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AGRICULTURE.

REPORT ON THE AGRICULTURAL CAPABILITIES OF THE PROVINCE OF NEW-BRUNSWICK.

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(Continued from our last.)

CHAPTER XIV.

Suggestions in regard to improvements in the practical Agriculture and the general productiveness of the several parts of the Province, which may be promoted by Legislative interference.

From what has been stated in various parts of this Report, and especially in the two preceding Chapters, it will be understood that the Agriculture of New Brunswick is far from being in that state of advancement, which the progress of knowledge makes attainable and the interests of the Province require.

But improvements in the existing condition of agricultural practices are not to be attained, unless two circumstances co-exist—unless the farmers of the country know how to make these improvements, and are satisfied also that by making them, more profit will be derived from their land than it is found to yield them at present.

Now to improve any art, it is necessary to apply more knowledge to the practice of it. That a community therefore may know how to make improvements, it is necessary that the further knowledge be imparted to them. The profits of proposed improvements can only be rightly judged of, after a knowledge has been acquired of the way in which they can be most economically carried out, and the principles on which they depend. This knowledge therefore it is the interest of the Province to place within the reach of all its farmers.

The easiest and surest way of leavening the whole mass of the community with a fair share of this higher knowledge, is to make provision for its introduction among the ordinary branches of school education usually taught to the rural classes.

It is unnecessary to enter into details upon this subject, but I take the liberty to suggest—

1st. The introduction of a certain amount of agricultural instruction into the elementary and other Schools of the Province. This should be done at an early period, but at the same time gradually, and as the teachers become qualified to give the required instruction.

This instruction given in the elementary Schools ought to be upon the principles of agriculture, rather than upon the mode of performing the manual operations of the farm, as some have recommended, upon a piece of land attached to the School. The latter would involve more expense in the outset in providing the materials for teaching, more expenditure of time in teaching the new branch, a greater interference consequently with the ordinary branches of school instruction; and besides, a knowledge of the practical operations of farming on the part of the teacher, which it would be difficult for him easily to acquire, and which it would be attended with risk for him in a rural district to attempt to practice. Such an appropriation and cultivation of a School farm or garden, also implies the constant residence of a settled teacher to look after it; a condition which in the present state of the Provincial schools exists only in a comparatively small number of localities.

2nd. But in the larger Schools—the Grammar Schools of the County Towns—to which settled teachers of a higher order are attached, such practical teaching upon a small farm, where it suited the taste, knowledge and habits of the master, might be given in addition to that instruction in the principles of agriculture of which I have already spoken: This however ought not to be compulsory, but should be left to the teacher himself or to the trustees of the school to regulate and determine, the Assembly giving such encouragement in the shape of additional salary or otherwise, as may seem to them expedient.

3rd. But it is desirable nevertheless—necessary I ought perhaps to say—that practical agriculture should be taught in the Province on a scale sufficiently large to embrace all the ordinary operations of the Provincial farmers, and under the direction of a person of acknowledged practical skill, in whom the public would have confidence, and whose

opinions and practice the pupils might safely adopt and follow.

Two such School Farms might be established, beneficially for this large Province, in districts remote from each other, where the soils are of unlike qualities, and where the establishment of them would be attended with comparatively little expense. In connection with these farms a more extended course of instruction should be given in the various branches of science which are related to agriculture.

At Sackville an Academy exists, well situated, well arranged, well provided with instructed teachers, established by one public spirited individual, and apparently well conducted by those who preside over it. To this school an agricultural department might be easily attached. If a farm were connected with it, and a skilful practical person provided to manage this farm and to give practical instruction to the pupils, the present staff of teachers, and the apparatus and other instruments of tuition already provided for that institution, would in a great measure meet the necessities of this new department. The purely agricultural training would interfere little with the branches of education already taught in this Academy to the ordinary pupils. For the agricultural pupils a little of what is usually given might be left out, to admit of the introduction of purely professional matter, and of that practical instruction which would require their presence upon the farm.—But the adjustment of such details will readily suggest itself to persons accustomed to tuition.

The city of Fredericton I would suggest as another locality, chiefly because of the facilities which there exist both for procuring land and for obtaining a well appointed staff of teachers at a comparatively moderate expense to the Province. There the principal Agricultural School and Farm of the Province might be fixed, immediately under the eye and direction of the Provincial authorities, and open to the yearly inspection of the assembled Legislative bodies. It cannot be doubted that if a farm and School were well conducted in this locality, it would exercise over the numerous visitors from other parts of the Province an influence very salutary to its general agricultural interests.

From what I have learned regarding the existing position of the College of Fredericton in general estimation at the present time, it would I think be a hindrance in the way of the prosperity of the Agricultural School, to attach it too closely at first as a separate department to this College. With its own organization and board of management, with a staff of officers selected from the various scholastic institutions in the City, and with its own cheaply erected farm buildings, and boarding house if necessary, measures would be more readily taken for efficiently carrying out its own special objects, than if it were in any way trammelled by the rules or customs of an already existing School, literary or scientific.

I do not enter into details as to the course of instruction which ought to be followed in these institutions—or the number of separate teachers or professors it would be necessary to appoint—I only mention as points which appear to me worthy of consideration in regard to the whole subject:—

First. That the elementary Schools which reach the masses, which teach the children at little expense, and without taking them from home or interfering materially with their domestic comforts, and which through the children teach the fathers, ought to be objects of special solicitude in reference to agricultural teaching.

Second. That the training of future School masters to teach this branch, is of great importance to the Province. The existence of the Normal School in Fredericton, is one of the circumstances which renders the locality desirable for an agricultural school. Part of the special instruction given in this latter School might be made to enter into the course of study prescribed to the pupils of the former, and thus, without additional expense to the Province, prepare them for being more extensively useful in the rural districts in which they may afterwards be located.

Third. In establishing the School at Fredericton, provision should be made at first only for a small number of special pupils, who should board upon the farm. Pupils might be allowed to board elsewhere if they preferred it, and yet avail themselves of all the advantages of the institution at a moderate cost. An enlargement of the boarding establishment might take place as it came to be required.

Fourth. In determining the number of teachers to be engaged, it ought to be borne in mind as a principle not lightly to be neglected—in reference to the reputation and good working of an institution—that the more numerous the branches a man has to teach the less likely he is to

know them accurately, to teach them well, or to be respected in teaching them. The more therefore circumstances admit of the labours of tuition being divided, the more perfectly and usefully they are likely to be performed.

I have not entered into any discussion of the propriety of introducing such instruction into the Schools of the Province, as a means of advancing the general prosperity of the whole country, and the individual profits of the farmers who till it; nor of the cordial support which such a proposal ought to receive from the agricultural body as a means of elevating them intellectually as a class, and of placing them in that position in the eyes of other professions which they have not hitherto occupied. These points have of late years been so much discussed that I could not hope to introduce anything regarding them into the pages of this Report which should be more convincing than what has been often elsewhere said by others as well as by myself.

I may remark however that in a country which, as it becomes cleared, is destined, according to present appearances, to become more and more dependent upon agriculture, a knowledge of the principles upon which all sound and profitable cultivation depends, cannot be a useless acquirement to any class of society. Especially to the clergyman and the physician, whose professions and superior general knowledge make them the natural advisers of the people among whom they are placed, such knowledge would be a great acquisition, both as respects themselves individually, and as respects the community at large.—They possess many opportunities of conveying instruction to willing ears, even beyond the proper sphere of their own professions, and in benefitting the state by taking such opportunities for diffusing agricultural information, they would also be increasing their own influence, and elevating their position in the eyes of a rural population.

2nd. Next in importance to the Province I consider a survey of the coal fields of New Brunswick, in reference to its economical extent and value. I have in a preceding Chapter shown how the real workable value of the coal fields has an important relation to the agricultural capabilities, and to the measures which may hereafter be taken by individuals, or by the Legislature, for the purpose of preserving to each locality a sufficient and readily accessible supply of winter fuel. Every pound spent at this early period may, in reference to this one point only, save hundreds to the future occupiers of the country, while it may also to the present generation save thousands which might be unprofitably spent in borings and sinkings in search of coal.

In selecting a person for this duty, familiarity with the general economies of coal fields and coal workings, combined with a knowledge of theoretical Geology and a special personal knowledge of the Geology of North America, above all with a sober judgement which will exclude and reject all conjectures, and will gravely weigh the consequences of creating unfounded expectations,—these are the qualifications which should be sought for, and if possible obtained, with a view to the good of the Province, without reference to the personal feeling and favour, or to party considerations.

3rd. I have had occasion to observe in many parts of the Province, that the best portions of the land which are made accessible by means of the existing roads, are held by persons who have no intention to cultivate or improve them. However much it may be for the advantage of individuals to invest money in land, which though it yield no present revenue, is daily rising in value as the population increases and settlements extend, it cannot be for the general welfare of the Province that such should be the case. Two things therefore deserve the consideration of the Legislature: first, whether in all future sales it should not be prescribed as a condition, that within a stated period a certain proportion of the land sold should be cultivated or improved; and second, whether some means might not be devised consistent with the principles of equity, by which the owners of unimproved or wild lands might be stimulated to improve them, or to dispose of them to those who would. The rights of private property must of course be respected, but the general interests of the country are paramount, and its steady progress ought not to be hindered with the view of promoting or securing individual gain.

In Canada West, where the evils of large unimproved grants were more felt even than in New Brunswick, they have been met by the imposition of a tax, fixed in amount and apportioned by the inhabitants of the municipal district in which the land lies, and applied by them, I believe, to the general support of Schools, roads, &c., for which municipal taxes are usually levied. It has been proposed to levy a similar tax in New Brunswick; and though few can reasonably object to the principle of taking such property for the good of the state, yet objection may fairly be