

FARM BOUNDARY LINES.

To the Editor of the *Agriculturist* :

DEAR SIR,—I would take the liberty of soliciting the use of your pages as well as your personal influence, in drawing the attention of the Board of Agriculture to a subject of the most serious interest to the farming community of this Province; a subject which, if duly weighed, you will find affects not only the physical well-being of our country, but trenches deeply on the moral and social relations of life.

The matter to which I allude is the boundaries of properties. This country is fast becoming populous and crowded with small holdings, which in the absence of clear and well-defined laws on this subject, promises to involve the rights of *meum et tuum* in a mass of inextricable confusion. The present seems a moment when we are especially called on to grapple with this subject, and when, by submitting to a little unpleasantness and squabbling, we may perhaps overcome an evil which threatens to become a monster grievance. There seems at the present moment a general expectation of a rise in the value of property, which has for some time stood almost below par; the increase of Bullion, the influx of foreign capital, and proximity to foreign markets, promised by the many railway schemes now in advance, and above all the geometrical progression of labor, on labor accumulating on our various farms, under the influence of an improved system of Agriculture, all call on us to set this question for ever on a clear and decided footing. Few men, not intimately conversant with the country districts, know to what extent this great evil reacts. In some sections, I venture to say, you will scarce find a farm, certainly and clearly defined; and how can it be otherwise? The first survey of the country was left often to most careless and incompetent persons, but had they possessed both these qualities in the highest degree, every one knows that a compass line cannot be run any distance through the forest without involving error, limited in its amount only by accident, whilst the chain is, if possible, a more uncertain guide, where swamps, streams and fallen logs bar your way. What after all were the marks left by these surveyors? A little stake liable to be pulled up or shifted by any interested or curious wanderer. Who does not acknowledge the temptation of a fine stream or house site, a beautiful spring, or even a handsome tree, the squatter scarce thinks it worth while to correct, far in the woods, where right is hardly known. The wild beasts themselves might easily knock aside a mark, which by the readiness with which it could be destroyed or altered, seemed to offer a premium on carelessness or villianry. Government sells this land often to needy men, to whom the expense of a survey is a serious object, especially where it involves the cost of some acres of land. You ask the boundary of your estate, you are told to employ a surveyor, perchance you have means and forethought enough to do so; what is the result? As with me, the same man has given me three separate locations for my farm, purchased direct

from Government. If you go on without troubling these gentlemen, in a few years, perhaps, your neighbour comes and cuts off your Barn, a case I have been witness to.

Is this justice? No! the time has come when farmers should not ask but *demand* from Government as a right, a straightforward and final settlement of this question. They have given them deeds and taken their money without demand; where is the *quid pro quo*? anywhere??

It is not the value of a few feet of land, though right is right; it is not the grasping spirit which would not yield an inch to a neighbor; but it is the spirit of improvement which now cries on you for aid. The time has come when our land not now virgin soil, requires that our water courses and drains be thrown into proper channels, and shall we shift them every year at the beck of an interested surveyor, or be dragged into an action at law, uncertain in everything except its cost abundant. Rails are becoming scarce, and can we build stone walls or thorn hedges on uncertain boundaries? Shall we be driven to perhaps a very inconvenient part of the farm for our increasing buildings, whilst a fine spring with a fair prospect and warm shelter, invite us near the side line? Above all, shall we encourage a rich growth of trees to protect us from the chilling wind or sparkling sun, that when they have arrived at maturity they may afford fuel to our relentless neighbours? But it were endless to recount the evils arising from carelessness, instead of permanent fencing; slovenly *Bars* instead of him gates; corners left to a luxuriant growth of weeds, because they dare not be occupied; old hoes, thistles and the interminable rubbish of disputed territories, straying cattle, fence corner squatters, choked drains, whilst around your buildings hoes, cattle, men, wallow in a bottomless Canadian mudhole.

I come to the moral and social side of the picture. Two friends, uncertain as to the line between them, agree to employ a surveyor,—a slice comes off one; try again: a slice off the other; surveyors dispute, neighbors dispute, from less to more they go, each fearing the expenses of an action at law. The dispute is handed down to children and to children's children, until at last the seed falls on pugnacious ground, and downright fighting and cuffing, with cursing and bitterness, is the result; or the more lawful expedient of law is resorted to and perhaps not even the oyster shell is left. If there be a disputed line, the neighbor is tempted and strips it of everything valuable, often even to the defying of law itself, which he knows to be a costly bugbear to the party he is wronging. Lying and wickedness, false-swearing and deceit, enter within the boundary question, and it would be hard to single out the many feelings which combine to give an acerbity to territorial disputes among male holders, an acrimony such as I have noticed few other grounds of quarrel to cause; perhaps its strength arises partly from the feeling that you are tied together and struggle on: on our school principle of nailing the inexpressibles of two young pugilists to their seats, so that they might be compelled to face each other and fight it out. The evil has been sorely felt in all the