

NOVA SCOTIA

JOURNAL OF AGRICULTURE

Published under direction of the Board of Agriculture of Nova Scotia.

Omnium rerum, ex quibus aliquid acquiritur, nihil est agriculturâ melius, nihil uberius, nihil homine libero dignius.—Cicero : de Officiis, lib. I, cap. 42.

VOL. IV.

HALIFAX, N. S., APRIL, 1884.

No. 44.

OUR readers are aware that at the Annual Meeting of the Central Board of Agriculture, Major General LAURIE was requested to present the views of the Board to the Special Committee on Agriculture of the House of Commons at Ottawa. We are now enabled to present General Laurie's evidence, as given before the Committee:—

OTTAWA, March 20th, 1884.

The Committee met, Mr. Gigault in the chair.

Maj. Gen. Laurie, Halifax, called and examined:

By the Chairman.

Q. Would you be kind enough to tell the Committee what experience you have had in Agriculture?

A. I should, perhaps, first explain how I came to appear before you. I am President of the Central Board of Agriculture for Nova Scotia, and, almost by accident, I received a copy of the questions your Committee have been circulating through the country. I submitted them at once to the Board of Agriculture, but as they had not received a copy of the questions formally, they hesitated to take up the subject. I asked them to prepare answers, as we were desirous of assisting you in every possible way in the enquiries you were making. However, they demurred at first to consider the questions, because they had not come before the notice of the Board officially, and they did not know in what way any uninvited responses to the questions

might be considered by your Committee, and I then submitted the questions to the Provincial Government. We have no Department of Agriculture in Nova Scotia; the Board of Agriculture is the body really charged with carrying out the work of the Government in this branch of the public service. The Government, through the Provincial Secretary, requested me to submit the questions formally to the Board of Agriculture; and the Board of Agriculture, after considering them, requested me to put myself in communication with you, and, if possible, appear before you and give you such information as I possessed in regard to these matters. We were desirous of showing how anxious we were to support your action in the direction of advancing agriculture in the way you propose.

Personally, I have been engaged in farming in Nova Scotia since 1866. Of course, I have not taken up farming as a means of livelihood, but I have had a good deal of experience in agriculture, and have been President of the Board of Agriculture for some eight or nine years. In that way I have learned a great deal about agriculture. I cannot call myself an expert on matters relating to experimental stations, nor have I gone deeply into scientific farming, but at the same time I have striven, as far as in me lay, to improve the system of farming in our Province.

Q. Under what difficulties does the present system of agriculture labor, and in what respect is the Canadian farmer

placed at a disadvantage when competing in foreign markets?

A. I speak, of course, of the Nova Scotia farmer, because I am best acquainted with him. I have mixed with the farmers of that Province during my command of the militia for the last twenty-two years. The Nova Scotia farmer labors under these disadvantages, to my mind: He has received no agricultural education, by which I mean training in the sciences connected with agriculture, and concurrently in the application in practice of the knowledge so acquired. He, consequently, is quite unaware what his land is capable of, or how to obtain the greatest return for his labor and other outlay. Our fruit growers have given great attention to that industry, and with exceedingly good results; but, with this exception, and that of a few intelligent men who, under favorable conditions, are reclaiming marsh lands and carrying on their work profitably, the vast majority simply obtain a subsistence, and the results consequently are so discouraging, that, even when in any way money is acquired, it is invested in anything rather than farm property. There is no encouragement to invest capital in farm operations, because there appears no promise of a return; consequently improvements are not actively carried out. Hired labor is only employed at busy seasons, and, being irregularly employed, the supply is irregular and uncertain, and wages are high. This re-acts, and men of means are discouraged from engaging in agriculture. Our young