

# FARMER'S ADVOCATE

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## EDITORIAL.

### The Proposed Nova Scotia Agricultural College.

According to the Act passed at the recent session of the Nova Scotia Legislature, the Government is authorized to purchase a site for an agricultural college and experimental farm and for ordinary farming operations, and to erect the necessary buildings, at a cost not to exceed \$20,000. It is to be equipped and conducted so as to impart a theoretical and practical education in agriculture, horticulture, and arboriculture. Power is conferred to appoint not less than two professors, one of whom shall be principal, who in turn will have power to appoint a farm instructor and manager, under the direction of the Provincial Secretary for Agriculture (now Mr. Chipman), and employ such further assistants as may be necessary for properly carrying on the farm operations and experiments. With the establishment of this institution the grant towards the Provincial School of Horticulture will cease. The location of the college is left to the discretion of the Government, and up to the present time, we understand, no steps have been taken.

### The Demand for Agricultural Education.

Throughout all English-speaking countries a reviving of intelligent public interest in agriculture is apparent. This has manifested itself in various ways, particularly in the last few years, in the demand for agricultural education. Recognizing the trend of events, we find the authorities in Ontario, Manitoba and the Maritime Provinces of Canada introducing the subject of agriculture in the public school course, while in some of the States, such as New York and Indiana, it is being dealt with in the form of what is called "nature teaching."

The United States Secretary of Agriculture, Hon. James Wilson, however, points out in his annual report, a copy of which we have just received, that there is still nothing being done in most of the common schools of the States to cultivate a taste for and lead the mind to enquire into and store up facts regarding nature so that the young farmer may be directed into the path that leads to education concerning his future life work. He points out that the great prerequisite is the education of the teacher, and he suggests the special training of teachers at the State Teachers Institutes and normal schools. He points out that the greatest difficulties in the way will be to overcome the conservatism of local boards managing country schools, and the securing of competent teachers. But we are satisfied that once the need for and advantage of such teaching in the public schools is fully realized by the people generally, as it already is by those who have taken careful stock of the educational signs and tendencies of the times, these obstacles will gradually pass away.

We notice by the *Otago Witness*, one of the leading journals of New Zealand, that the question of agricultural education is coming to the front in that distant part of the British Empire, the demand being made for a really good and practical text-book on agriculture, to be made a compulsory item in the syllabus of all the country schools. The writer, however, insists that it be intelligently taught, as a mere perfunctory cramming of technical terms would be of little use and would put it on the same footing with many subjects already taught. He argues that it is the duty of the State to give the rising generation of farmers the opportunity to acquire such knowledge of the principles of agriculture as will improve their chances of success.

We are glad to observe that Ireland, long distracted with a variety of troublesome questions, is now devoting more attention to the means necessary to raise the standard of Irish agriculture to a

higher plane. The following from the *Farmer's Gazette*, which is itself doing a grand work in spreading agricultural knowledge, fairly represents what is taking shape in the minds of the more intelligent men of that country on the subject:

"It is to the rising generations in our schools that we look for the great changes which we foresee as possible in our Irish agricultural systems. The foundations upon which the improved agricultural practices of the future must be built up can only be laid in our schools, and in order to enable these foundations to be properly laid, our teachers must be properly trained. It is, to a large extent, because of the lack of proper training under which the majority of our teachers have labored in the past that agricultural education has come to be regarded with so much disfavor in many parts of the country. For this, of course, the teachers are not to blame—the fault is not theirs so much as that of the system under which they are obliged to work. Will it be believed that in the great Central Training College in Dublin, at which such a large percentage of our young teachers are trained from year to year, the "Professor" responsible for the agricultural portion of the College curriculum is a gentleman who has been for years a teacher in the City of Belfast, and who has had absolutely no practical experience of the subject which he teaches! This sort of thing must be done away with, and an up-to-date system of agricultural education adopted, if we are to have any 'alteration' in the 'spirit' with which offers of instruction by the Board of National Education are received by practical farmers throughout the country."

We must congratulate the *Farmer's Gazette*, which is one of the most progressive of Irish periodicals, upon the fact that it has thus resolutely taken up the cudgels in so good a cause, and we trust it will not lay them down until the great reform for which it is battling has been brought about.

### Do Sheep Degenerate in Canada?

The discussion on another page in this issue, by a valued contributor, of the alleged deterioration of sheep in this country, and the necessity and possibility of originating and fixing the type of a Canadian breed of sheep more suitable to the country and its climate than the English breeds, opens a subject which admits of difference of opinion at least, if not total disagreement. If we admit the premises of our correspondent that the English breeds of sheep do degenerate in Canada, that the necessity and the fact of repeated importations is proof of this and is the main object of importation, then there is little room for argument; but, for our own part, we are not by any means prepared to admit that proposition, and are of the opinion that importations are made so largely as they are more especially as an enterprise and an advertisement, knowing as we all do the undue importance that is attached to the fact of importation as a means of improvement of our flocks as compared with selection from the best of home-bred animals. While many of the best that can be bought, and many of the prizewinners at the leading shows, are imported, it is also true that many are imported which are not qualified to improve the flocks of this country, and of which it can truly be said, "They left their country for their country's good."

The statement that "the immediate effects of our climate on imported animals are reduced vigor and failing flesh" can only apply in the case of those animals which have been forced by high feeding and the use of artificial food into an abnormal state of fatness for show purposes and are turned out to shift for themselves on arrival in this country, on scanty fare and without any grain feeding to supplement, it may be, a bare pasture. On the other hand, we have seen field-kept English sheep imported in thin condition improve rapidly on short fresh pasture when landed here, and continue to improve and develop as long as they were afforded reasonably good fare.

The success which Canadian-bred sheep, in the hands of skillful handlers, have met with in the

showing in competition with imported sheep is a pretty good answer to the question of degeneration, not infrequently winning as they have the highest honors. In the great competition at the World's Columbian Exhibition, in several of the classes of long-wools, and middle-wools as well, the most and the best of the prizes were won by Canadian-bred sheep.

The writer has known cases of long-wool rams bred in Canada being forced by high feeding to weigh 400 pounds and up to 450 pounds each, ewes to 350 to 375 pounds at maturity, and yearling rams at eighteen months to 350 pounds. Of course, it may be said that these had the benefit of the blood of immediate imported ancestors. True, they had on the sire's side, but their maternal ancestry traced through many generations of Canadian-bred animals—in some cases for thirty to forty years; and while they proved a great success from the point of view of show sheep, there is no evident reason why they might not have reached as good results if they had been bred from selected Canadian-bred sires of the same breed. Take the Leicesters, the first of the English breeds imported to Canada, as an example. It is the deliberate opinion of competent judges that sheep of this breed, forty years from the original importation, shown at our exhibitions are superior to those shown at the leading English shows. The best prizes in this class at the Toronto Industrial last year went to sheep tracing to importations forty years back, and in the first prize pen was a ewe which weighed 385 pounds, on the word of her owner, a reliable man, and the same ewe, though fitted for show purposes for four years, had in the last three years produced nine lambs. In the breeding of this ewe, none but Canadian-bred sires had been used directly. It would be difficult in this case to find evidence of degeneration. The fact of importation amounts to little in the building up of an ideal flock if the imported animals used are not characterized by individual excellence in constitution, quality, and conformation. As a matter of fact, many inferior rams have been imported, and high prices have been paid for them simply because they were imported, and with the hope that the fact of having used an imported sire would enhance the value of the offspring and improve the character of the flock; but in many such cases the result has proved very disappointing, and the breeder has been convinced that it would have been wiser to have made a suitable selection from a home-bred flock.

It appears to us that Mr. McCaig makes entirely too much of the effects produced by the difference in climatic conditions, to the disadvantage of Canada. We are fully persuaded, from personal observation, that as a rule sheep suffer vastly more from exposure to cold and wet in England than in Canada, from the fact that here they are almost invariably provided with shelter from storms during the winter season, while in England the great bulk of the sheep have to lie out in all sorts of weather without any shelter, which means at times drenched skins and a wet blanket of wool in winter for weeks at a stretch; and when folded on turnips, standing in mud nearly knee deep, without a dry place to lie down, and subject to changes of temperature occasionally so sharp that sometimes long-wooled sheep have been found by the shepherd in the morning fastened to the ground by the frost, requiring to be released by chopping them out with an axe; and who has not read harrowing tales of snow storms so violent in Scotland and in parts of England as to cover whole flocks completely out of sight, so that they have only been discovered by the instinct of the faithful collie. On the other hand, we have experienced summer weather in England nearly as hot as that of some of our most extreme July days.

It seems to us a stretch of imagination to assume that sheep under average conditions suffer in