art, produce something for the occasion, and be sure *to prepare in time.*

R. L. D.

Township of York,
January 26, 1852.

INQUIRIES RESPECTING THE ACTION OF MANURES, &c.

(To the Editor of the Canadian Agriculturist.)

PIFFARDINIA, Livingston Co., N. Y.,
January 10, 1852.

MR. EDITOR:—I read your valuable paper with much pleasure and satisfaction. It is always so straightforward to all your correspondents on either side the question, which is the only true way of arriving at facts. It is not constantly puffing your own wares, as is too often the case. It is my opinion that much judgment must be exercised before trying experiments not founded on *practice.* There is so much "*humbug*" in what is *falsely called science,* that the farmer is often led astray by its erroneous statements. This gives him a distaste for reading, justifies him in condemning "*book farming,*" and induces him to pursue his habitual customs, whether it renders a profit or loss.

I am perfectly willing to admit that there is much benefit derived from *true science,*—but there are so many persons aiming at notoriety and "*professorships*" who base their foundation on *scientific words,* technical terms, and grammatical language, for the purpose of displaying their learning, and at the same time their "*noddle*" does not contain a practical idea. They involve themselves in a labyrinth of learned mystery, from which they cannot extricate themselves; and, in attempting to teach others their visionary pursuits, they have signally failed in the result. *Such is too much the fact.* I know many scientific gentlemen who study ancient authors, modern authors, and various kinds of authors, who have turned over as many leaves of paper and print in their *laboratory* as would puzzle the brains and confuse the imagination of a previously strong mind, and who have never turned a furrow or a compost heap in their lives, grope on in these *dark passages* until they are actually swamped in their extensive learning, and absolutely forget the place they started from. Farmers are beginning to understand this. They find that by reading practical letters, frequently published in your paper, and information derived from actual, practical, and other sources, endorsed by sound heads, strong hands, and willing hearts (the best parts of a farmer's capital) that they are more capable of taking care of themselves and their soils than trusting to the dictates of artificial education.

We all know full well that barn yard manure is a substantial fertilizer, and we likewise know that its value is estimated by the kind of food the animals consume; and we are also well aware if it is left in a position to draw away its strength that it is solely the owner's loss; but I for one *do not know* whether any of its substances *ever* evaporate into the atmosphere. We know too that excrements from the feathered tribes are valuable, and probably of more strength than the former, because the ingredients in the urine pass through the same channel, are not exposed to the washing of rains, and are generally conveyed to the land in their full power. We also know that night soil is still more powerful, and when a mixture of good roast beef, venison, some well fed carcases of Southdown, and Cotswold sheep, Berkshire and Leicester hams, well seasoned with wines, liquors, and beer, *to stir them well together* in uproarious confusion, is a valuable deposit. And I would strongly recommend City gentlemen to distribute this *high farming* produce amongst their neighbouring farmers, for the production of premium crops, *and setting good examples with money.* They must be aware that such a gift would be a *substantial one,* and the farmer to whom it was given would have an opportunity of displaying his *true science,* in its management and economy. It must be adulterated with weaker excrements or common earth, plaster, or lime, to effect its immediate action, or left to decay and then used in small quantities, or in any other form the farmer's good judgment may dictate; his *science* in a judicious disposition of it, would command confidence. If applied in its crude state extravagantly, it would destroy vegetation. Every *practical farmer* is aware of all this, and applies his manure according to its substance. But the farmer is highly indebted to chemistry for discovering the means of conveying this highly valuable article from its place of deposit to that where it is more profitably invested, *void of that offensive smell.* I must ask one question on this point which I have never yet seen satisfactorily answered. Is this odour, commonly called ammonia, to be classed with fertilizers? I have an impression from my own observation only, that it is not, and that manure is of no benefit to plants until it escapes from it, nor is it converted into food for them until thoroughly dissolved. It must be in solution before it can be absorbed by the roots (the only means of support to the plant, in my opinion) and when it is in this state there is no smell to it. For instance, apply fresh urine bountifully to a plant, it sickens, and often dies, because it has fed on unwholesome food; but place that urine a short distance from it, where it can be absorbed by the inorganised earth, and there held in solution until that unwholesomeness has escaped, the roots and fibres of the plant will gradually draw toward the spot in search of its food (if the immediate soil is nearly exhausted) and when they arrive there, it will grow luxuriantly; while fully supplied with it, the roots on that side the plant will be strong and vigorous, while on the other they will be weak and dwindling. This is from my own practical observation.

Here is another point on which I would like to gain some information. Does this odour, when absorbed by charcoal, gypsum, or any mineral called absorbents, tend to add strength to them as fertilizers, or is it taken up by them for the purpose of decaying them *prematurely? they not possessing this agent.* This seems to me like a reasonable question. I should like to