ADDRESS
OF
Hon. DANIEL NEEDHAM,
OF HARTFORD, VT.,
DELIVERED AT THE
Wool Growers' Convention,
AT RUTLAND,
September 9th, 1862.

PRINTED AT THE REQUEST OF THE CONVENTION, BY THE VERMONT
STATE AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY.

L. J. McINDOE, PRINTER, WINDSOR, VT.

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ADDRESS.

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN OF THE CONVENTION :

At a meeting of the Board of Directors of our State Society, held at Bellows Falls in February last, it was voted, That the Secretary be requested to call a Wool Growers' Convention, to be held at Rutland, on the first day of our Annual Fair. In obedience to that vote, I have called a Convention, to be held at this place, and you, gentlemen, are here in response to that call.

At the time that this vote was passed, I am not aware that any particular subject for discussion, in connection with the wool growing interest, was contemplated. But it was fully understood, that the growing of Wool and the production of Sheep, were interests of great importance to our people, and that a free discussion of the various topics which a Convention might suggest, would not be without profit to our farming community.

It is a matter of congratulation that the people of our country are able, not only to clothe themselves well, but with neatness and taste. And that we can not only afford to use all the wool produced in the country, but are able to be consumers of large quantities of imported wools, both in the raw and manufactured states.

The value of wool imported into the United States in 1861, was nearly five millions of dollars; while the value of imported manufactured woolen goods, was more than twenty-eight millions of dollars; and this amount, enormous as it is, was nearly ten millions of dollars less than the importations of 1860.

Taking the last three years as a basis of calculation, we have had an annual importation of from thirty-five to forty-five millions of pounds of manufactured and unmanufactured wool — being

the product, at the least calculation, of thirteen million of sheep.

The questions very naturally arise, Why not produce the most of this wool at home? Why go abroad for one of our leading staples which, on an average, yields to the producer a larger profit than any other article which is the fruit of agricultural labor in this latitude?

That there can be no danger of producing too many sheep, that there need be the least fear of anything more than a temporary glutting of the wool market, figures easily demonstrate.

The annual increase of population in the United States, requires the wool from more than three million of sheep.

With an annual deficiency of wool of from forty to fifty million of pounds, we certainly need have no fears of glutting our domestic market.

When we consider that there is no animal in which there is so little waste or loss; no animal that will thrive by so little attention and labor; no animal so perfectly adapted to our mountain pastures—that both the necessities and the luxuries of man are furnished by this little animal, whose skin and wool clothe and whose flesh feeds us; we may well come to the conclusion, that the breeding of sheep, if properly attended to, is the most economical mode, experience has as yet taught us, of converting the vegetation of the farm to money.

The number of sheep kept in the State of Vermont, according to the census of 1850, was a little more than one million, while the product of wool was three million four hundred thousand pounds, or a little more than three pounds to a head. There can be little doubt that the great care which has been taken by our farmers, within the last few years, to improve their breeds, has greatly increased the quantity of wool to a sheep, and if the census of 1860 does not disclose a much *larger number of sheep* in the State, we have little doubt but it will increase the quantity of wool to *three and a half, if not four pounds to a sheep*.

The number of sheep in the United States in 1850, was twenty-one million seven hundred and twenty-three thousand, producing an aggregate of fifty-two millions of pounds, at the rate of two and half pounds per head.

The fact that in many sections of our own country sheep can be wintered almost as cheaply as they can be summered, while with us, in our more northern latitude, one dollar and twenty-five cents is the least expense of wintering a sheep, must satisfy us that we must either be good shepherds and improve our wool and increase its quantity, or give up competition with more southerly latitudes.

There can be little doubt but that climate, locality and soil, have a most important influence in the value of wool—rendering some lands peculiarly adapted to the improvement and production of certain breeds.

But much as these may have to do with the improvement of the sheep and the wool, I am inclined to the belief that the care and attention bestowed upon the flock may be of still greater value.

Statistics clearly demonstrate, that it is only by constant care and attention that the breed of sheep has been sustained and improved in the older countries. The best flock of sheep, by carelessness and neglect, will soon deteriorate to mediocrity and become to the owner a burden of expense, rather than a source of income.

The first introduction of Merino sheep into Russia, was made in 1803, when one hundred Merino rams, of the best quality, were taken from Spain, at an expense of two hundred dollars each. The exportation of Merino wool from that empire, in 1830, amounted to one million four hundred thousand pounds; and in the course of fourteen years, increased to more than thirty million pounds. But the great desire of the Russian farmers to increase their number of sheep, rather than the quality of their wool, has led to a large falling off in the amount and value of the Russian Merino. This wool, like many other kinds of imported wool, has lost its reputation, through the negligence of the producer in its preparation, or in his overweening desire to get rich from his flocks.

To the sheep producer, next to the important matter of care of the flock, is the exercise of good judgment in crossing. This requires unremitting and constant attention; for experience has taught us, here as elsewhere, that even the most valuable breeds lose a portion of their good qualities, if the necessary crossings are not seasonably undertaken.

In Silecia and Moravia these precautions have long been observed; precautions which to an ordinary observer, would appear trivial and useless. Among the most important features of this care, may be noticed the separation of flocks into families, and the weighing and registering of the fleeces from generation to generation, and the moment deterioration is detected, the occasion is studied and a change made. This, in those countries, is not confined to small flocks, but extends to flocks of ten and twenty thousand head.

In our own country we are beginning to be particular; in Vermont we have flocks of sheep which are as closely watched as any of the Silecian or Moravian flocks.

Not long since I made a visit to Mr. Rybald, in Delaware City, in the State of Delaware, and, after looking over his magnificent South-downs, which in small flocks of fifteen and twenty, were depastured in separate folds under the constant vigilance of a shepherd, I was interested to find oil paintings of his leading bucks hung up in the halls and rooms of his elegant house. Each buck had his name, and the picture was true to the life. By having the picture of the sire preserved, he could compare it from generation to generation with the progeny; so that the picture had its use far above that of a mere fancy sketch.

One of the most difficult questions in political economy, is to determine to what extent aid and protection shall be furnished by the Government to the producer and manufacturer. Between the wool grower and the manufacturer there has always been a contention with regard to this great question. The manufacturer claiming that upon the raw material there should be only a light duty, sufficient to pay the expenses of the Government; while the producer claims that it should be sufficiently large to amount to protection and encouragement.

In 1861 the average price of foreign wool was eleven and one-third cents a pound. Could it be supposed for a moment that we could compete with such a price as this? South America, of the entire importations of last year, furnished five millions of pounds, and of this the larger part came from Buenos Ayres. In Buenos Ayres the land is not fenced. There is scarcely any value attached

to it. They have no winters there. No hay crop to harvest against the storms and colds, the frozen ground and the deep covering of snow of our temperate zone. A single shepherd takes care of three thousand sheep, and there is little expense in the production of the wool beyond that of shearing.

Here then, is this wool, produced on the immense plains of South America, with no labor attending its production, coming directly into competition with the wool produced by the hard labor and constant vigilance of the farmers of our country. And shall not the Government protect the interests of its own subjects, when such a fearful competition is assailing them?

That we can produce every variety of wool, from the very finest grades, there can be no doubt. America can and should make herself independent of the world. It is a well known fact, that a manufacturer in Maine, manufactured from Silecian wool produced in that State, a piece of cloth which, for fineness and quality, took the first prize at the World's Fair in London.

The old argument that in the protection of the manufacturer, you build up a consuming class for the agricultural products of the country, and that the additional market thereby furnished for the producer, compensates him for allowing foreign competition, has long since exploded. All our interests go hand in hand. Deal a blow at one, and in the end it will reach them all. We want, in order to have a perfectly prosperous country, such as I hope it is our destiny yet to become, that there shall be such a diversity in the pursuits of the people, that each may consume the products of the other.

To satisfy this demand of the manufacturer, only a few years since, we negotiated a reciprocity treaty with the Canadas, which enabled New England to import all her bread and meat from the British Provinces duty free—giving to the Canadian farmer all the markets of the United States, to the exclusion of our own farmers, who have paid more for their land and who pay more than double for their labor.

The duties on products imported, under this treaty, will reach more than thirty millions a year since its adoption—and what have we in return? why, the privilege of sending beef, wheat and pota-

toes to Canada. And this is all! And this year, and last, and the year before that, our humane Government has thrown into the pockets of Victoria's subjects, in the British Provinces, thirty million of dollars per year; all of which, I am justified in saying, has been wrung from the sweat and labor of the yeomanry of our country.

The protection of manufactured woollens to a greater extent than you protect the production of the raw material, would result in the same way.

We want equal protection to all the great interests of the country, and it is due to the farmers of the great West, as well as our own, that this reciprocity treaty, which enables the farmer in the British Provinces to get the products of his labor to a United States market, at a less cost than the expense of transportation from Chicago, should be repealed.

The uniform policy of the country has been to make the duties a little lower upon imported wool than upon manufactured woollens. We only ask for ourselves that which we cheerfully accord to others. The manufacturer and producer must stand side by side; for what protects the one, equally interests the other. If the farmer gets a generously remunerative price for his wool, he is a freer buyer of the manufacturer—dressing himself and his family in better clothes, and buying more of them;—but pinch him down to the mere cost of production, and you drive him from the market as a buyer of anything but mere necessities, and he will be hardly able to buy them. Who then will buy the goods of the manufacturer? Why, the wheels of the great mill would stop, and there would be no market, and the thrift of Lowell and Nashua, and all our large manufacturing villages, which have grown directly and immediately from our farmers, would depart like the morning dew. I have only alluded to this subject for the purpose of showing our reciprocal duties and obligations.

There is, undeniably, connected with the soil of our mountain pastures, that peculiarity which enables us to breed better sheep, with the same care, than any other State in the Union. And I am free to say, that while the sheep of Illinois, and Texas, and California, deteriorate in quality, from year to year, and the sheep

raisers of those States are obliged to come to Vermont for bucks to improve their flocks, our sheep, with comparatively little care, are constantly growing better. And, if the time should ever come when we shall fail to compete with the States of the West and South West in the production of wool, the time is far in the future when any of those States can compete with us in the production of breeding sheep.

The present condition of the country makes the prospect of the wool market, for two or three years to come, very encouraging. The loss of the great Southern staple must be supplied by wool. And the amount of cotton to be produced for the next three years, even should the rebellion be subdued and we in the meantime again become a happy family of States, which may God in his mercy grant, will be much short of the needed supply. There was no surplus of wool last year, and on the first of January, 1862, there were less than ten thousand bales in the New York market.

The clip of wool for 1862 has already passed into the hands of the manufacturers; so there can be no fears of raising wool for two years to come.

A very difficult question to decide and one which is beginning to meet a good degree of discussion, is the manner in which the wool should be prepared for the market. The California wool is sent to the New York market as is most of the Texas wool in an unwashed condition. Our imported wools from South America and Russia and Australia, come in the same form.

Then too, there is the question of health to the sheep. There can be little doubt but that sheep from colds taken by washing often sicken and die. This is a serious matter. Could we reach some plan, by which there could be a uniformity of action on the part of producers—and could we make manufacturers believe that it was for their true interest to buy and pay for wool in accordance with its real value, we should have attained a goal greatly to be desired by all honest men.

The wool buyer goes into a neighborhood and buys all the wool at the same price, while the wool of one man, on account of the sheep having been thoroughly washed, is worth ten cents a pound

more than that of another who washed the wool on the back of the sheep, but allowed all the dirt to lodge in the belly.

Very little if any discrimination is made by the buyer; and the conscientious man—and it is fair to presume he is in the majority, suffers, from the fact that the dirty wool of the dishonest man must be bought by the manufacturer at a living price and he must sell his for the same.

Why cannot the manufacturer see his true interest in encouraging integrity on the part of the farmer! Why can he not see that so long as he pays the conscientious wool grower no more for his wool than the miserable knave who with three pounds of wool sells three pounds of dirt, he encourages a fraud which in the end injures himself more than any one else.

I know there is the argument that if you do not wash, some producers will leave twice the amount of dirt on their fleeces that others do. There is a chance for fraud here as elsewhere. And I can see no way to obviate all these opportunities and inducements for fraud, except for the manufacturer to pay in exact proportion to the value of the purchased wool.

The wonderful improvement in the breed of sheep in our own country, is worthy of remark. Twenty years ago, and five and six pound fleeces were of rare production. In the whole State of Vermont there was not a buck in 1840 that would shear twelve pounds of wool;—and now, there are many breeders in the State who will show you this years' clips from bucks, which weigh from twenty to twenty-five pounds. And, I am bold to say, this great weight is neither all dirt or all oil; but to at least fifty per cent. clear, genuine wool.

The wool grower who still clings to his native stock, when such bucks are in the market all around him, is among the men who still believe in the wrought iron plough and the little miserable cattle that our early English ancestry in their poverty and necessities, transmitted to their New England posterity.

With the farmer as well as the artisan and the mechanic, the last twenty years have been twenty years of change and improvement. Experience has lent to enterprise a helping hand, and having given full and fair opportunities to French merino, Silesian,

Saxony and Spanish merino sheep, public opinion, with almost universal consent, has awarded to the latter class, the meed of merit as profitable fine wool sheep. And when to-day you interrogate the sheep breeder, whether interested or not, in the other varieties, which is the most profitable sheep to breed from, he will, with frankness tell you, the Spanish merino.

The Spanish merino has been fully tested; and it has been found to possess those peculiarities which render it pre-eminently adapted to our soil and climate.

The average cost of keeping sheep in the several States is a matter of much consequence to us, and suggests the importance of keeping up our best breeds with constant improvement or a fair prospect of meeting a competition from other States, which will be ruinous to the production of Vermont wool.

In Illinois, the cost of keeping is sixty cents; in Iowa, seventy-five cents; in Michigan, eighty-three cents; in Virginia, sixty cents; in New Jersey, sixty cents; in Maine, one dollar; in Pennsylvania, fifty cents; in California, seventy-five, and in Vermont, one dollar and thirty. The average increase of sheep in Vermont is also less than that of the other States I have mentioned. The increase of Ohio being eighty per cent; Georgia, ninety-nine; New Jersey, eighty; Maine, ninety, and Vermont but seventy.

Still we lead the nation in the production of stock sheep,—*and this is our forte*,—and may we so guard and protect it, that we may never lose our superiority in this respect.

It has been well said, that before any one commences the rearing of a breed of sheep, he must make up his mind what shape and quality he wishes to obtain; and that afterward, he must steadily pursue that object! If he pursues this course, there is little doubt in his obtaining the point he seeks; but the large experience which sheep raisers have had, may save the novice many a wild and expensive experiment.

Should you ask a sheep breeder of experience in Vermont, why western and south-western flocks so rapidly deteriorated; why the sheep raiser in Illinois and Texas and California a few years after having procured the best stock from Vermont, was obliged to re-

turn and buy anew, to keep his flock from entire ruin, he would reply, that it was because the western and south-western breeders were so careless and inattentive to their crossings,—that they mixed Silesian and French merino and Spanish merino together,—and in this way lost the strong family likeness of the Spanish merino, with its most valuable qualities; and that therefore, they were obliged to return to Vermont every few years, and buy again of the careful breeder in the Green Mountain State.

Should you ask the Vermont breeder, whose bucks are sold off every year readily, and to a quick market for from two to five hundred dollars each, and whose ewes would average from twenty-five to fifty dollars at a ready sale, why his sheep were constantly improving, he would reply, because he was so careful to preserve the blood, keeping it from taint from year to year, and studying with care the formation of limb as well as the texture of wool.

The answer may be in neither of these. It may be in both. For my own part, I think the carelessness of the Western farmers has much to do with the depreciation; but the soil the climate, the exposure has also much. While to the care and attention of the Vermont farmer I would give great credit, yet to our sweet mountain pastures, to our excellent quality of well cured hay, to our warm and well ventilated barns, I would also attribute much.

I cannot feel that I have touched lightly, even, upon the many important questions worthy of the consideration of a Wool Growers' Convention, without alluding for a moment to the importance of such a meeting as this.

The depressing influences which immediately succeeded the breaking out of the Southern rebellion, affected the wool grower to as great an extent, as any other class of men. And amid the general distress and alarm, the anxiety of our farmers to dispose of their clips in the summer of 1861, caused them to make a sacrifice of from ten to thirty per cent. below the cost of production.

Could we have had a Wool Growers' Convention previous to that sale, or could we have given to the public, over the signature of some careful statistician, the condition of the wool market at that time, every farmer could have judged for himself the chances of a sale, and the result would have been, that the State of Ver-

mont would have realized at least a hundred thousand dollars,—which through the influence of the wool panic, passed from the pockets of the farmers into the hands of speculators.

Wool Growers' Associations have been established in several of the States, and in the State of California with very great success. According to the Report of the Wool Growers' Association of that State, there was saved in California last year, more than five hundred thousand dollars through its instrumentality in diffusing information, and enabling the California wool growers to reach a ready market.

That an Association of this kind connected or disconnected with our State Agricultural Society, if properly managed, would be productive of great good, I have no doubt. It would furnish a medium through which all our farmers could be reached, and by making the subject of wool a specialty, would elicit by discussion and thought, valuable information which the more tardy means of reaching would place at a far distant day.

I have in these hastily prepared remarks, given you a brief word upon a few of the many great subjects connected with our interests. There are many subjects of equal importance, to which I have not even alluded. A Convention like this, if conducted in the right manner, is the proper place to draw from the men of large and long experience, the information so greatly desired by us all. And I doubt not, in the course of a few years, the influences growing out of such meetings as this was designed to be, would do much toward bringing our sheep to that high standard which men who have made a life study of this little animal, know its capacity to reach.

I know that there is a feeling which is inclined to regard this meeting, as well as the meeting of our State Agricultural Society, as out of place at this time ; that there are those who would divert our minds entirely from the pursuits of peace and absorb them in those of war.

I can see as clearly as any one the dark cloud that hangs over the nation ; I can hear its distant charges of electric power that bear down the strong arm and intelligent brow to smite the dust ;

to an extent, I can see its appalling magnitude, threatening to sweep not only a nation from existence, but the great light of civilization from the world. I can feel the trembling earth beneath me, as the dark wave of cloud after cloud gathers to increase the intensity of the storm, and need only intuition to teach me, that each successive wave is designed to sweep a civilized nation back to barbarism and a freedom-loving world to hopeless slavery.

But to us, who do not go to engage in the deadly conflict, is left the high and important mission of clothing and feeding those who do. And I know of no way in which we can serve our country better unless she call us to the field, than by studying the means of enriching and improving it. For wealth and civilization are twin sisters, whose united influence as the result of intelligent industry, has made the nation of the Stars and Stripes a city set upon a hill, giving light and comfort to the down-trodden and oppressed of all lands.

And I rejoice to-day, that although we have sent to the battle-field twelve hundred thousand intelligent and noble men whose names shall form in history a galaxy great as fame can write it, to fight the great battle of liberty, we have still left those to carry on these great works of peace,—and should thrice twelve hundred thousand more follow in their steps, to aid in this great contest, I hope there will be old and decrepid men enough still left to carry on these great institutions which have done so much toward improving and enriching our country; and if the time should come, when the men shall become exhausted, may the women and children join hands in keeping in motion this machinery of civilization, which their husbands, fathers, and lovers have established.

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