

Agricultural.

THE EDUCATION OF FARMERS.

"It has often been a matter of surprise that, in this age of improvement and progress, the education of our agricultural community should be so entirely neglected, the more so, when we consider how large and important a body our farmers constitute. For the professions, from twenty to twenty-four years of constant study from youth to manhood, are considered requisite to prepare a young man to enter upon the threshold of either; and for the first trades either mechanical or mercantile, the first fourteen years of life are spent in an elementary education, while the subsequent seven are devoted to acquiring the rudiments of the pursuits selected. The farmer, on the contrary, conceives that, after his sons can hold a whip or pull a weed, one-quarter of the year is quite sufficient to devote to the development of their minds, while the other three-quarters are consumed in the most drudging minutiae of agriculture, and this at a period of life when impressions are most easily made; and when, if they imbibe any notions at all of the culture of the soil, it must be those of their fathers; and if these are tainted with ignorance or prejudice, the rising generation must be cursed with the same obstacles that were stumbling-blocks to the preceding.

"We often hear it said, that practical experience will correct erroneous opinions formed in youth, and will supply the want of agricultural information which has not yet been acquired. And is this a fitting preparation of a young man for any pursuit, much more for one that requires the immediate and constant application of fixed and correct principles? Is it wise, is it just to the young farmer himself, first to expose him to the inculcation of the errors of an unimproved system of agriculture, and then throw him, with a half-formed mind, upon his own energies, to suffer the consequences of his mistakes, and correct them if he can? Do we find that this practical experience remedies the deficiencies of early education, and makes our farmers what they might and should be? Is not the adherence of our farming population (and we appeal to their sober judgment when we put the question) to old and erroneous practices in culture, almost proverbial? Judging from our own observation, limited to be sure as it has been, their love of the systems of their fathers, right or wrong, has given birth to a prejudice against, a hostility to the improvements of the day that many have no power to overcome. This is the constant cry of those engaged in the regeneration of our agriculture. They cannot persuade the farmer to adopt modes of culture that every principle of science and all experience warrant, because preceding generations have followed different ones.

"The reason why our agriculture is so far in the rear of all other pursuits, seems to be of a twofold nature; first, because our farmers are half educated when young; and, moreover, because they will not be induced by the ten thousand motives held out to them to eradicate mistaken opinions and prejudices engendered in youth, and which are at constant war with their best interests. They will not educate themselves. Scientific principles are ridiculed by them under the name of book farming, and the many substantial improvements and useful discoveries offered to them by the many as being theoretical and visionary. Generally speaking (and we appeal to common observation for corroboration of the statement, which is made without the slightest disrespect to the farming interest,) they will know but little of the fundamental principles that govern the culture of the soil, and their information and skill are limited to the manual and more general operations of farming. And is this as it should be? Can the husbandman hope to reap the heaviest and most profitable crops while ignorant of vegetable physiology, the organization and habits of plants? Can he expect to obtain the most perfect animals, while he disregards the laws of breeding, and the comparative value and properties of different races? He will be successful just in proportion as he renders science and discoveries, which are the result of skilful observation, subservient to his pursuits; for just in that proportion does he compel nature to aid and complete his operations.

"There are few, if any other pursuits, that open so wide a field for inquiry as agriculture. It is true, every boy of capacity, who is brought up on a farm, becomes sufficiently familiar with the usual farming operations to pursue the business in a way that enables him to get a living. But in most instances his operations are carried on with but very little inquiry as to the most correct and best principles of husbandry. He goes on this year as he went on last year, and as his father went for many years. Moving onward thus in his unvaried rounds from year to year, the industrious and prudent man may gain property and be a respected and useful citizen. But his pursuits would be more interesting, and he would become a more intelligent man, were he to observe more closely the immediate and lasting action of each kind of manure that he applies; were he to note the effect of each kind of manure upon each different crop that he cultivates; were he to calculate the cost of each crop that he raises; were he to determine, by careful observation, the soil best suited to each crop; were he to consider the best time and manner of applying manure to each; were he to study how to make as much manure as pos-

sible, were he to learn whence his plants derive their principal nourishment, and in what state they take it up, were he to satisfy himself as to the parts of the farm which are too acid so far cold to be productive, were he to learn carefully what spots could be greatly improved by deep ploughing, were he to seek diligently to know what it would be best to do on each comparatively unproductive spot of the farm in order to make it fertile. Were he to be observing, studying, thinking, reasoning, and judging upon these matters, there can be no doubt, that without ever reading a line upon agriculture, or making experiment above what his usual routine affords, he would become a more intelligent and a more successful farmer.

TO BE CONTINUED.

Boys—No doubt their labor is worth their wages, if they are looked after. The question of loss or gain by employing them wholly depends upon whether they are efficiently superintended. The old story, that every boy on a farm requires a man to look after him, tells the same sort of truth as the following, in which a fair estimate is made of their value when not superintended. "One boy is a boy; two boys are half a boy; and three boys are never a boy at all."—Agricultural Gazette

TO KEEP BIRDS FROM FRUIT.—Suspend in the trees or vines a piece of looking-glass by a string, so as to turn freely in every direction—No bird will come near, after a trial or so unless very tame

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