

JOURNAL OF EDUCATION

FOR

Upper Canada.

Vol. III.

TORONTO, APRIL, 1850.

No. 4.

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION IN UPPER CANADA.

To the Editor of the *Journal of Education*.

SIR,—The Hon. Adam Fergusson has lately addressed a letter to the Editor of the *Canadian Agriculturist*, on Agricultural Education. The letter of the honourable gentleman has already received extensive publicity.

The impression seems to be uniform and general that Canadian Farmers require a knowledge of the principles of Husbandry. Different opinions may, however, be supposed to exist, respecting the amount of practical benefit likely to be derived from the mode suggested by the honourable gentlemen to secure to Farmers the advantages of an Agricultural Education.

In reviewing some of the more prominent reasons why Farmers require at present, more than at any other previous time, a knowledge of the principles of their art, we obtain an indication of the real nature and extent of the information they should possess, and the machinery best adapted to diffuse it amongst them.

During a course of lectures on Agriculture, lately delivered in the city of Albany by Professor Johnston, we learn that "the farming interests in the State of New York are in process of deterioration; that the average of all crops is certainly diminishing" (See published lectures also speech of Mr. Baldwin). A statement which applies also to many of the older settled districts in Canada. When we compare these positive results, as exhibited by tables of produce, with the opinions we might be inclined to deduce from the extensive displays of stock, of vegetable productions and of farming implements at the great agricultural fairs held in the neighbourhoods of Buffalo, Syracuse, Cobourg and Kingston, during the past two years, we are compelled to adopt the conclusion, that agricultural exhibitions, however magnificent and useful in themselves, do not necessarily afford an illustration of the general progress of Husbandry. If the average amount of crops raised each year on the same extent of surface is, *ceteris paribus*, diminishing, we cannot congratulate ourselves on that universal progress upon which the prosperity of an agricultural country is evidently so dependant. This yearly diminution is no new thing in the agricultural history of exporting countries. The present and past conditions of Virginia and other Southern States furnish illustrations on the continent of America. Experience and science both indicate that deterioration in the soil is universal wherever farming operations are conducted without a regard for the future, without an acquaintance with farming principles. We already discover its approach near and around us. Thousands are complaining of constantly diminishing scales of produce. (See editorial, *Canadian Agriculturist*, April No.)

In this constructive and enterprising age, communications by means of rivers, lakes, canals, railroads, plankroads, &c., are in their rapid development, bringing the more distant parts of this Province and the prairies of the west, within reach of those great centres where their produce may be turned into money. We must not shut our eyes to the fact that millions of bushels of wheat, raised without skill and harvested almost without a care, by glutting the home, must cheapen the foreign market, and that the occupant of a crop-worn farm, will most certainly ere long be brought into direct (now partially indirect) competition with the careless yet successful cultivator of a virgin soil.

Our markets in a great measure lie beyond the seas. Beyond

the seas themselves what active energies now begin to develop themselves. Simultaneously with political revolutions are springing social and commercial revolutions. In every direction means of communication are opening up fertile farming provinces; railroads, joining all great centres, and passing through agricultural districts, where labour is most abundant and cheap, and where the staple commodity wheat, has frequently hitherto throughout extensive provinces rotted in the sheds of the landowner, owing to some trifling obstruction to transportation. These increased facilities for throwing into market centres the supply to be derived from distant and hitherto stagnant provinces, are multiplying in a ratio which outvalues the yearly progressing demand, and resolve the probability, that the price of wheat, will in a few years, average much lower than at present, almost into a certainty. In order that the farmers of Canada may sustain their position and brave the competition which is yearly augmenting, not only must the average amount raised from the same extent of surface be increased throughout the country, but their attention turned to the growth of those vegetables which serve to improve the rotation and their stock, as well as for manufacturing and other purposes. Such progress implies at the same time the elevation of the people at large, in intelligent and virtuous industry, and a real advancement in the most material interests of the country.

Among the various suggestions of Mr. Fergusson for meeting the requirements of Farmers in Canada, none seems so favourable to the object in view as the establishment of a Board of Agriculture. "There can be no doubt that a Board, if properly constituted, is calculated to do great good." Farmers would place confidence in whatever emanated from a body of well-known and personally uninterested individuals; their suggestions would be responded to, and as Mr. Fergusson remarks, one palpable and most valuable result would be the annual collection and publication of the Agricultural statistics of Canada in an authentic and extended form.—Another valuable attainment would probably be in the preparation and distribution of a proper geological description of Canada for agricultural purposes. Nothing is more required; the geology of the soil and subsoil of Canada offers peculiar facilities; it is in general uniform and elementary; it does not exhibit those anomalies which characterise the geology of England. A good report expressed in plain and familiar language, with the objects and advantages briefly stated, would, if issued under the authority of a Board of Agriculture, be of the greatest use to farmers and emigrants, indicating in a measure the mode of culture to be adopted, the species of vegetables to be used in rotation, and the general adaptation of the soil for special purposes, which cannot possibly suggest themselves to the unscientific husbandman.

Mr. Fergusson alludes to the establishment of a Chair of Agriculture in the Provincial University. If such a professorship could be conveniently associated with a Board of Agriculture in various scientific capacities, the utility of both might be enhanced. I think it is very questionable, however, if the ordinary mode of communicating instruction by means of lectures would be of any avail for many years to come. An experimental farm appears to me to present a far more favourable field for speculation. A farm of 500 or 600 acres, embracing the two varieties of soil we meet with in this neighbourhood, would offer many advantages for experimental purposes under suitable regulations and management. The results, if published annually, under the authority of a Board of Agriculture