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AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION.

BY THE COUNT DE POUVINS.

A report presented to the General Meeting of Agricultural Societies, held at Monbrison, on the 13th February, 1866. Translated from the "Journal d'Agriculture Pratique."

It seems to me unnecessary to point out the advantages of general education, and still less those of professional education. Instead of inquiring whether agricultural education is a good thing, it is more to the purpose to ascertain in what it consists, and by what means, in the existing state of things, it might be encouraged or hindered, and by what course of action we can supply what is deficient and correct what is defective.

In the first place, it should be recognised that agricultural education may have two distinct objects, affecting two classes. It may attract capital to farming by showing those engaged in commerce that the land offers a field of profitable investment; or it can lend its aid in the instruction of the class exclusively devoted to farming.

The first of these objects does not now engage our attention. It requires for its

accomplishment larger means than we have at our disposal; besides which it does not appeal to our thought and feeling. We want to improve our farms, but we want still more to improve our farmers.

Such progress as improves our cultivation, without enlarging the intelligence and promoting the well-being of our cultivators, does not satisfy us. Our ambition is to improve in the cultivation of the land by securing the improvement of those who cultivate it; our immediate object is to neglect nothing which, while it is for the good of the country, at the same time improves the condition of our countrymen. Is this result possible? We are convinced that it is by means of establishing and encouraging a system of education specially intended for farmers.

If we wish to instruct anybody we must ascertain: 1st, what they already know; 2d, what it will be useful for them to learn. It is often said that farmers know nothing! This may be correct enough as regards recent progress in the art of agriculture, but is it so as regards agriculture as a whole? I think not, and for these reasons: All experimental science consists of theory, which is truth demonstrated by reasoning; and of practice, which is truth established by experience.

I readily admit the ignorance of farmers in everything belonging to the theory of agriculture, but it is impossible to deny their real knowledge of all that relates to its practice.

There are two distinct classes of agriculturists—theorists and practical men. The former, starting from logical principles, condemn that practice with which they are unacquainted; the latter, attached to old customs, go on with their traditional practice, without intelligence.—Which of the two has the most agricultural knowledge? The innovator has received a better education; he possesses varied information; he might have been a writer, or a lawyer, or a merchant instead of a farmer. In an agricultural point of view he has obtained, by intelligent enquiry, many special endowments; he brings to an undertaking the courage and the will that shape their own ends, instead of a mere spirit of resignation and yielding to necessity. He is a man earnest and determined, and instructed in many matters apart from the art that he attempts to practice: but what does he know of practical farming? Too often, very little indeed.

The working farmer, on the contrary, is ignorant of everything relating to gene-