

THE
Canadian Agriculturist,

OR

JOURNAL AND TRANSACTIONS OF THE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE
OF UPPER CANADA.

VOL. XIV.

TORONTO, JANUARY 16, 1861.

No. 2.

Land Drainage.

It is now a universally admitted truth by all who understand the subject, that in the temperate zone of Europe and America the under drainage of land is the foundation of all agricultural improvement. Hence laws have been passed for enabling the owners and occupiers of land to facilitate this essential operation; and the British Government have expended large sums of money, to be repaid by an annual rent charge extending through a long series of years, for the purpose of extending an improved system of land-drainage. Some of this nature would no doubt be of immense benefit to Canada, provided sufficient checks could be brought to bear to prevent abuses. At best the draining of a young and extensive country like this must necessarily be a slow and progressive work, since the capital required for such operations, on an extensive scale, is very great, and at present wholly beyond the reach of the proprietors of the soil. Notwithstanding all that has been done in the old country in this way during the present century, it is astonishing to find this essential means of agricultural melioration, can only be said to have made commencement. Imperfect, superficial drainage is, as yet, comparatively limited. From an elaborate paper recently read before the Central Farmers' Club in London, by that eminent draining engineer, Mr. Bailey Denton, we condense the following information:

It appears that the total extent of wet lands drained or capable of improvement by draining in Great Britain alone is estimated at 22,890,000 acres, out of the total area of 56,352,000. The extent of land already permanently drained will not reach 1½ millions up to the present time, so that there remains undrained more than 21 millions of acres. The remaining 33½ millions of acres consist, for the most part, of free soils, naturally dry, which absorb and infiltrate to various depths, beyond the reach of evaporation, from one-tenth to half of the rain that falls on the surface, the rest of the rainfall being taken up by vegetation or evaporation, or passing off the surface without entering it in times of heavy and sudden rainfalls. The other portion of the 33½ millions consists of mountainous lands of rock formations, the surfaces of which having rapid slopes, throw off the rainfall in very large proportions, namely, from one third to four fifths of the rainfall. Within the bounds of these steep lands there are bogs and moors, which catch a large quantity of the water thrown from the mountain slopes, and give off by evaporation much more moisture than the rain which falls directly upon them. The extent of the surcharged free soils drained or requiring draining is about 12 millions out of 23 millions of wet lands, leaving of clays about 11 millions. These figures are set forth to draw attention to the magnitude of the field to which under-drainage is gradually extending itself, and for which provision must