

mark fetch, commonly, twice the price of Canadian butters. Do you ask what is the reason? The answer is plain—the northern nations of Europe take the greatest possible pains in preparing their produce for market; whilst, on the other hand, Canadians seem to be shamefully careless about theirs. In the different provinces of the Dominion, especially in Ontario, may be seen many well cultivated farms which would bear comparison with those of any other country, and which are frequently cited as models by the leading agricultural journals of the United States.

In the Province of Quebec a great improvement has been observed during the last few years. In many a parish may be pointed out farmers who display a laudable ambition in ameliorating their cultivation, and in improving upon the practice of their neighbours. Even among the, comparatively, well to do, men may be seen who have earned all they possess by their own industry, and their strict economy, examples followed, in no few instances, by the general mass of their friends, and by the surrounding farmers.

Sad as it is, truth demands that we should acknowledge that these men are not numerous. The greater part of the French-canadians have not yet entered upon the road of progress; the larger part of our soil produces not one third of its ancient returns; many a family is growing poorer and poorer, and, without a complete change in the system of cultivation, will be reduced to the dire necessity of surrendering to others the property that their ancestors bequeathed to them after having lived upon it in the enjoyment of all the necessaries of life from generation to generation.

It is easy to prove that, formerly, our land yielded from 25 to 40 bushels of wheat per acre. To day, the average is about 9 bushels; where the old fashion of growing wheat every second year without manure obtains, the yield is from 4 to 5 bushels—take the long settled parishes of the Saguenay, for instance—and all other crops have diminished in a most lamentable degree.

Why should this be? We do not hesitate to affirm that the cause lies in the almost general ignorance, or forgetfulness, of the elementary principles of the art of agriculture among the French-canadian population. Not that they are wanting in intelligence—no people excel them in practical good sense, in sound judgment, or in intellectual power, but, unfortunately, our rural population has never had a chance to acquire the true principles of the art of which we are treating, and it never will have the chance without a great and serious effort on the part of those whose duty it is to enlighten them.

Our ancestors were, for the most part, artisans, soldiers and sailors. To induce them to apply themselves to the cultivation of the soil great temptations, on the part of the authorities, were needed. To attach them more firmly to their farms laws were passed which prevented, as much as possible, any change in the ownership of the land, and retained, almost forcibly, the colonists in the country. No where do we read in history of any attempts made by individuals to improve the cultivation of the soil—it is to Louis XIV, and to Colbert, that all the ameliorations that were made are due, and, after their time, all these ameliorations becoming the business of no one were utterly lost sight of. (1)

The produce of the soil, after its first clearing, exceeded the dreams of avarice. The riches accumulated in the land since the creation sufficed for the wants of a luxuriant vegetation during several successive years; and, when the years of diminished yield, from 1830 to 1850, made their appearance, the

(1) It was to Louis XIV, that the early colonists owed the possession of the Canadian horse. Many fine animals were sent here from France, by Colbert, and sold to the best farmers on very easy terms. See "Histoire de la Colonie Française en Canada," by the Abbé Taillon.

farmers were more inclined to attribute them to atmospheric influence, or to unknown causes, than to believe that the gradual impoverishment of the soil had, as it always will, worked its dire revenge on their unhappy heads. Aye, even now, many a man imagines that the severity of the climate is the cause of his diminished crops; forgetting that the climate is the same that it was 200 years ago, but that two centuries of cultivation, without manure and without care have necessarily impoverished the land.

Unfortunately few people think of this; few cultivators practice the elementary principles of which we spoke at the beginning of this chapter. It is a sad, but a true confession to make—in the majority of our parishes, there is hardly one farm that has been manured from one end to the other since its original clearing.

Brushwood or stones are seen on every side covering part of the land in cultivation. The water furrowing is conducted in a manner that leaves much to be desired; as a general rule, no earnest effort has been made to clear away the weeds; the proper working of the land is neglected; the ploughing done carelessly and in haste; whilst the harrowing is a mere scratching of the surface, and cross ploughing, so useful in pulverising and cleaning the land, is almost unknown. So great is the quantity of ground ploughed, and so hastily is it done, that no one dreams of the possibility of working some few pieces a second time during the same year.

The Scarifier (grubber) and the Clod-crusher are unknown; the choice of good seed is the exception; for, ordinarily, any thin grain, even if it be mixed with rubbish of all sorts, is thought good enough. A few wretched beasts, fed solely on straw during the winter, are, usually, the only purveyors of manure; and much of the miserable droppings of these starved creatures is wasted in various ways. It is true, butter is made, but made with so little care, and the cows are so poor and weak, that it is rarely of the best quality, and the price corresponds with its badness. For one tub of good quality, fifty very inferior may be found at every market. Why should our Norman cousins sell their butter in England for twice the price we can get there for ours? Moreover, throughout the Province of Quebec, without paying the slightest attention to differences of soil, of climate, of demand, the farming is conducted in the same way, and the same grain is universally grown, at the risk of swamping the markets by too abundant a supply. Seldom is an attempt made to transform the product of the farm into meat, butter or cheese of the best quality which would suit the European markets. Thus, thus it is that our people are impoverishing their land, are impoverishing themselves.

Since the expiration of the Reciprocity treaty with the United States, it must be confessed that our markets are easily over-supplied, and that the distress of our farmers is in no slight measure due to the failure of our national industries. But these last named misfortunes have only aggravated an already critical state of things the principal cause of which, I repeat, lies in the almost universal ignorance among our French-canadian population of the elementary principles of a sound and profitable system of agriculture.

Subjoined is a dark and disagreeable picture, a picture doleful to the mind of any true lover of his country, but a picture whose truthfulness it would be difficult to find any one hardy enough to dispute.

Table of the production (average) of wheat per acre of different countries—in bushels of 64 lbs.

England,	29 bushels.
Prussia (Pomerania alone),	26 "
Belgium,	24 "
Holland,	19 "
France,	16½ "