

AGRICULTURAL IMPROVEMENT

BY THE EDUCATION OF THOSE WHO ARE
ENGAGED IN IT AS A PROFESSION,

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&c. &c. &c.

LETTER III.

I shall commence this number with an extract from an excellent work, *Wilderspin's Early Discipline*:—"A strange idea is entertained by many, that education unfits persons for labour, and renders them dissatisfied with their condition in life. But what would be said, were any of the powers of the body in a certain case disused? Suppose a man were to place a bandage over his right eye—to tie up one of his hands—or to attach a ponderous weight to one of his legs—and, when asked the cause, were to reply: that the glance of that eye might make him covetous—that his hand might pick his neighbour's pocket—or that his feet might carry him into evil company—might it not be fairly replied, that his members were given to use, and not to abuse—that their abuse is no argument against their use, and that this suspension of their action was just as contrary to the wise and benevolent purpose of the CREATOR, as their wrong and guilty application? And does this reasoning fail when applied to the mind? Is not the unemployed mental faculties as opposed to the advantage of the individual as the unused physical power? Can the difference between mind and matter overturn the extraordinary principles of reasoning and of morals? Besides, how is man to be prepared for the duties he has to discharge? By mere attention to his body? Impossible. The mind must be enlightened and disciplined; and if this be neglected, the man rises but little in character above the beasts that perish, and is wholly unprepared for that state to which he ought to have aspired." In these ideas I most cordially concur, and I steadfastly believe that there is no means of teaching men to know themselves, what they are capable of doing, what they ought to do, and how they can best accomplish what they have to do, than by a useful education, constantly exercised during life, at every fitting opportunity, by good reading. If this be not the surest means to establish right principles in man—to instruct him in his duty—to make him industrious in his calling—ambitious to provide for himself, and all those who have claims on his protection, as much of reasonable enjoyment as possible—in fact, to teach him to do all that he may have to do, better than he could have done, without education, it is in vain that we should go to school, or waste our time at "Book-learning."

THE CREATOR AND GIVER OF ALL GOOD, has endowed man with faculties suitable to his condition, and though these faculties may not be given in equal measure to all, or in some cases, from accidental circumstances, may not be so full or perfect in one

as in another, yet, with, I believe, few exceptions, the faculties are capable of being improved by a proper education, to suit our circumstances, and enable every man who exercise them properly, to fill his station in society, with credit to himself, and if not in all cases, with advantage to the community, at least, without injury to them. We know by experience, that all men do not possess equal natural abilities, and cannot attain to the same degree of knowledge by education, but most men may acquire what is necessary to enable him to perform all his duties with satisfaction to himself and others.

It has often been observed to me, that education was by no means necessary to a farmer who followed the plough, and had to join constantly in all the other labours of agriculture; that it did not require much reading to instruct men to plough, to dig, to sow, to plant, or harvest. It is true, an uneducated man may perform all these works as a machine might do, but he is not capable, in all cases, and under every circumstance, of understanding the most proper and judicious mode of executing these works, and of doing all that ought to be done, so that the most favourable results shall be obtained at the least possible expense of labour or risk to the safety of the crops. A farmer who employs labourers, and is himself practically educated and qualified to direct the labour of others in every department of agriculture to the best advantage, may have his work done in the most perfect manner, notwithstanding that there should not be one of those he employed who understood the alphabet. He might direct and move them as he would a machine, though they should be perfectly ignorant of every thing connected with the art of agriculture, except the knowledge of labour which they had learned by imitation. But, let us suppose, that the person who has to direct the labour of others on his farm is uneducated, and not even well instructed in the practice of agriculture—has never had an opportunity of reading, or hearing of the valuable information that has been published on the improvement of the art of agriculture, the breeding and management of stock, and various other matters connected with his profession. How can such a man be qualified to guide himself, or direct others to profit or advantage? *It cannot be, nor never has been.*

After a good deal of observation, and some experience, in the Old Country and in Canada, I am fully persuaded that it is necessary to understand perfectly the theory and practice of agriculture, in order to practice the art properly, and at the same time, with the advantage it is capable of. A man of capital, though he should be ignorant of the practical part of farming, may, by employing qualified farm-servants, have all the work executed in the most scientific style; but I have reason to believe that this kind of farming is not the most profitable in this, or in any other country. I look upon farming as a regular profession that

requires to be understood theoretically and practically. and those who will practice it without being duly qualified, may expect that success that a man would have in any other profession, of the theory and practice of which he was wholly ignorant. There may be exceptions to this general rule, but I believe "they are few and far between."

Good management in husbandry, is that which will produce annually, from a given quantity of land, the greatest or most valuable product, at the least expense, and at the same time not exhaust the soil. This is what I understand to be profitable and successful farming, both for the individual and for the whole community. A farmer, under such circumstances, will have it in his power, with all those who are dependant on him, to enjoy a larger portion of the comforts and conveniences of life, than those who raise only a scanty produce; and being able to purchase and consume more of the necessities and conveniences of life, he contributes towards the profits of other classes not agricultural. A farmer who can thus successfully practice his art, may well consider himself at the head of all other professions, *in usefulness in every way*, because he furnishes the means by which alone commerce and every other business is carried on. Were farmers only to produce what was necessary for the support of their own class, no other trade or profession could exist in the world. Is it desirable then, that every agriculturist should be capable of practicing his profession in the most perfect and profitable manner, so that land and stock shall yield the largest returns, that judicious cultivation and management will give? If this is "devoutly to be wished," the only way to accomplish it is, by encouraging and promoting useful education among the agricultural class by every possible means.

By reading the many excellent works on agriculture, that are published in Britain, France, the Netherlands, and other places, farmers will be able, with their practical experience, to attain a useful knowledge of their profession. And by reading other good books, they will make themselves acquainted with men and things, of other countries, their manners and habits; and thus they will obtain by degrees a perfect knowledge of what they ought to do, in every circumstance, and how to do it. I know it is by such means they will acquire a taste for improved agriculture, and for the reasonable enjoyments of life, without which, improvement will never advance one step. Persons may feel very well content with their situation and circumstances, and want none of the actual necessities of existence. But the question is, could their situation and circumstances be improved, and what are considered the means of happiness augmented, by a better and more perfect knowledge of their profession, which they might attain? I would almost say, that it was *sinful* for persons so circumstanced to remain contented, if they were sensible of the fact, that their condition was