

## AGRICULTURAL.

[FOR THE BEE.]

*An Essay delivered at the opening of the second Session of the Tatamagouche Literary and Scientific Society; by JOHN BONTMAN, Esq.*

MR CHAIRMAN,

Sir,—Agriculture is that art by which the soil is brought to yield that which is necessary to the subsistence of man and beast.

A knowledge of the principles upon which this art is conducted, is called the theory of Agriculture, the exercise of that knowledge, its practice, and the one practising, a Farmer or husbandman.

In order that any art may be successfully prosecuted, it is necessary that the rules by which it is guided, be well understood; and as no art is more conducive to the comfort of man, than the one we now treat of, we shall endeavour in the first place to show how the requisite knowledge may be acquired.

As an acquaintance with the operations of nature, affecting both animal and vegetable life, is of the utmost importance, the strictest attention ought to be paid by the farmer, in this respect. The works of scientific men upon subjects connected with agriculture should be consulted with care, and digested in the mind. We are apt to slight their investigations, whereas we ought to respect them and profit by their researches. Repeated experiments of various kinds are very useful, if the results are marked with care. Making as accurate calculations as may be, of the expenses and profits attending different modes of husbandry, may assist in directing to that which should be preferred.

Presuming that the requisite knowledge is attained, we shall now proceed to the practical part of agriculture, premising that nature for the wisest purposes, has so diversified the soil and situation, that general rules will not apply to all; therefore, allowance must be made for particular cases.

The great object in view, ought always to be, to bring the land to that state which will bring the most valuable crop with the least expense or labour. In order to this, it is necessary to have the soil enriched to a certain degree, and the weeds destroyed. A species of crop that would not pay in one situation, may be cultivated to advantage under different circumstances. The field upon which the scientific farmer may exercise his talents is so wide and varied, that there is ample scope for the genius to work upon.

The division of the farm into a number of equal parts should be the first step taken in the improvement of a farm; such as the command of manure—the qualities of the soil—localities of situation, &c. Where raising grain is the chief object in view, four plats, or what is called the four-shift rotation, I consider the best; if a mixed system of raising grain, and breeding and feeding stock be adopted, five plats; and if with a view to stock chiefly, six or more will be found the most advantageous. Having fixed upon the number of fields, they should be laid off in such a way as that easy access may be had to them all from the barn-yard, which ought to be in as central a situation as circumstances will admit.

The fields must then undergo a thorough course of cultivation, consisting of a competent application of manure to enrich them, and a complete extermination of weeds. It is a rule in good husbandry to interchange the crops alternately from white to green, and vice versa, so that, excepting grass, crops of the same kind may not follow.

Great care ought to be exercised in the selection of seeds of every description, as it is of no use to look for owls breeding eagles. The quantity of manure should be increased by every possible means, and applied to the soil in the way from which it will derive the most benefit. This I conceive to be either to put it in drills if for green crop, or if for white, to plough it down immediately after being carted from the heap

Long exposure to the sun and air is highly injurious to any kind of manure, particularly if it has been in a state of fermentation. No kind of barn-yard manure should be applied as a top dressing, until it has been composted, and its parts completely divided.

The field or plat intended for green crop should be ploughed deep in the fall; so that fresh mould may be brought to the surface, and the soil pulverised by the frost. Loam intended for grain crop the following year, should likewise be ploughed in the fall, so that it may be consolidated, and at the same time pulverised for the reception of the seed.

Land of every description for crops of any kind, should be completely harrowed, and reduced to a fine mould; otherwise the delicate fibres of vegetables will not find that nourishment which is necessary to bring them to maturity.

Every description of culmiferous crop should be cut before it is that is called dead ripe, as the grain is then as valuable, and the straw much more so; and it should be thoroughly dried before housing, to prevent heat or must.

I shall now conclude with a few more general observations. A proper division of time and labour is of the greatest moment; that is, a doing of every thing not only in the way that it should be done, but at the time it should be done. If not, both time and labour may be lost. No one should attempt to till more land than he can keep in complete order, or keep more stock than he can feed well. The farmer's comfort and interest will both be promoted by having his houses and fences in the best order, and as there is none more deserving of a good living, I think it advisable to make sure of this in the first place, and then sell the overplus to the most advantage. It is quite a mistaken idea to carry all the best of the produce to market in order to raise money; it is just the way to let monied men reap the fruit of their labour at a cheap rate.

[It gives us a great pleasure to perceive, that debating, reading, and literary societies, are springing up in all directions. We think such societies, by whatever name they may be known, afford the happiest indications of the general diffusion of useful knowledge among the rural population of this country, at no distant period.—ED BEE.]

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