

English Letter, No. 12.

[FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.]

The past month has not been one of much interest in events specially interesting to your readers.

Apropos of Irish affairs, the extent to which the Green Isle is suffering through the untoward season last year, is shown by the statistics of agriculture just issued by the Registrar-General, which exhibit the startling fact that the money value of crops of Ireland last year was £10,014,788, or more than fifty millions of dollars less than in 1878; and £8,847,385 less than the annual average of the last ten years.

The English farmer is indeed to be pitied. Not only is he fearfully handicapped by heavy rents, taxes, and other burthens in his competition with trans-atlantic competitors; not only is he half ruined by disastrously poor crops, but now the rot is playing frightful havoc among his sheep, especially in the Midland districts. On some farms it amounts to complete annihilation. One farmer lost 600 right off; and many others count their losses by hundreds of pounds. The effect on the lambing season, now close at hand, will be most marked. However, "it is an ill wind that blows nobody good," and such of your Canadian farmers as have a good head of sheep, and prepare them judiciously for this market, ought to have a flourishing time.

As regards the cattle trade, prices are sure to improve as the season advances. Unfortunately for the interests of the trade, the exporters from Canada are pursuing the same system as last year, and by competing with each other for space on board the steamships to an excessive degree, are doing their best to place the bulk of the profit to be obtained in the hands of the steamship owners. This is the more vexatious because the steamship owners are able to run their vessels far more cheaply now than at any previous time. For instance, the Cunard steamer *Britannia*, the best vessel of her time, in 1840 obtained a speed of 8½ knots per hour and expended 48.3 cwt. of coal per ton of cargo obtained; whereas the *S. S. Britannic*, in 1879 ran at the rate of 15½ knots per hour, and expended only 4.3 cwt. of coal per ton of cargo delivered. Ought not the owners of cargo to have some share in this enormous saving of time and fuel?

An article in a leading agricultural journal in this country upon the export of pedigree cattle to the Australian Colonies, inspired by a letter from a gentleman who has recently visited the principal herds in those far off dependencies, reveals the fact that it is and will be necessary for Australians to import their pedigree stock, for the improvement of the native herds, &c., from time to time from the northern portions of the empire. It has been found from long experience that in the hotter climates shorthorns lose their hair, and those "handling" qualities so peculiarly prominent in this most noted breed. Canadians, therefore, have something to pride themselves upon in this fact, that whereas the southern colonies have to import their pedigree stock, owing to climatic disadvantages, the English breeders have found it to their advantage, in many cases, to import pedigree stock from the Dominion. In further acknowledgment of your great advantage in this respect, the Hon. David A. Wells, writing in the *North American Review*, some time ago, states of your Province, that it raises the finest cattle, with qualities specially desirable to make good the deterioration of stock in other sections.

It is with no little pleasure that I see it announced that the United States authorities have withdrawn the prohibition against the entry of

Canadian stock into the States; for owing to similar climatic conditions to those of the Australian Colonies, many of the States are obliged to have similar recouping draughts of our superior herds. Our pedigree stock raisers, who have hitherto enjoyed no mean trade in the United States, have every reason to be hopeful, for assuredly they will have as good and a more extended market in the States as Great Britain has in the Australian Colonies.

I have to note that Herefords appear to be rapidly gaining ground in the United States. Mr. H. C. Burleigh, of Fairfield Centre, Maine, has just made what is stated to be the most important selection of Hereford cattle, in point of numbers, from the leading herds of England, which has ever been made for shipment across the Atlantic. His selections are from the herds of Her Majesty the Queen and Messrs. Carwardine, P. Turner, W. S. Powell, T. Duckham, A. Rogers, W. Price, A. P. Turner, B. Rogers, &c., &c.

The English farmers in various districts are bestirring themselves actively in many localities with the view of obtaining a larger representation in Parliament; and of pressing on land tenure and other reforms, which are daily becoming more necessary if their position is to be at all retrieved.

Agricultural Societies.

THEIR ADVANTAGES.—THEIR DEFECTS.

Perhaps no institution has done more in the past for the advancement and progress of agriculture in our midst than the annual gatherings of the various agricultural societies. Here farmers living miles apart meet in friendly intercourse—here they vie with each other in the production of the best. At these exhibitions for the first time many a farmer has witnessed what may be done in the production of the best beef, mutton, pork, etc., etc.; and seeing what is accomplished by others, he has gone home to follow the example. At these gatherings erroneous opinion and foolish prejudices have been removed, and stimulus created by these meetings has tended to develop, to a very large extent, the agricultural resources of our country. Their object ought to be the gathering together of the largest possible number to compare their productions under the most favorable circumstances. We think a fair question for discussion just now is, "How shall this be best accomplished?" Shall we depend on the annual Provincial Exhibition for these advantages, and if not, what shall be supplemented? It will be admitted by all that we cannot reach the masses by the Provincial Exhibition, as comparatively few from any single locality will find their way so great a distance. But, if it be true that, in proportion to the larger number, and excellence of the exhibits, so is the advantage gained (and this, we think, cannot be denied), then it follows that the larger the territory included in these exhibitions—provided they are within the reach of the classes sought to be benefited—the greater will be the benefit. We have now in existence county and township organizations. To accomplish the greatest results is it necessary to continue to hold an annual county exhibition, to be followed by a smaller one in each municipality? We are decidedly of the opinion that the greater overshadows the lesser, and, while in early days, without any railway communication, without good roads, without the easy carriage now so common, it might have been necessary to hold these smaller shows, there is now no longer any necessity, except in very exceptional cases, for their continuance. Of course if the object be to pay a few dollars to the principal farmers and mechanics in each municipality, in the way of prizes, then continue—but we

have always understood this was but an incentive to accomplish the higher ends above. Again, if no real good is to be gained, the continuance of these gatherings becomes a real evil. They must be held at a time of year when labor on the farm means wealth—when the time ought to be occupied in preparing the soil for the following crops and in marketing that already on hand. Those who exhibit must spend ten or twelve days in preparation. All the farm-hands expect to go, and all work must be stopped, if not for the following day. Again, it is always more or less expensive attending these exhibitions, quite as much so attending a small as a large one. Surely no good can be gained by gazing at the same articles a second time within a few days, only on a smaller scale. In view of all this we hold that the gathering of the people annually to attend these smaller exhibitions is but a waste of time and money and not any longer to be tolerated. We think the time has come when, "their usefulness being gone," the Legislature should be asked to discontinue the amount annually granted for their support. Carrying out the same idea, we are of opinion that in some localities good results would be seen from the union of two or more counties in the holding of a District Exhibition; at all events let us have fewer exhibitions and better ones. In the increasing number of these gatherings the interest is divided. Let us have more concentration and union of effort, and we feel sure that good only will be the result.

Strawberries.

There is no fruit more successful in such a diversity of soil and climate as the strawberry, still many who have plenty of land deprive themselves of them. Many do not plant them from the idea that they are too much trouble, while in reality they can be grown with no more trouble each year than so many potatoes. If the ground is rich enough to grow good potatoes or corn, it will produce good strawberries, but if not in good order apply well rotted compost. Coarse manures should not be used, especially in light soils. The ground should be worked deep as soon as dry enough. Any soil will produce strawberries, provided it is sufficiently dry. The lighter soils are more easily cultivated, and will produce the earliest and best flavored fruit, while the heavy soils produce larger specimens. They should be set out in the spring as soon as the land can be prepared, and should be littered over after planting with well rotted manure, which enriches the soil, keeps it moist, and prevents it from becoming hard. Old beds may be treated in the same way with good results. The method of cultivating the vines in rows three feet apart is generally considered the most satisfactory.

There were shipped of last season's crop, from Kings Co., N. S., 237,004 bushels of potatoes. Pretty good for Nova Scotia.

It is proposed to start a Sugar Beet Factory in Nova Scotia. Capitalists are prepared to invest \$4,000 in the enterprise, and a gentleman is expected from France early this spring to commence operations. When farmers of Kings Co., Hants and Annapolis decide to grow a sufficient quantity of roots, the work will, it is said, commence.

Canada is rapidly progressing in her live stock trade with the mother country. In 1877 the exportation from the port of Montreal from the opening to the close of navigation in the St. Lawrence river, was: of cattle, 6,940; sheep, 9,509; swine, 430; in 1878, 18,665 cattle; 41,250 sheep; 2,078 swine; in 1879, cattle, 24,832; sheep 78,792; swine, 4,745. At this season of the year Canadian cattle are shipped from Halifax, but we have not the figures of this winter's trade.