

## AGRICULTURE—PAST AND PRESENT.

LECTURE DELIVERED BY PROF. BUCKLAND, BEFORE THE TORONTO MECHANICS' INSTITUTE,  
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In attempting to sketch the progress of Agriculture from the earliest periods of authentic history to the present times, the usual limits assigned to a simple discourse will allow me to glance only at a few prominent points which have distinguished, or characterized this invaluable art at its successive stages of development.

I make no apology for bringing before the attention of a city audience, a pursuit that is purely rural; for it will be at once admitted by all who are capable of rightly estimating the value of the subject, that it has a powerful claim on the earnest consideration of all classes of the community. In a country like this, so peculiarly adapted to agricultural pursuits, in which, perhaps, not less than three-fourths of our entire population are directly engaged, and on the extension and improvement of which, the increase and prosperity of our towns and cities mainly depend, the ancient, and indispensable, and truly noble art of husbandry, can never want zealous advocates, sincere admirers, and earnest and enlightened cultivators. The first and most pressing physical want of man is food, and the only means he has of obtaining it with certainty and in abundance, is by a judicious cultivation of the soil. The history of this art indeed is no other than the history of civilization, and its various epochs constitute the several steps of the world's progress in wealth and knowledge, happiness and liberty.

I have no intention of treating this subject in a dry and technical manner; much that would be interesting to the practical cultivator must necessarily be omitted as unsuitable to the occasion, and the time allotted to this lecture, will not allow me to descend into particulars.

First, I may remark that Agriculture, which is the art of cultivating the ground in order to raise food for the sustentation of man, and the animals he domesticates, must necessarily be the most ancient pursuit. Its first records are found in the inspired writings of the Book of Books,—the Holy Bible. The only authentic account we have of the origin of our race clearly indicates the intimate connection that subsists between man and the earth, out of the dust of which he was created. Our first parents were placed in a garden "to dress it, and to keep it;"—thereby indicating that the elements of both vegetable and animal life were treasured up in the soil. True it is that they lost their original innocency by transgression, and forfeited the elevated joys and privileges of paradise, and thereby

"Brought death into the world  
With all our woe;"—

incurring a condition which the posterity of Adam has continued to inherit;—"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it was thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." A little further on the sacred historian informs us that the first offspring of the first human pair betook themselves to the pursuits of husbandry;—"Abel was a keeper (that is feeder) of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground." Here we have evidence in the very infancy of the race, of the practice of the two great departments of Agriculture,—pas-