

THE CANADIAN AGRICULTURIST

AND

Transactions

OF THE

BOARD OF AGRICULTURE OF UPPER CANADA.

VOL. V.

TORONTO, SEPTEMBER, 1852.

NO. 9.

AN ESSAY ON AGRICULTURE.

BY LEWIS CHIPMAN, OF THE COUNTY OF LEEDS,
[To which a Diploma was awarded by the Board
of Agriculture of Upper Canada.*]

Agriculture, whether considered as a Science or an art, must be regarded as a subject of the greatest interest and importance.

It was not unknown to the ancients; from the earliest period it has been followed to some extent. Formerly it did not receive as much encouragement as in modern times, yet, in the days of Varro, in the home provinces of Rome, wheat was raised in large quantities, and some land produced from thirty to forty bushels per acre, but this was not general with respect to other parts of the world, nor did it continue long in those provinces. Although the arts and sciences were carried to some extent among the Greeks and Romans, yet Agriculture did not advance but retrograded for more than a thousand years, chiefly because they did not obey those laws which the Creator laid down to govern the fruitfulness of the soil; and at the present day, if we aspired at nothing more than the ancients did formerly, we would be as imperfect in agriculture now as they were two thousand years ago. But of late, science combined with practical farming, has been the motto with many intelligent and influential men; they have ascertained that in addition to education, something more is necessary to advance agriculture and

bring it to greater perfection, in order to supply the present demand for food. It is well known that every year brings its thousands of inhabitants from foreign countries to settle among us, who must subsist from the produce of the soil; and unless agriculture receives proper encouragement it will not supply the inhabitants with food and export produce to foreign countries in any great quantities. At no time in our history has it required as great attention as at present. When this country was first settled, the inhabitants few, and the soil fertile, there was little attention paid to agriculture; but after the soil became partly exhausted by a succession of crops, it became necessary to replenish it by manure to bring it back to its original state. Many points worthy of consideration are embraced in the subject before us, but space will not allow us to dwell long upon any one in particular. I shall consider first.

ROTATION OF CROPS AND METHOD OF RENOVATING WORN OUT LANDS.

Many parts of this country which have been tilled for a number of years are nearly worn out, in consequence of continued cropping and applying but little if any manure. Generally after the first crop is taken off, the ground is seeded and kept for meadow fifteen or twenty years in succession, till it will not produce more than half a crop; it is then perhaps ploughed and a crop or two raised—then seeded again and in this way the exhaustion is brought about.

In order to restore land that was originally fertile, various experiments have been made to ascertain what crops are best suited for certain soils, and what method is most beneficial for supplying the earth with the elements of fertility which have been taken off, in order that its expanded powers may be replenished.

It is easier to prevent sterility than provide a remedy, but after the soil has become exhausted by bad management nothing but a systematic rotation of crops will prove beneficial.

* This Essay was written to compete for the prizes offered by Johnstown District Agricultural Society, in 1851, one condition of which was, that the Essay should be the bona fide production of practical farmers.