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AGRICULTURE.

THE INEXHAUSTIBLE MINE OF WEALTH TO EVERY NATION.



WHEN, at any period of its history, a nation, from any cause, has arrived at such a state of commercial depression that thousands of her people are almost in a starving condition; when the doors of her foundries, machine shops, mills, and manufacturing establishments are closed in cities and towns in which the unemployed mechanics—whose daily food, and that of their wives and children, depend upon these being in operation—form the bulk of the population; when her industries

are suspended, her trade paralysed, and her markets glutted with over-manufactures and over-importations—and no one to purchase these—no foreign market to which she can export her manufactured goods, because almost every country is suffering from a like crisis in its affairs, or has guarded itself by a girdle of protective tariff—then her statesmen and her people must look around among themselves for a remedy, and both by legislative action and mutual co-operation, find out and adopt the surest and quickest method to bring about relief to her suffering population.

The causes that for the last four years have been gradually sapping the apparent prosperity of the country, were fully entered into in a leading article in last November's *MAGAZINE*, and may here be summed up in a few words, viz.—*over manufacturing, over importation, and over credit.**

When we speak of apparent prosperity, we mean that no country is in a positive prosperous condition which is suddenly elevated by any extraneous impetus or circulation of money among its people, which leads to

* NOTE.—The withdrawal of the troops from Canada was also a loss to the country of an annual expenditure of over a million pounds sterling.

speculation and extravagant habits, and leaves them, when the wave subsides, in a worse condition than before. When that condition arises as the result of a forced or hot-house growth, and not from a gradual increase of wealth arising from a healthy stimulant in her trade and in all her manufactories, caused by the normal demands of commerce and the moderate requisites of the people, a powerful reaction is sure to follow.

Before the construction of the Grand Trunk Railway, the bulk of our population were agriculturists; our manufactories were limited in extent, but sufficient, at the time, for the wants of the people, and their wants were then but few. But when our great railroad scheme was inaugurated and carried into effect, in connection with the Victoria Bridge, it brought, not thousands, but millions of dollars, all foreign capital, into the country, which was scattered broadcast through it, and when these great works were completed, Canada saw herself almost a century in advance of what she was six years before. Manufactories had started up in every city and town; towns sprung up in a few short years where the forest before had stood; and splendid stores and dwellings were erected, before which still stood the giant stumps of the primitive forest. From this state of transient prosperity there came a great reaction; many doubtless had, by prudence and judgment, acquired much wealth; but much distress existed among that portion of the population that had abandoned their agricultural pursuits for railway construction and other employments. Soon after this came the American civil war, which gave a fresh impetus to our declining industries. Not only then did our factories, to a very great extent, benefit by that unhappy strife, but thousands of Southerners, bringing with them what means they had saved from the wreck of their fortunes, sought refuge on our soil—not as paupers, but as benefactors to a much greater extent than was generally supposed; for, in the year 1867, after the war had ceased, there were 1,100 houses to let in the city of Montreal alone, which was caused by the return of Southerners to their own country. During that period thousands of the unemployed in our cities and towns found work waiting for them across the border, and were paid the highest rate of wages ever given before on this continent. Masons and bricklayers