

THE COLONIAL FARMER,

DEVOTED TO THE AGRICULTURAL INTERESTS OF NOVA-SCOTIA, NEW-BRUNSWICK,
AND PRINCE EDWARD'S ISLAND.

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AGRICULTURE AND DAIRY HUSBANDRY.

Jackson's Treatise on Agriculture and Dairy Husbandry is chiefly a compilation from Agricultural works of the highest character; among these he frequently quotes the "Letters of Agri-cola." The following extracts from this work will show, that a poor man may sometimes do a great service to his country, which the rich would attempt in vain:

"Two things were desirable to increase the extent of culturable soil for grain crops, and to raise sufficient food for cattle and horses all the year round. Now these desirable points involved a thorough change in the practice of husbandry. How was it possible to break up and profitably cultivate indifferent soils, much of which had hitherto been considered beyond all hope of improvement, without an abundant supply of manure? and how could this manure be procured without keeping a large stock of cattle, for which there was evidently no means of subsistence? To overcome these difficulties it was found necessary, in the first place to introduce what are called green crops, that is, crops of artificial grasses, including clover, turnips, and other roots and plants; for by having a plentiful supply of these substances two important ends were gained—the support of cattle for manure, and the alternation of green with grain crops; thus at once enriching the land, and relieving it from the scourging obligation to raise corn crops successively. On these main points then, along with plans for drawing off by artificial drainage the surplus water lodged in or upon the soil, hang the great Agricultural improvements of modern times.

"The admission of green crops into what is now termed the alternate system of husbandry, and which was commenced about a century ago in Norfolk, produced a revolution in the whole condition of Agriculture; without this important improvement on old usages, the reclamation and culture of soils of inferior quality would never have been attempted with any prospect of success. Soon after the introduction of the turnip crop into Norfolk, where the vegetable was first cultivated to any great extent, single crops were raised upon many thousands of acres of the light soils of that county, the value of which surpassed that of the previous fee simple of the ground. And throughout the kingdom, land, being by that means rendered capable of producing more than formerly became intrinsically more valuable, and the value of estates was nearly doubled. A knowledge of the improved husbandry spread to the Lothians, and some other of the Southern Counties of Scotland about the year 1750, and shortly the cultivation of turnips, carrots, and other vegetables, superseded the common practice of summer fallow. Still this improvement was only effected by certain spirited landlords, chiefly at their own risk; and among these gentlemen may be mentioned Lord Kames, in Berwickshire, and Mr. Cockburn, of Ormiston in East Lothian, to both of whom the modern practice of husbandry is much indebted. The farmers generally were deeply prejudiced against the new system, and paid little attention to what they deemed mere fancies and novelties of proprietors. At length one of the class of farm tenants led the way to a better appreciation of the improved practices.—Dawson was the son of a farmer in Berwickshire, where he was born in 1734. At the age of sixteen he proceeded to Norfolk, and other parts of England, to examine the best courses of Husbandry, and store up for his own use whatever seemed likely to be introduced with advantage into his own country. Returning to Scotland he commenced operations on the farm of Frogden in Roxburghshire, in the year 1759. Disregarding the evil anticipations of his friends and neighbours, he proceeded in his course, upon the rational plan of bringing his lands into the best possible condition. This he accomplished by the use of the turnip husbandry; by the use of artificial grasses then unknown in Scotland; and by the liberal use of lime, not for the purpose of scourging the soil by successive

grain crops, but to obtain the means of bringing it advantageously into grass. His object was, to support upon his lands a great number of cattle, and by means of them to enable a moderate portion of the soil to bring forth a larger crop of grain than had formerly been done by the whole. Every man who in our times has attempted to improve an ill-cultivated and exhausted soil must be sensible of the merit which attends success in such an enterprise; but in those days Mr. Dawson had to encounter difficulties which do not now exist. He had numerous prejudices to encounter, and it was nearly two years before he succeeded in training an expert ploughman, who was willing to follow out his plans. All difficulties are overcome by perseverance. Mr. Dawson's fields soon became more fertile and beautiful than those around him. This his neighbours might have overlooked, as they had disregarded the fertility produced by the costly efforts of certain enterprising land-proprietors; but as his conduct had become an object of minute attention, a more important point was speedily discovered, namely, that he was becoming a rich man. They now became eager to tread in his footsteps, men who had been once in Mr. Dawson's service were always sure to find employment; his ploughmen were in the utmost request; they were transported to East Lothian and to Forfarshire, and every where spread the improved practice of Agriculture. Roxburghshire, in the mean while, together with the adjoining County of Berwick, soon became the scene of the most active agricultural enterprises; and Mr. Dawson, independently of his own personal prosperity, had the satisfaction to live to see himself regarded, and hear himself called, the Father of the Agriculture of Scotland."

Although the improved mode of farming was introduced into Scotland not less than eighty years ago, yet it was not generally adopted much before the year 1800, since which period the rents have been doubled, and it is certain that it has been profitable to the farmer, as well as to the landlord, while at the same time food is supplied to more than twice the number that were in the country a century back. Here, (long, long may it be the case!) the farmer works his own land, and if he can double its produce the profit will be all his own.

A better system of school appears to have been connected in Scotland with improvements in Agriculture. For the last forty years the benefits of education have been diffused among a much greater portion of the population there than in any other part of the British Islands—scientific works have been published in a very cheap form; and for the sum of five shillings a complete course of lectures on Chemistry or Mechanics might be attended. They had learned (what it is rather difficult to teach very ignorant men,) that they did not know every thing that was worth knowing; and they therefore applied themselves to the acquisition of that kind of knowledge which they found they lacked. The consequence has been that "the Scotland of the present day is a very different thing from the Scotland of sixty or seventy years ago," as Mr. J. justly observes. Formerly on their ordinary soils, a part of the land was cultivated, (generally, by sowing with oats,) and a much greater part was a common pasture. When the crop would not pay expenses, the land was left to lay as a common, and a part of the "out-field land" which had long been uncultivated was taken in, first manuring it by cutting and drawing to it a quantity of alder bushes in the summer, which were removed when the leaves had crumbled off. The land was then ploughed and cultivated till it was worn out, when it was again turned into the "out-field." Under this "in-field" and "out-field" system, only the most fertile tracts were frequently cultivated, the greater part of the land made a poor pasture for sheep and black cattle, who had little ex-