

tion of time and circumstance. English writers, living themselves in the heart of an intense and glorious nationality, do not know what a dependency is. That independence should have come to the Americans in the form of a violent rupture with the Mother Country, was a great calamity to both parties, but especially to the Americans, since a revolutionary bias was thus given to American politics and the nation lost the influence, at once ennobling and tempering, of a historic past. That a similar calamity may never befall Canada is the earnest desire of all British Canadians; and, in order to extinguish the only conceivable cause of it, many pray that the meddling, whether official or covert, of Downing Street and its representatives with Canadian affairs and destinies in the interest of the British aristocracy, may some day cease.

The paper by the late Governor-General in the *Contemporary Review* proves to be not, as some had inferred from the telegraphic summary, a warning to Ontario about the boundary question, or, as others surmised, a rebuke to the centrifugal tendencies of Quebec, but a review of the Canadian Constitution, with reference to the relation between the Dominion and the Provinces, written for the satisfaction of some persons who desired his Lordship's opinion on the expediency of applying Canadian Home Rule to Ireland. "Sir," Boswell is made to say in a travesty of his Life of Johnson, "would you advise a man to wear green spectacles if they hurt his eyes?" "No sir," the sage is made to reply, "I should dissuade him." Statesmen might as well provide the Irish people with Canadian snowshoes as extend to them the Canadian Constitution. There is nothing in the political world, past or present, at all resembling the relations, geographical, historical, religious and social, of Ireland to Great Britain, and of Ulster to the rest of Ireland. Neither in the relation of the Dominion to the Imperial Government, nor in that of the Provinces to the Dominion, is any help towards the solution of the Irish problem to be found. Lord Lorne is right in saying that there has been a constant tendency, under Confederation, to the increase of the central power: he is wrong if he thinks that this is certainly conducive to the stability of the Federal system. The stability of the Federal system depends not on the stability of the central authority but on the freedom from dangerous tension which attends the secure enjoyment of local liberties. It was not defect of central authority, but fear lest the central authority should be exerted for the abolition of Slavery, that led to the Civil War in the United States. The danger of Canadian Confederation at this moment is the abuse by Quebec of her practical possession of the central power. As becomes an ex-Governor-General, his Lordship talks a good deal of gentle optimism, and shows that a British nobleman enthroned in Rideau Hall sees Canada from a balloon. In a balloon indeed he would have no courtiers to mislead him about the sentiments of the people. A BYSTANDER.

MANITOBAN FARMING.

THERE is a tendency in human nature to invest the distant and the new with unreal charms. When it is discovered that an over-estimate has thus been formed, mankind are apt to go to the opposite extreme, so that what was at first exaggerated is at length belittled. The public mind has gone through both these processes in regard to Manitoba and the North-West. It is gradually regaining that equilibrium of common-sense, which was disturbed alike by the speculative craze, and by the depression that followed in its wake.

A level prairie country, possessing an exceptionally fertile soil, without stones or trees to obstruct the progress of the plough, could not but be attractive to a race of husbandmen who had wrestled with the primeval forest, and conquered the difficulties attendant on its conversion into a fruitful field. But wherever there are great advantages, we may look for corresponding disadvantages, and the great North-West is no exception to this rule. It may be questioned whether, after all, scarcity of timber be not a greater evil than superabundance of it. The two items of shelter and fuel are very important in practical life. In the older Canadian provinces the earlier settlers found themselves amply provided with building materials, with which, at very trifling cost, a comfortable habitation could be quickly constructed. When the house was built, there was a plethora of fuel with which to warm it, close to the door. On the prairies of the North-West sod is the only material out of which the settler can construct a home-made dwelling. It is at best but a poor apology for a house. Compared with it, the average log-shanty of the settler in the eastern provinces was a mansion, if not a palace. The scarcity of fuel becomes a serious drawback when six months of winter have to be counted on, and winter, too, in downright earnest, the thermometer being most of the time below zero, and often a good way below.

Manitoba must come to the same test as Ontario, and be judged according to its ability to sustain a population. The future of the great North-West mainly depends on the development of its agricultural resources. A large amount of capital has been invested there, which will prove profitable or the reverse in proportion to the yield obtained from the land. That, at the present time, bountiful crops can be raised in Manitoba with comparatively little labour, is undeniable. How long this state of things will continue is a question of the greatest interest to the settlers themselves, and to the Dominion at large. If the usual course of impoverishment is pursued, farming in the North-West will not be profitable very long. Under the most moderate scale of freight tariffs, the cost of transporting surplus produce to the European market must make a considerable reduction in the farmer's gains. But it is not probable that freights will be moderate. There will be no competition to keep them down for many years to come, and it is the invariable practice of railway monopolies to exact all the tariff that the traffic will bear. Once let the crop average in the North-West go down to that of older countries at the east, and the farmers of that region will find themselves hopelessly distanced in the agricultural race.

The great mass of settlers in the North-West are improvident and reckless in regard to the resources of the soil. They are fully persuaded that those resources are inexhaustible. It is passing strange that this delusion should prevail as it does, with the lessons of other prairie countries written on the great blackboard of the soil, in view of all the world. Illinois, Iowa, and even the newer state of Minnesota—prairie countries like Manitoba, and with a soil equally rich at the outset—have deteriorated to such an extent, that the wheat-crop is only about one-third what it was at first. In a recent report of the United States Department of Agriculture, the editor, in an article headed "Wheat Culture Ruinous," asks, "Is proof of impoverishment wanted?" and replies, "One witness only is needed—the soil itself. First, thirty bushels per acre is the boast of the farmer; then the yield drops to twenty-five; to twenty; to fifteen; and, finally, to ten and eight. Minnesota claimed twenty-two bushels average a few years ago—some of her enthusiastic friends made it twenty-seven—but she will scarcely average this year twelve, and will never again make twenty-two under her present system of farming." The same experience awaits Manitoba and the North-West, if, as now seems probable, a similar system of exhaustive farming is pursued. It is therefore important that the voice of warning be uplifted against a style of husbandry which would, before very long, reduce the Garden of Eden itself to a barren wilderness.

There is no necessity and no excuse for exhaustive farming. The plea of ignorance even cannot be urged, because light on this subject has blazed forth all over the civilized world. It has been demonstrated times without number, that successive croppings without manure, are the short and sure road to poverty, both of the land and the land-owner; while by due attention to rotation of crops, clovering, and stock-feeding, the fertility of the soil may not only be maintained, but increased for all coming time. Nature is inexorable. Obey her laws, and there will be prosperity; violate them, and retribution is inevitable.

At this point, scarcity of timber comes in again as a serious drawback to Manitoban farming. Stock requires shelter, and shelter is costly. The settler who finds difficulty in housing his family, can hardly be expected to provide stabling for stock. But it must be done, if stock are to be kept, and Manitoba is no exception to the rule; "no stock, no manure; no manure, no crops." For a time, necessity, which knows no laws, will compel the farmers of the North-West to forego stock-keeping, but ere long, a sterner necessity will demand it, and they must either accept the situation or quit the field. The sooner they admit this to themselves the better. It is a stupid folly to be day-dreaming, as many are, that the soil of Manitoba is *sui generis*, and has been gifted by nature with inexhaustible fertility. No such soil has ever yet been discovered on earth, and it is safe to say it never will be.

It would be a fine thing if the Canadian North-West could be made exceptional in its agricultural history, so as to escape the soil-deterioration and crop-diminution which have marked the careers of the other countries of the new world. This is perhaps too much to hope for; but, considering all that we have been told of the superior intelligence and high farming qualifications of the great bulk of the settlers who have gone thither, it is surely not unreasonable to expect that there will be, at least, an improvement in this respect, and that some evidence will be given of wisdom being learned from the mistakes of others. The prodigal son who goes to a far country and wastes his substance in riotous farming, may be a grade better in moral character than the historical one who wasted his substance in riotous living, but he will come to want all the same, and richly deserves to do so. No fatted calf or sumptuous feast will be found awaiting his repentance and return to reason.

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