unfortunate Acadians, who took possession of the marsh and other flat lands of the counties of Hants, King's and Annapolis, and, by skilful dyking and tillage, produced results which have furnished themes for the descriptive powers in poetry and prose of Longfellow and the Abbe Reynal. Making all due allowance for the fervid imagination of the one, and the friendly and genial prejudices of the other, in the presentation of highly coloured descriptions of rural plenty and moral excellence, to which there are few practical parallels in the history of the race, there can be no doubt that these glowing representations have a substratum of truth, both as to the skill in husbandry, and the excellent moral and religious qualities of the Acadians. In estimating their merits as agriculturists, we must take into account the comparatively undeveloped condition of agricultural science at the time, and the very limited extent to which its principles were diffused. The success which attended their efforts proves their ability as husbandmen, in circumstances where peculiar skill and industry were required. The tidal waters were successfully fenced out by sea banks, which were protected at intervals with sluice doors by which the waters escaped at low tide. The process was substantially that by which the extensive fens of England have been reclaimed and brought

under a state of admirable cultivation. Here it may be mentioned that the whole sea coast of Lincolnshire and part of Norfolk, a line of at least 130 miles, consists of marsh lands lower than the tides, and is protected by barrier banks, besides which there are hundreds of miles of river embankments. The Acadians produced on their lands in great abundance wheat, oats, rye, barley, and potatoes. Well authenticated details as to their stock at the time of their expulsion, place beyond doubt the remarkable prosperity to which they had attained as an agricultural people.

Leaving these interesting settlers, a wide field opens before us. The County Histories which, through the liberality of Mr. T. B. Akins, have been written, and of which, many still in manuscript, have become the property of King's College, present interesting data to determine the extent to which the agriculture of the various counties has been affected by the different classes of emigrants who at first settled in them. The limits of this paper will not admit of a thorough discussion of this important phase of the subject, as bearing on the development of agriculture. A few general remarks on the topic must suffice.

The largest body of emigrants who arrived at one time was in 1749, at the settlement of Halifax, when Cornwallis landed with 2576 souls, of whom 1545 were males, including 500 seamen who had served in the Royal Navy. Of the remaining thousand a large proportion had been connected with the military profes-