AGRICULTURAL ADDRESS.

By Colonel Laurie.

Delivered at Shubenacadie, Feb. 15, 1878.

Farmers' meetings for the discussion of Agricultural topics are at last coming into fashion; their great benefits have long been recognised in theory, but until lately they have not been worked out in practice. It is for such meetings and discussions that our Agricultural Societies are supposed to be organized, or, at any rate, that is recognized by law as a very important part of their work, and, with a view to galvanize some of these rather torpid organizations into a more active life, our able Secretary of the Central Board, Prof. Lawson, has undertaken to visit such societies as may express a wish to hear him, and it would be well if more of them would avail themselves of his offer: then other latent talent, tending in the same direction, might be developed; more interest would be aroused in farming questions, and intelligent and educated men would recognize the farmer's profession as a fitting field for their talents and research, instead of running off in search of an avocation that they imagine will give them a higher social standing. At a recent meeting in Pictou, Prof. Lawson, according to the published reports, took a very sensible position. I was not present at the meeting, but wish I had been, as Prof. Lawson's addresses are always so practical and to the point, and full of information.

It has been too much the practice for those who have studied agriculture, and who undertake to instruct us, to ignore the circumstances of the country and the farmers, and to rush off to what *should be*, rather than than what actually is; and to build up, like the German philosopher, "out of their own inner consciousness," a new and perfect system on which we should work.

I think it was Lord Palmerston who said, that if he had the making of a new map of Europe, he could arrange it much better than he found it existing. No doubt he could have done it, and so saved the world the sad spectacle of nations in arms tearing one another to pieces in the lust for increased territory. Following out the same idea as Lord Palmerston gave expression to, if those of us who wish to see Nova Scotia what she must eventually become, a rich agricultural country, had the power to remodel every thing according to our views of what *should be*, we might at once work a vast improvement; but we have no such power, and must take things as we find them. Starting, therefore, and working for a gradual improvement, we shall be practical instead of visionary, and thus stand a better chance of attaining our ends.

In one sense this is more than ever the age of small things; it is by attending to the minutest details that the greatest successes are won. That has been plainly proved in war:—it was by attention to details that seemed in themselves almost frivolous that the Germans trained the army that crushed France in the autumn months of 1870. It was by utter neglect of details that Russians and Turks, each in their turn, have, during the present war, met with serious disasters from very slight causes. In the same way, it is in trifles as we call them, that our farmers are thoughtless and careless; "take care of the pence and the pounds will take care of themselves" is an old English adage, conveying very tersely the principle that thrift and method in small things establish such a sound system of business that it be comes second nature, even in larger operations, and humanly speaking, must lead to competence and wealth; and Prof. Lawson, at the Pictou meeting, well put it, that he would not so much urge the farmers to go into underground drainage and high farming, as press on them the necessity that existed for stopping the small leaks, of the waste of manure, and of food, and through bad cultivation. Improvement in these matters would naturally lead to a desire for the other, but to invest large amounts of capital in farm improvements, and then to waste the produce of the farm by want of method and care, would be employing disproportionate power to get very inadequate results,—to use a well worn simile, much like putting up a steam hammer to crack nuts, and farming would sink lower than ever in public estimation. All practical men should, therefore, strive for an improvement in small matters which do not involve heavy additional money outlay, and farmers, both great and small, finding that there is decided gain thereby, will be encouraged to launch out, and spend both labour and money in improvement; but it cannot be too often repeated that we cannot accept the system pursued in any other country as our pattern. The general principles will be the same, but we must modify the imported systems to suit our soil, climate and markets; in fact, by experiment and careful record, we must work out and establish a system of our own to suit our peculiar conditions.

I believe that what first stirred me up to go into farming in Nova Scotia was the sight of so many of our young men going off to other countries, seeking they hardly knew what. I can understand and accept the proposition that it is not at all imperative that every young man brought up on a farm, should of necessity take to farming as a pursuit; men's tastes differ, and altho' on a farm there is not much to satisfy the mechanical or commercial taste, still it is as well that from the healthy men and women raised up on our farms, our cities should be replenished, thus giving new life and vigor to our town population,—a population that, without a constant influx of new blood, is very apt to become torpid and stagnant instead of progressive. I mention this because it is a common belief that the townspeople are the energetic and stirring, and the country people the sleepy and slow going race; now I am willing to accept the fact that the centres of life and activity are generally to be found in the towns, much of which is no doubt due to the wits being sharpened by constant contact with others. But I ascribe it largely to the energy imported into the inhabitants by the constant infusion of new blood, of the healthful and vigorous young countrymen who, with a fancied distaste for farming, pour into the towns to push their own fortunes. Such men have hitherto, to far too great an extent, gone away to the cities of the neighbouring republic; the tide set in in that direction, and men were very much like sheep; when once the bellwether leads, there's a rush to follow. I believe that the same energy and enterprise, accompanied by the same hard work, would have made them as weathly as, and much more comfortable at home than, they have become abroad, and they, as well as we, should have had the satisfaction of seeing our acknowledged vast natural resources developed. I could enlarge on this at some length, for I have always believed that industrial and agricultural prosperity go hand in hand. But I am running away from my subject. I have said I *believed* that our mechanical and commercially-inclined young men could do as well at home as abroad; *I am sure* that those who desire to follow farming as a business can do as well here.

The same conditions are necessary to success everywhere and in every business, and I take it that farming must be conducted as a business if it is to succeed either here or elsewhere. A farmer must not only have land but he must have stock—teams to do his work—cattle to consume certain products of the farm and thus maintain its fertility, and implements with which to perform his various operations. He must provide seed to put in the ground, and must furnish himself and his labourers, whether members of his family or hired hands, with the means of living till the ground gives its returns at harvest time. All this is as necessary in California as in Nova Scotia. He must have the skill to plan his operations, the knowledge of the requirements of each crop in regard to manures and cultivation; the cost of producing each and the returns that can be obtained from it and the judgment as to the time, place, when and where, and the form in which it can be brought to market so as best to reimburse the outlay.

A farmer should make his calculation that his farm should yield him the interest on its value—in fact, if he is the proprietor, it should pay him the rent—should pay for the labour, both manual and mental, expended on it; should return not merely a percentage on the cost of the implements used, but should cover their wear and tear and consequent depreciation. In fact, every operation of the farm should be separately weighed and considered, and the profit obtainable from it should be calculated, and if there is no benefit in it, either directly or indirectly, the sooner a change is made the better. At the same time the fault may not lie in the plan, but in the way it is carried out; and there is of course another consideration which must be taken into account in this country where the vast majority of occupiers own their farms; it is that, although they may not be drawing proportionate returns from their farms, it may be because they are putting labour on to them and thus increasing their value, and this is not only equivalent to, but decidedly better than taking the profit out of them.

A friend of mine in * * * County, and a very fine young fellow, told me that he farmed about 200 acres. He ploughed up about 30 acres every year, sowed 5 to 6 bushels of oats to the acre and obtained about 20 bushels—took two crops of oats in this way and then turned the land out to pasture *till it got rich enough to give oats again*. Yarded the cattle at night in summer on a piece of land, which was ploughed up for potatoes the following year, and obtained about 100 bushels per acre, and on enquiry as to what they did with the manure, for I told him they surely must make some,