

ADDRESS

*Delivered at the Annual Exhibition of the Ellisburgh, Adams and Henderson Agricultural Society, New York, Sept. 9th, 1853,*

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[We have much pleasure in laying before our readers this excellent Address, particularly as it was delivered before an American Society, by one of our most zealous and intelligent Canadian agriculturists. May so beneficent an example find many imitators in both countries.—*Ed. Ag.*]

Improvement in the knowledge and practice of agriculture, the object of this and all similar societies, although receiving much laborious attention from all civilized nations and intelligent classes of men, from earliest ages to the present day, appears, by opinions very generally expressed, to have, as yet, made but moderate progress, compared with the general advancement in science, and the improvements in many of the useful arts of life.

To trace the cause, would be an investigation both curious and useful; for although our first parent Adam, and his two first-born sons, Cain and Abel, were engaged in gardening, tilling the soil, and in the keeping of sheep, occupations the best calculated to afford to themselves and their progeny both food and clothing, by the sweat of their brow, we find at this period, so remote from their day, innumerable tribes of their descendants wandering over soils the most fertile, in a state of hunger and nakedness, despising the sources of comfort and happiness to which God so early directed man's energies, giving preference to the uncertainties of the chase, and consequent privations and miseries,—not unfrequently, like Cain, "rising up against their brethren," slaying, and as cannibals, devouring them, for want of other food. Before the white man had begun to people this continent, the poor Indians may not have had any opportunity of acquiring the art of raising for themselves the necessities of life from the soil, and may therefore often have been driven from one pitiful necessity to another, still more horrifying, as detailed by Hulman and others, but having now, for centuries back, had the benefit of both precept and example in farming set before them, they may be said to exhibit, in an extreme degree, the utmost indifference, if not aversion, to the operations of husbandry. We know that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof;" that it is manifestly his design it should be cultivated for the sustenance of man, to whom he has given dominion over it; that, from the general tenor of his word, we are enjoined to be industrious. In the parable, it was the mildest portion of the sentence upon him, who did not properly apply his one talent, to "take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents;" and so, without presuming to judge harshly of our brother, the "red man of the forest," we may believe that it is the will of the Great Ruler of all, that this great and fertile region should no longer continue to be the monopoly of that "idleness which

clothed a man with rags;"—no longer the birth-right of a people "whose sloth killeth them, for their hands refuse to labor." We are sometimes entertained with effusions of affected philanthropy, deprecating the taking of part of their hunting-grounds from the aborigines, and this, too, when millions of their fellow-men would be rendered the happier by the possession of only one acre each, whereon to raise their bread. But the tide of emigration, of industrial, of agricultural, educational, and general improvement, has set in so strongly on this continent, as ere long to cover the land, and to render the portion of the sluggard therein comparatively small. The error of the untutored Indian, in not cropping the soil for his sustenance, is clearly perceptible to us. Could we as clearly understand our own mismanagement of the earth in over-cropping, without fertilization, we no doubt would make immediate and eager exertions for improvement, a conviction for its necessity being generally a preliminary thereto. The Indian, it appears, considers agricultural operations unremunerative to him. We often conduct them so indifferently, as, in a few years, to render them so to us; were this not the case, could we find in our neighborhood a Province containing a population of nearly a million, whose annual average production of wheat per acre, by their own showing, is but 7-1-5 bushels; while some of them boast of having taken forty successive crops off the same field, without using any means whatever to sustain its fertility. And when it is known that much of the soil in the same part of the country, unexhausted, produces over four times the former quantity; with this warning before us from Lower Canada, we had better impartially examine whether the practice we are pursuing is not insensibly leading towards similar results. Coming nearer home on this subject, we have received a more direct warning, and that from a source which tends to give it a weight and importance sufficient to demand our attention.

PROFESSOR JOHNSTON, who travelled in this country in the year 1849, in speaking of North America, says:—"As to the condition of agriculture, as an art of life, it cannot be denied that in this region, as a whole, it is in a very primitive condition. In relation to English markets, therefore, and the prospects and profits of the British farmer, my persuasion is, that year by year, our transatlantic cousins will become less and less able, except in extraordinary seasons, to send large supplies of wheat to our island ports; and that when the virgin freshness shall have been rubbed off their new lands, they will be unable, *with their present knowledge and methods*, to send wheat to the British market so cheap as the more skilful farmers of Great Britain and Ireland can do. If any one, less familiar with practical agriculture, doubts that such must be the final effect of the exhausting system now followed on all the lands of North America, I need only inform him that the celebrated Lothian farmers, in the immediate neighborhood of Edinburgh, who carry all their crops off the land, as the North American farmers now do, return, on