

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION.

From Evans' Letters on Agricultural Improvement.

Whatever doubts may exist on other questions, there can be none that those who should constitute the YOMANRY of British America, should be properly educated, or they must be unfit to occupy the situation they fill, with either credit or advantage to themselves or to the community. I have already said there are many subjects connected with agriculture, which have a great influence on its prosperity, and that cannot be understood by the uneducated. Among the number, are the means of internal communications, which would require to be ample, in an extensive country circumstanced as this is, exporting her own produce, and importing the produce of other countries in exchange. For these purposes railroads, bridges, and navigable waters, are most essential, and in promoting these improvements there is not a class of the community that should be more interested than the agricultural, though hitherto they have scarcely taken any interest in the matter. Where they ought to lead, their own neglect has left them to be shut out altogether. I am aware they have not capital to construct these works, but they have land to produce what would employ the works after they were constructed, and without this produce such works would be useless. It is a product raised from the soil of Canada that must support these public works, and refund the money expended in their construction. Whether the produce of the soil is transported by railroads, bridges, and navigable waters to be sold to the merchant or tradesman, or the merchandize be conveyed by the same means for the supply of the agricultural population, the cost of transport, both ways, must be paid out of the produce of the country. It will be deducted from the value of what the farmer sells, and it will be added to the price of the merchandize he buys. A farmer in Upper Canada, or in any other distant settlement, who sells wheat that is subsequently shipped at Montreal or Quebec, or consumed in these cities, must sell it at a price that will pay for transporting it to those places, and the goods that are purchased in Upper Canada or other distant places, are charged with the cost of transporting them from the port of Quebec to Montreal. I do not complain of this, because it is perfectly reasonable it should be so; but I would wish to show farmers that from these facts it is plain, that the *better and cheaper* the means of internal communication throughout the Provinces, the *greater* will be the value of their produce to them, and they will be enabled to purchase the merchandize they require at a lower price. Hence it is manifest they will be every way benefited, and, consequently, should be the first to suggest these improvements where they would be likely to be useful, but only in such cases as these are matters connected with these improvements that require their attention. In England, lately, they have adopted a rule in chartering railroad companies, that will prevent them becoming unfair monopolies, and will subject them to the control of Parliament. They are also liable to all damages that may be produced by their means. These precautions are not less necessary in these Provinces, and it will be the duty of land owners to see that they are provided for. Those who expend capital have a right to every fair privilege, but to none that would be injurious to public interests. These works are generally under the superintendence of those who are in no way connected with agriculture, and who in consequence do not much regard its interests. If farmers are not competent to give attention to all these subjects, in which they are so deeply interested, they cannot expect that others will do it for them. It may, perhaps, be considered out of place, that I should introduce this subject here, as it is not directly connected with education, but how are farmers to understand these matters without being instructed? It is impossible they could, and their prosperity will be retarded in consequence.

To the agricultural and other classes I would say, that from whatever funds these public improvements may be effected, it is a product raised in the country from the soil, and the labour applied to its cultivation, that must be the great source of supply for the support of such works. The transport of troops, Government stores, emigrants, and travellers for pleasure, may contribute a part, but it will not be a large proportion. Ample means

of internal communication, and ample production, will go on well together, BUT CANNOT, and will not, prosper separately, unless Canada becomes the carrier of the produce of other countries, and not of her own soil and industry. The St John's Railroad, now in operation, may be said to be thus employed; but I hope it will long continue so. It would be well that agriculturists and others would allow themselves to be persuaded, that it is from a produce raised in this country, that the riches and enjoyment of its inhabitants must be derived, and that from none other source can it be obtained, unless such of the people as have a fixed income from other countries, which they expend in this.

PLAYFAIR, in his "Decline and fall of Nations," says, "If the agriculture of a country be neglected, that country becomes poor and miserable." Again, "The wealth of a nation, like the happiness of an individual, draws the source from its own bosom. The possession of all the Indies would never make an indolent people rich; and while a people are industrious and the industry well directed, they never can be poor." The same author says in another place, "The wants of men increase with their knowledge of what is good for them to enjoy; and it is the desire to gratify these wants, that increases necessity, and this necessity is the spur of action." Education will enlighten men all these matters.

I think it is proper that I offer a few observations here on the present state of agriculture and agriculturists in Canada. I will do so as correctly as I can, and I hope I shall not give offence in any quarter. In every country it is desirable that the condition of the people would go on constantly improving, and in this it might reasonably be expected to be the case, where rent and taxes are trifling, the soil good, and the climate on an average of seasons very favorable. If improvement do not progress under such circumstances, it becomes the duty of men of influence and the well instructed, to examine into the causes that are supposed to prevent it, and provide or suggest a remedy. There may be differences of opinion as to the existing causes that obstruct improvement in a country, and, unfortunately, these differences of opinion have a tendency to perpetuate evils that otherwise might be got rid of, by a cordial co-operation of the influential in society. The subject on which I write, ought, above all others, to be interesting to every one whose home is in Canada; and every man, of every party, should sincerely unite in forwarding every measure that would be considered necessary to increase the produce of the soil of Canada, and thereby augment the means of happiness of all her inhabitants without distinction. It is a most unfortunate mistake, that every one should not be perfectly aware that by advancing the general interests, individual interests will be most certainly and permanently promoted and secured. Few, indeed, can get rich in a country by fair trading that will not produce abundantly. The thing is impossible.

It is deserving of attention, that agriculture has now been a long time practised in Lower Canada by a rural population, that were generally uneducated, and that the system of cultivation, and management of stock, did not undergo much alteration since the country was first settled. If it is found, nevertheless, that the agricultural population throughout the Province are at this moment in a prosperous state, and their condition constantly improving it would be a convincing proof that their want of education did not operate against their interests, and that they did not require, like other countries, to introduce any change in their system of agricultural management, inasmuch as the old methods succeeded to their entire satisfaction. If such be in reality the case generally, a change is unnecessary, nor would I presume to recommend any. I confess I would not readily change my own habits or modes of action, if I thought them reasonable, and found them satisfactory to myself, without very strong grounds for supposing that by adopting a change, I would improve my condition, and increase my means of reasonable enjoyment. But if I did suppose that a change would produce this good to me, were I to hesitate in adopting it, it would indicate a want of judgment, or perhaps common sense.

We know that in other countries the produce of agriculture has been vastly augmented within the

last few years, and this increase was obtained in consequence of new and improved modes of cultivation, and management of stock being introduced. There is scarcely any country in Europe that are not endeavoring to adopt, and bring into practice, new and approved systems of agricultural management. In France, very great exertions are being made in this way since the termination of the last war, and by late account, vast improvement is effected in her husbandry and stock. The old modes of cultivation, and management of stock in Canada, are acknowledged to be very defective by persons born in the country, and well qualified to form a correct opinion. Though much is said against the climate of Canada. I know that the modes of cultivation that is in many instances adopted here, and may in favorable seasons produce a reasonable crop, would not, if adopted in England, produce a crop that would be of any value.

What is in fact the present state of husbandry and of the agricultural population of the Province generally, and which has resulted from the practice of agriculture under the circumstances I have mentioned? This is a question, I would wish others better qualified than I am, should answer. But as I have no alternative here, I cannot help saying that from my own observation, and from reports, I am sorry to believe, first, that husbandry is not practised on the most approved principles, and does not yield a produce any thing near what it might do under different management; secondly, that it follows as a natural consequence, that the agricultural population generally, are not in so prosperous a condition as they ought to be; and thirdly, that the general improvement of the country does not advance with that progress, which countries do, that are not possessed of so many natural advantages. This is my candid opinion of the state of agriculture in Lower Canada, and perhaps it is not much better in Upper Canada. If, then, such are the results that have been produced by agriculturists that are confessedly deficient in education, and practising a system of cultivation and management of stock that is long in use, and that is proved to be defective by its consequences, it is unquestionably prudent and necessary that a change for the better should be introduced without hesitation or delay. The present system has been tried a sufficiently long time to give full opportunity of knowing all its advantages; and if they do not prove satisfactory, it is evidently our duty to give a fair trial to a different system, and the only legitimate means to insure the introduction of the very best mode of farming in every department, is by properly instructing every man who is proprietor of, and cultivates a farm in Canada. This will be a reasonable experiment, and one that is necessary independently of the favorable influence it would have on agriculture. Though I could not expect to live to see the practical results of this experiment, yet I do look forward, confidently, that they will be most happy for those who will try the means, and apply them industriously.

PLAYFAIR says—"The great end of all effort is, to improve upon the means which nature has furnished men with, for obtaining the objects of their wants and wishes, and to obviate, so far as possible, or do away those inconveniences, and disadvantages which nature has thrown in the way of their enjoyment." Let farmers be judiciously educated, and the occasional inclemency of seasons will not be so injurious in their effects, because the husbandman will be better qualified to understand the most prudent and suitable means to adopt to guard against injury, and to remedy evils that might occur under extraordinary circumstances.

Man can never discover what he is capable of, executing until he has improved to the uttermost the faculties bestowed upon him by his CREATOR. When he has done this, he may, by exercising them prudently and industriously, overcome almost every difficulty in nature, over which it would be proper or useful that he should have the control. This is a privilege which, I believe, the ALMIGHTY has left it in the power of man to enjoy, and which places him high indeed in the rank of creation. Perhaps the reader would excuse me for introducing Shakespeare's admirable description of a man.—"What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in form and in moving how like an angel! in apprehension