

Parrsborough, 6th April, 1877.

DEAR SIR,—

I DULY received your letter of the 1st February, 1877, "calling, by direction of the Central Board of Agriculture, the attention of our Society to the terms of the Act for the Encouragement of Agriculture, respecting the expenditure of monies, and conveying their opinion that the giving of premiums on so large a scale as our Society does for compost, growing of crops, &c., is not so desirable as the improvement of live stock."

The letter was read at a meeting of our officers and members on the 3rd inst. A member who is a practical and successful farmer, following no other occupation, being present, remarked that we ought to import a Jackass to breed with our Mares, so as to have mules rather than horses and oxen, which are so expensive to rear and feed, to do our work, as is done in some other countries. The mule will live on very little hay and that of the poorest quality, and labor with great endurance.

The fault or misfortune with a great many here, who cultivate land, is that they strive too much to keep stock, so that when there is a short crop of hay, (their chief dependence for fodder), great expense and loss falls upon them. This was the case last year, causing a regular stampede from here to Amherst, Macan, Minudie and Nappan for hay, on the first sledding the winter. The price was high in those places, and it is estimated that the cost to Parrsborough for hay bought out of it this winter was from two to four thousand pounds, and it is still coming in vessels. The same thing occurred about twelve years ago, when it was said the Parrsborough people bought at least four thousand pounds worth of hay that year. It occurs also, but to a less extent, almost every year. You will see in this fact one reason why there is less enthusiasm among our farmers about purchasing imported stock than is witnessed in many other parts of the Province, where there is a greater supply of good hay, and larger crops of grain, potatoes and turnips, enabling their farmers to raise and fatten cattle to advantage. We never hear a complaint here of poor cattle, but constantly of poor feed, small quantities of it, and of the minimum quantity of bread stuffs raised by ourselves. The mission of our Society, therefore, has been to stimulate all in its power the raising of larger quantities of hay, grain, and vegetables, as the proper basis for improving our stock. With this view, to enlarge the manure heap, and increase its value as a fertilizer, was always considered by us an object of the first importance. We know by experience that with an abundant supply of such food, we can make our cattle anything that can be desired in the

way of Beef, even without the intervention of imported breeds. The largest pair of oxen ever raised in Nova Scotia up to the year 1860, were just the native breed, specially cared for from the time they were calves; they were raised in Colchester, and their beef, in Halifax, weighed nearly 4000 lbs. The owner, however, lost heavily by them. He only obtained £60 for them at six years old. He was offered £50 for them when about three years old. The last winter he fed them they cost about £8 per month. Farmers in the lower towns so called, viz:—Windsor, Cornwallis, Horton and Annapolis, still feed their beef cattle two seasons before sending them to market. In Cumberland, Colchester and counties to the Eastward, they are only fed on grass and hay, for one season, and it has generally been allowed that farmers from these counties have had the clearest profit from their beef cattle. A farmer here some thirty years ago was offered £17 for a yoke of oxen by a Horton farmer to whom he was indebted that sum. He said no, I will feed them with hay and potatoes through the winter, take them to Halifax in the spring and then get cash for my feed as well as cattle; they only brought enough to pay for the hay and potatoes they ate or for the cattle in the Fall; thus all he got for the hay and potatoes the cattle consumed in the winter was the manure they made, which was not worth enough to pay for their care and the expense of taking them to market. Formerly, fifty, sixty and seventy years ago, when hay and potatoes were less than half the price they have been of late years, and when beef was about the same price it is now, the stall feeding of cattle could be done with more profit than at present.

There are other reasons why the farmers here have not such a phrensy for imported stock as they seem to have in other parts of the province. Among these are their great cost, often very far above their intrinsic value. Different sales of the importations by the Central Board of Agriculture, not only of late years, but in former years, during the time of "Agricola," shew this. Being raised in a milder climate, and where there is richer feed, imported cattle deteriorate when brought here and become in a few years like our own, unless kept up with an abundance of short feed. Until acclimatized they are in fact inferior to our own. Our farmers think that the proper way to improve their breeds is to educe them from the best animals of our own herds. Constantly pursuing this plan the best of breeds for all the different purposes required, viz:—labor, beef, and the dairy, can be obtained, thus saving importation from England, the

United States, the Upper Provinces of Canada, or elsewhere. The proposed Stock Farm favors this idea. It has been repeatedly noticed here, that our cattle, when taken across the Bay, or to Cumberland Proper, where the feed is so much richer than ours, that they immediately improve, while the reverse is the case when cattle from those places are brought here. Another reason is that our farmers are constantly making purchases themselves to cross and improve their breeds, and sometimes with good success. Another reason is that in those instances where we have deviated from our general rule, and bought animals with the funds of the Society, we have not noticed any very marked improvement, while it has been attended with much trouble and expense, in some instances with the loss of the animals. Another reason is the many accidents and failures that we hear of and read of, where animals have been procured at great expense by societies and individuals.

There is yet another reason often lost sight of, viz:—the imposition practised by and upon those handling public monies. High sounding names and pedigrees are given to animals, and high prices accordingly asked and given, sometimes for animals utterly worthless as breeders. A gentleman in this county once gave £70 for a cow at an auction sale of imported cattle and the cow never produced a calf or a quart of milk. Sheep have often been bought in England that died with the scab before they were landed here, and those that were landed infected and ruined other flocks. About fifty or sixty years ago, several thoroughbred horses were imported from England, and it was everywhere remarked, a few years afterwards, that our horses were not so good as they were before this importation. They were good for the race course and the heavy draught work in England, but not well adapted for our purposes. There was therefore much dissatisfaction and disappointment, and seldom, from that time to this, have importations of thoroughbred horses been made with public monies. This kind of work left in the hands of farmers and horse fanciers themselves would be more economically and more successfully done than by public bodies with public money. A Nova Scotia gentleman, about sixty years ago, had a boar and sow brought to him from England. They were beautiful animals, and their progeny for a few years were beautiful and apparently superior to the native breed, but in a short time they fell to the ordinary level of the ordinary breeds of the country. There was therefore no more desire for imported pigs at that time. If farmers in any locality had confidence in the great value of thoroughbred imported stock, any one, two or