

PRIZE ESSAY.

The Condition of the Canadian Farmer.

BY THOS. ELMES, PRINCETON.

The farmer is the connecting link between the Great Creator and all mankind. The great law was laid down at the beginning that life should only continue by the cultivation of the soil, and consequent toil of the husbandman. All pursuits in life sink into insignificance compared with this.

This is the high position in which the farmer is placed; but to come more directly to the farmers of our own country, we find, perhaps, they are more favorably situated than in any other part of the world. Here we have the richest of soils, where the farmer can produce all that is conducive to the sustenance, comfort and well-being of the human race. Around us are thrown the greatest bodies of fresh water upon the face of the globe, in whose lap we lie, safely shielded from tornadoes, pestilential diseases and famine. Our bread is certain, and water is sure.

But we also find the farmer surrounded by enemies from nearly all other classes of society, who form themselves into rings, associations, and combinations, which is a direct injury to the farmer. This he passively allows, not because of his weakness or inability, but simply on account of his docility. The farmer is born a king, but made a slave. He is as the lion, who, after securing his hard-earned prey, allows the mice and rats to run over him, gnaw off his mane, obliterate all traces of his nobility, blind his eyes with dust, and then rob him of his food, leaving him hungry, bare and desolate. The farmer is deluded by the oratory of the politician, swindled by the oily tongue of the merchant and agent, robbed by railway and other combinations, burdened and oppressed by direct and indirect taxation, until endurance has long since ceased to be a virtue.

Were all this on account of his weakness or inability to withstand and resist, there might be grounds for sympathy, but we find he is a power that it would be impossible to resist if the agriculturists were united and made to stand for their rights. But we find they are isolated and disorganized, and take no interest in each other's welfare; consequently are governed, deluded, swindled, robbed and made mere serfs of the soil, and lion providers for all other classes of society; in fact, as has been quaintly said:—

Lives of farmers oft' remind us
Honest toil don't stand a chance,
The more we toil we have behind us
Bigger patches on our pants.

Let us look a moment at a very few of the schemes adopted to bleed and delude him. First comes the politician, usually a trained lawyer from some of the leading cities, with his oratorical wind, Grit or Tory, who is as ignorant of the resources of the country or its requirements, or how money is honestly made, as the farmer's dog. But if he has plenty of wind and brass, he is sure to be elected. He then marches to Parliament, where he is immediately surrounded by corporations, associations, monopolies and combinations, ever ready with their bribes or political support, and, as a natural consequence, their desires are granted. Then immediately, of course, the farmer is compelled by Act of Parliament to pay heavy bonuses to railways, and after building

the roads, obliged to pay exorbitant rates for the transportation of his produce. Then comes monopolies, associations, rings, etc., who combine to make him pay exorbitant prices for whatever he may be compelled to purchase, and reduce as low as possible all he has to sell, by rates, commissions and other schemes. For instance, does a farmer wish to purchase say a machine of any kind, manufacturers have their associations, which control the price of their productions. After this there is from 20 to 50 per cent. added for agents' fees; in fact, farmers of Ontario alone are supporting a vast army of agents of different kinds, paying them large salaries, providing them with every luxury, simply to sell them, in many instances, something they do not require, or by their oily tongues delude them to their ruin by some fraudulent scheme.

Then in relation to whatever produce he has to sell, he has nothing whatever to say in regard to price, but must simply take whatever is left after all commissions, rates, storage, cartage, etc., have been deducted, or has been decided to be left, by associations and rings.

We live in an age of rapid advancement, which also has its disadvantages to the Canadian farmer. Steamships are building and running to every part of the world. The railway engine is rushing into the interior of every country, flooding the markets of the world with products of the Canadian and American farmer. This competition is likely to continue, and, indeed, increase. But the Canadian farmer has nothing to fear, as he has a great advantage in situation, being placed in the very centre of the best markets of the world, has a rich soil and fine climate, and has the great thoroughfares of the world's commerce at his very door.

But with all these advantages, still he lacks one thing, viz., a thorough knowledge of his calling. He is expected to extract enormously from his soil, and still retain its fertility.

What has he to fear from the vast products of India, Russia or any other country, which are but second class now, and are sure to deteriorate? What has he to fear from Australia, America, Mexico, South America, &c., if he produces a high grade of stock at the least possible cost, as the best will always secure ready sale at highest prices, while the low, poor grades from these countries must always be a drug? But this over-production has its bright side; it has affected all the products of every clime, and what matters it if the farmer receive 50c. or \$1 for his wheat or products if for his 50c. he receives \$1 worth of tea, sugar, cotton or manufactured goods? But if we have a reckless spendthrift Government, overwhelming the country in debt and are obliged to meet all importations as they enter the country and impose a duty of 25 to 60 percent, it puts a different face upon it, and the farmer suffers severely from over-production. We find the farmers form a majority of the population of this country, and as regards value of property held by them, all other business sinks into insignificance. Therefore, the farmer should control, to a very large extent, the government of the country. But we find the minority rule, and he is practically left without a voice. Our national indebtedness is rapidly increasing, which simply means the lands of this country are mortgaged to that extent. Capitalists and men with large salaries and incomes can avoid fair taxation, but the assessor is sure to find the full value of the farmers' property, consequently it pays more than its share of direct taxation; he also suffers heavier than any other class of society from indirect taxation.

Does the farmer suffer all this because he lacks intelligence? I say emphatically no. It is granted on all sides the farm has produced the greatest intellects of any country. The pure air, the health-giving breezes, the pure water gushing from the hillside, the fresh upturned earth, all combine to produce a sound body and strong intellect; and as the farmer walks abroad in the great laboratory of nature learning daily from the actual and real spread before him, unfolding their unsearchable grandeur and beauty, we find his mind involuntarily expanding and his intellect strengthening.

The present and future peace and prosperity of our country lies directly in the hands of the farmer; to him all eyes must turn in this day of adversity; but he must awake to the position into which he has fallen by his neglect to use his intellect and educate himself in his calling, unite and organize to annihilate all robbers and spoliators of his and his country's rights, extricate himself from the political mire which has almost swallowed him and his country, make all spoliators of whatever stripe tremble, exalt the heads of honesty, industry and economy; let all political dissensions which have divided in the past be forgotten, and only return when they shall no longer be an attack upon the very existence and prosperity of the country, and he has then nothing to fear. The future is bright, and peace, prosperity and advancement are sure to follow.

Mr. Henry Thompson, M.R.C.V.S., says in his "Remarks on Chemical Manures," recently published:—"On light, sandy lands, clover-sick soils, and lands where potatoes are growing to a great extent, kainit, or potash, are almost invaluable, while their effects are simply marvellous. A dressing has almost the same effect as a dressing of common salt to ward off disease in stock, while it acts beneficially as a manurial agent as well." Kainit is said to be the same natural solvent of silica, an element of great moment in the growth and support of straw. We had many illustrations of this last season; for, on old lands long under the plow, which were timeously and judiciously dressed with this salt, the quantity of straw was not only abundant, but, what was still of greater importance, it had stamina enough to bear its own weight and its crowning fruit of golden ears of grain."

Mr. J. J. Thomas, veteran and still watchful observer of pomological movements, gives, through the Country Gentleman, a suggestive reminder about old fruits that stay, despite the many and persistent efforts to crowd them out with new varieties: "Baldwin among apples still heads the list in several Eastern States; every attempt for fifty years to supersede it has proved a failure; Rhode Island Greening closely follows it. At the West, Ben Davis, a fruit of poor flavor, has a corresponding position. Bartlett among pears (a foreigner) has no equal for popularity in early autumn. Early Crawford holds a similar place with peaches, although hardly equal in delicacy of flavor to the finest white-flesh varieties. Lombard heads the productive plums. Attempts were made for nearly twenty years to displace Wilson strawberry, and it is only of late years that in some localities Crescent and Downing have taken its place, while the popularity of Sharpless is only local. The Concord grape still holds its position."