

# THE MARITIME PATRON,

AND ORGAN OF THE

## Maritime Provincial Grange—Patrons of Husbandry.

"In Essentials Unity. In Non-essentials Liberty. In All Things Charity."

[All communications intended for this column should be sent to the editor of the Maritime Patron, EDWIN S. CREEK, M. D., Newport.]

The question—What have agricultural education, experiment stations, or science, done for practical agriculture? may be best answered by inquiring—Wherein does the farming of to-day differ from that of a time prior to the advent of science as its instructor?

To this latter inquiry there can be but one reply, and that is—in the use of improved implements and tools. The inventor and the manufacturer of agricultural implements and tools have had infinitely greater influence over and have benefitted practical agriculture to an incomparable greater degree than the scientist, the experimenter, and the educationist.

Agricultural societies, farmers' clubs, agricultural literature, and lastly, those best of all schools for farmers, our Granges, are urging and aiding us, not only to regain lost ground, but to press on towards perfection in our profession. We write "to regain lost ground" advisedly, and in view of the fact, that in these Provinces we are only commencing to employ methods that the farmers of older countries have for generations regarded as being essential to successful farming. Thorough draining, the use of lime; soiling and summer foddering of stock; the cultivation of pastures; the improvement of stock by judicious selection for definite purposes; proper care and economy in the use of manures; and other methods and practical wisdom, the result of accumulated observation and experience, which "old country farmers" have invented; our fathers, the early settlers of this country, having no opportunities for practising, forgot, or failed to transmit the heritage of wisdom, or of skill. They failed not, however, to transmit to their offspring the mulish conservatism and the inertia which have been inimical to progress.

Has nothing worth while been accomplished for practical agriculture by agricultural schools or colleges, experiment stations, and the labors of those who have devoted their lives to the many problems upon the solution of which depends the solution of the great problem of economy of agricultural production?

Liebig suggested the treatment of bones and mineral phosphates with sulphuric acid, by which their insoluble phosphate of lime is converted into soluble superphosphate, which is immediately available as plant food; but whether the superphosphate manufacturers and dealers, or the farmers, have been most benefitted by this contribution of science to agriculture, is an open question which we cannot now discuss.

We have good reason to hope and to believe, that science, as the result of long-continued, carefully and patiently conducted and expensive analyses and experiments, is in a position to tell the farmer how to mix albumenoids, carbohydrates, and fat-producing elements, so as to insure the best results in feeding with the greatest economy. Science has familiarized the farmer with the three prime essential elements of plant food, nitrogen, phosphoric acid and potash. It has observed and arranged facts concerning the various animal and vegetable pests that share, if they do not take, the farmers' profits, and has suggested remedies and preventatives. It has explained the reasons of, and for what we have learned and practiced empirically; but as yet science has exercised scarcely an appreciable influence upon practical farming; unquestionably, the *practical* results are as nothing to the outlay.

That there is great need of, and room for improvement in farming, every farmer will admit, and this is shown by a comparison of average yields or results with what is known to be possible, or what this or that neighbor has done by thorough cultivation, adequate manuring, or feeding, or other means available for all alike.

If every acre of wheat, potatoes, and meadow, in this Province, next year, were, by the use of any means, made to yield 100 pounds more than would have been raised without the use of that means; and were every sheep made to yield one pound more of wool, and every cow one pound more butter per week, by the employment of any means, than would be got without the use of that means; the means employed should be credited with having added to the wealth of the Province not less than half a million of dollars.

That more thorough cultivation and a little extra care and feed, or value of feed, more judiciously administered, would give this result, every farmer will admit. Every farmer who has read the little text book on the Principles of Agriculture, recommended for use in the district schools of this Province, will also admit, that even if the teachings of that primer were practised on every farm, the result would be the addition of several millions of dollars worth of farm products to the average yield.

This much of good, even this small measure of agricultural education, may, and should do, any and every year.

We feel it to be our duty, while dealing with this question, to record our opinion, an opinion which we believe will be approved by a large majority of farmers, that it is not from the laboratory! at science will bring us a practical solution of the great problem of economy of agricultural production.

It has been hoped, that with the knowledge obtained by chemical analyses of a given field of animal bones and tissues, and of plants, agricultural chemistry would be able to tell the farmer how to compose a fertilizer or a feed that would exactly supply deficiencies and requirements. The chemist has, indeed, as has already been said, *co-operated* in giving us the

science of nutritive ratios, but the precise instructions hoped for can never be obtained from the chemist, because animal and vegetable tissues and organs, unlike test tubes and retorts, have, or are subject to affinities and reactions peculiar to the vital economy, and such as are variable and undeterminable in character.

Chemistry can and should protect farmers from the fraudulent practices of manufacturers, by ascertaining the chemical composition of fertilizers or feeds, and thus save them many thousands of dollars that are yearly thrown away; but what a plant or animal prefers, and can most profitably digest and assimilate, can only be ascertained by long continued experiments, conducted by men whose attainments fit them for such work, and under conditions that can be supplied only at agricultural stations or practical agricultural colleges.

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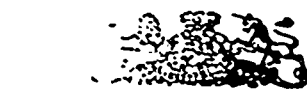
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CHARLES J. MACDONALD,  
Post Office Inspector.  
Halifax, 18th June, 1886.

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CHARLES J. MACDONALD,  
Post Office Inspector.  
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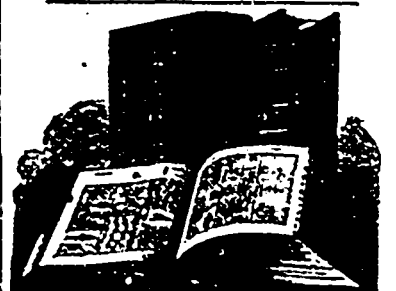
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