

IMMIGRATION AND THE EXODUS.

The exodus from the Province of Quebec, we are told, is once more assuming large proportions, but there is no good reason why we should be discouraged over that fact. There always has been and always will be a certain ebb and flow of population across the international boundary line. What we have had to complain of in the past was that it was mostly flow, with very little ebb. This cannot be said of the people who are now leaving Quebec, however, for it is altogether probable that many of those who are now going out have already been in the United States. During 1893-94, when factories were closing all over the United States and the labor market was glutted, there was a marked backwash of population to Quebec. Previous to that period a traveller through the Province was astonished at the number of empty farmhouses whose occupants had gone to the United States. The farms were not abandoned, but, having ceased to be profitable, the owners had gone away, hoping at some future time to return and cultivate their fields. This hope was realized in a great many instances during 1893 and subsequent years, and on every road in Quebec fires were relighted on hearths that had been long cold. A great many of the returning travellers had no farms to go to, their sole object being to make the old Province their home until renewed prosperity in the States should restore them to employment. The present exodus is no doubt swelled by these. There is good ground for hope, however, that the great proportion of those who returned to the farm will still find it to their interest to stay there. Both the Federal and Local Governments have directed a great deal of attention to the improvement of agriculture in Quebec, and one result of their efforts has been to establish a flourishing dairying industry. It is a business well suited to a Province rich in grass lands and with an industrious, economical and painstaking population. We may be sure, then, that many who returned will find their farms sufficiently remunerative to make it unnecessary to seek fortune elsewhere.

In any event there will always be a large outflow of population in Quebec. The natural increase in that Province is so great that it quite transcends the supply of desirable agricultural land. The result is that the young people look to the cities as the next best place to earn a livelihood. They crowd into Montreal, Quebec, Hull, Sherbrooke, St. John's and St. Hyacinthe, but there are ten pairs of hands for every job to be done, and the consequence is that the overflow finds its way to the factories of New England. Thousands of their countrymen and countrywomen are already there, and the newcomers find themselves quite at home. This movement is bound to go on, and all that can be done is to take whatever steps can be suggested to at least lessen it. An accession to the industries of Quebec is one of the most promising methods of arresting it, and with the multiplication of such industries as the cotton mill at Montmorency, which manufactures for export exclusively, considerable will be done in this way. The protectionist plan is to create industries by high taxation, but even if the home market could be wholly delivered into the hands of Canadian manufacturers it would not afford employment for more than a fraction of the exuberant population of that Province. If they are to be employed it must be on products for which large markets can be found abroad.

The natural increase of the home market will undoubtedly help, however, and this is one of the aspects in which we see the supreme importance of the growth of the west. The high taxation plan fails, because it places a burden on the farm, injuring a calling in which there must be prosperity if the country is to advance at all. Making farming profitable and the rest will follow. The attempt to build up industries without that as a basis is bound to be futile and disastrous. To endeavor to keep the young people of the Province of Quebec at home by building up industries at the expense of the farming population would end in increasing the exodus. The rational process is to increase the number of people engaged in the fundamental industries, in agriculture, mining, fishing and lumbering. The tollers who have to supply their wants will increase in

healthy proportion, and the industries that arise in that way will always be on a sound, substantial business basis. These seem to be the principles that guide our present immigration policy. No one contradicts the proposition that what this country wants more than anything else is population, and it is a proposition that stands the most searching examination. Every large project that has ever been undertaken is based on that as a fundamental axiom. The enormous expenditure on canals, the pushing of a railway across the continent through an unpeopled wilderness, the multiplication of branch lines, have all had that purpose in view. We are at the present moment at the unearliest stage of the process. We have incurred the burdens, but are only at the beginning of the realization of the objects. What will happen when results begin to come in is plain enough. Increased population will diminish the national individual burdens and reduce rates of transportation, so that the economically habitable radius will tend continually to grow greater. The vaster the volume of traffic to and fro the more cheaply can the service be rendered. This boon increased population will give, so that the situation is that each settler added to the population makes it measurably easier for those who are already here to make their homes and earn their livelihood in the Dominion. General assent is given to that self-evident proposition, which makes it all the more remarkable that when a batch of new settlers arrive on our shores we immediately become acutely critical, and the spirit in which they are received can scarcely be called enthusiastic. Is it because some of them are foreigners, speak a different tongue and desire to live together? These are but temporary drawbacks. The west is decidedly assimilative, and a generation will have largely obliterated these dividing lines. In the meantime the industry of the settlers will have brought many acres under the plough, the product of their labors will have increased the wealth and trade of the country and added to the revenues of the railways and steamboats, and their wants, few though they may be at first, will bring business to the factory and to the merchant.

But the immigration to the west this season and last has not been wholly of this description. It is probable that the outflow to the United States in the east has been more than matched by the inflow from the United States in the west. This could never have been said before in our history, and it is a new development which will, we believe, continue and grow. It is the natural result of changed conditions. The United States has little more virgin soil to offer the settler, so that the man looking for that has now on this continent to turn his eyes to **Canada**. Our immigration department is awake to the situation, and a migration whose extent in the future can scarcely be predicted has already begun.