

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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DOCUMENTS

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THE LEGISLATURE

OF THE

STATE OF MAINE,

DURING THE

EXTRA SESSION OF 1853, AND SESSION OF 1854.



Augusta:

WILLIAM T. JOHNSON, PRINTER TO THE STATE.

1854.

THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE.

HOUSE.

No. 4.

ADDRESS

OF THE

BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

TO THE LEGISLATURE.



To the Honorable Senate

and House of Representatives in Legislature assembled :

GENTLEMEN :—The Board of Agriculture, having finished the business of their session, and finding no legislative committee of agriculture as yet appointed, through whom to communicate their propositions to you, take the liberty of addressing you direct, with a view of giving an expose, or general outline of their doings, and what they ask of you to do in order to consummate their plan of operations, for the improvement of agriculture, and agriculturists in Maine.

Last year, on assembling together, the board found awaiting their action, no small amount of work, which had for three or four years accumulated from session to session of the legislature, it having been summarily disposed of, by the legislature of one year very quietly referring it to the next.

It this way the recommendations of one or two Governors in relation to agriculture, and the legislative reports on the same subject of at least three sessions, together with the petitions from many worthy citizens of the State, came into their hands from the legislature of 1852.

These related principally to two propositions, viz: 1st. The establishing and endowing an agricultural college. 2d. The commencing of a stock and experimental farm.

In obedience to the request of the legislature, the board gave these subjects a careful, patient and thorough investigation. They thought the condition of the finances of the State, and public opinion, was not yet in a condition to warrant the founding of an agricultural college in the State.

They therefore turned their attention to maturing a plan of commencing, with the least possible outlay of capital, a State stock and experimental farm of the kind prayed for.

This, accompanied with an elaborated report, made out by an able committee of the board, was submitted to your predecessors through the legitimate channels, with the expectation that it would receive a candid hearing, and calm investigation, and be made to stand on its merits, or fall by its demerits. We regret to say that it did neither—that but little investigation was made into the subject, but that it was finally rendered undesirable, and a *quietus* given it by uniting it with an incongruous matter.

Gentlemen, we would speak respectfully *of* and respectfully *to* the legislature of our State—but, we have also a right as a legally constituted board, and as individual citizens, to a corresponding treatment. We have a right to expect, that when any matter submitted to us from any respectable source, relative to the subjects on which we are appointed to act, shall have received from us due deliberation, and by much care and labor been fully matured and reported to you in legitimate form, it would receive fair discussion, and honorable, manly action, for or against it, and not, as was the case to which we

allude, be trampled to death "between the porch and the altar," or, in other words, be throttled between the two houses.

Another subject submitted to your predecessors, and one which the board greatly desired should receive a favorable response, was a memorial, asking for the resumption and completion of the geological survey of the State. The board still have the same opinion in regard to the importance and utility of said survey, and have unanimously voted to repeat and reiterate, with a few prefatory remarks, the same request and same arguments which were laid before the legislature last year. Will you have the goodness, when they shall be laid before you, to give them careful consideration, and take some definite action thereon?

Another subject which occupied the attention of the former, as well as that of the present board, is the publication of the transactions of the several agricultural societies in the State. It is now more than twenty years since the system of establishing county agricultural societies was embodied into a law, and took its place among the statutes of Maine. The act of 1832, making it imperative on those societies, through their proper officers, to transmit to the Secretary of State, such portion of their doings as related to the moneys received from the State, together with such report, statements, essays, &c., as were given in, during their operations, and that the Secretary of State should, each year, lay them before the legislature, and their agricultural committee publish them, or parts of them, to be distributed among the people.

These documents, above named, were annually sent to the Secretary of State, and by him laid before the legislature, but their committee probably found their time too much occupied to take further notice of them, or to become compilers of agricultural reports; and consequently, they disregarded this part of the laws, and nothing of the kind ever appeared from them or by their sanction.

At the time of the revision of the statutes in 1840, this por-

tion of the chapter relating to agriculture, was revised, but the legislative committee on agriculture was again empowered to select the matter from the several returns, and publish them as a legislative document.

This arrangement proved as inefficient and inoperative as before; for although agricultural societies increased in numbers, and by consequence, an increased amount of agricultural matter was, or should have been transmitted from the societies to the Secretary, and by him communicated to the legislature, yet the whole process was unproductive as ever of any agricultural publications by the State.

The committee on agriculture each year, feeling that their legislative existence was short, and having enough of other duties to perform, suffered this provision of the statute to become a dead letter, and every thing which was transmitted from the agricultural societies, and which the framers of the law intended should be published and scattered freely and liberally among the people for their information, by way of recompense for the pecuniary encouragement given from the public treasury, seemed to be engulfed in oblivion, and to sleep "the sleep that knows no waking."

When the board met last year, in obedience to the requirement of the statute which brought them together, they took this subject into consideration.

They accordingly sent a messenger to the Secretary of State, requesting to be put in possession of the returns of the several societies, that they supposed had, for a score of years, been accumulating in his office, and from which they expected to glean a rich harvest of practical matter, such as would be valuable to put into the hands, not only of the farmer, but of the general reader. To their surprise, but a few papers could be found. The Secretary very politely gave up to them all that he had, and which were all that had ever found their way back to him, after being laid by him before the legislature. What had become of them, was more than we could ascertain. They

were probably entombed in some solitary cloister of the state house, there to remain unseen and undisturbed, save by foraging rats, who probably believe they are fulfilling "their manifest destiny," by feathering their nests at the public expense.

On considering this state of things, the board came to the conclusion to gather together the transactions of the several societies as far back as 1850, thus commencing at a decennial period, and putting the amount of the three first years subsequent to 1850, into one volume.

There has been no small trouble in collecting these transactions no farther back than this, but such part of them as could be found are now in press, and will soon be issued for your distribution. We trust that in this you will find a volume, in which will be perpetuated much valuable agricultural matter, by which the requirements of your statutes, so long neglected, will be fulfilled, and with which you will be enabled to reciprocate the favors you have received, and are still receiving from many of your sister states, who have for years been occasionally enriching your state library by sending their own documents of this character, without receiving a similar return from you. After this, the transactions of each year can be easily procured and put into an enduring form. Progress has already been made in the collection and arrangement of those for 1853. The publication of these volumes will, of course, involve some expense. The true friends to the improvement and elevation of the productive classes, by the spread of practical knowledge among the people, will not regret this—and if any of our o'er careful friends, whose patriotism ebbs and flows in unison with the rise and fall of funds in the treasury—more mindful of cash than of the country, should become nervous on account of the expense this publication involves, we would say to them—it is but a small, very small installment of a debt long since due to the farmers of Maine, and but a tithe of what would have been taken, had not the requirements of the law

been disregarded for more than twenty years last past, and the people thereby deprived of what they had a right to expect and even demand.

During the present session of the board, many propositions from the friends of agriculture in different sections of the State, have been received and considered. After much deliberation, they have come to the conclusion that the greatest and most pressing need of the day is *a better agricultural education* among the masses. To effect this, after a very free and patient discussion and investigation of the different methods proposed, the members of the board have come to the conclusion that none appear to be so simple, easy and effectual, as that of introducing the study of the first rudiments and elementary principles of agriculture into our common schools.

To bring this about, the first step must be for you to pass a short act, additional to "An act to provide for the education of youth," and another, providing for the selection of a suitable text book. This branch of study has been so thoroughly neglected, that it is difficult to find a rudimentary work on agriculture, exactly suitable to put into the hands of the young beginner.

A committee of the board was appointed last year, to examine and select such an one, but, after searching diligently nearly a year, have reported, this session, that they had not been successful, and could not recommend any of those that they had examined. The board have therefore taken the initiatory steps to have one prepared, and hope that the legislature will co-operate with them in effecting that object.

In obedience to the wish of a large and highly respectable and intelligent convention of farmers, and the friends of agriculture, recently held in this city, as expressed in a series of resolutions passed by them, and communicated to the board, they will also submit to your committee on agriculture, when appointed, a plan of modifying one at least of the academies, or higher seminaries in each county, so as to have a department of practical agriculture connected with it.

Our strongest hope, however, is in the introduction of the elementary principles—the A B C of agriculture into our common schools—thereby, early implanting a taste for the pursuit in the tender minds of the two hundred and fifty thousand pupils in Maine, and so bending the young twig, that when it shall have come to a stately tree, it will shade and protect this indispensable, noble, sinless, life-sustaining occupation.

We have heard but one objection to this course, viz: that such studies would be abstruse, dry, and uninteresting, and that but few would be benefited thereby. It is not probable that every individual would be alike benefited by them. This is true of every other study. All do not receive and retain them alike, and yet, experience proves that it is a wise provision in our laws, that every child in our land, shall have the privilege of making it a duty to attend to them.

You all remember, gentlemen, the story of the sower who went out to sow. It was first told by lips that were wont to utter momentous truths in the most simple language. It was told to illustrate the truths of higher teachings than those we plead for, but will apply equally well in answer to our objectors. "Behold a sower went forth to sow; and it came to pass, as he sowed, some *seed* fell by the wayside, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth, and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth; but when the sun was up, it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased, and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred. He that hath ears to hear let him hear."

Gentlemen, we ask you to sow the seed—sow it broadcast. Sow it on the hill top and in the valley—sow it in the field and in the forest—sow it in the city and in the hamlet. Let

it fall where it will—by the wayside, on stony ground, on thorny ground, on good ground. Sow it with a liberal hand and a living faith, and trust in God for the harvest.

With much respect,
your obedient servants,

HENRY LITTLE, *President.*

E. HOLMES, *Secretary.*

IN BOARD OF AGRICULTURE, }
Augusta, Me., January 30, 1854. }

Read, accepted, and ordered that the Secretary be directed to communicate the same to the legislature now assembled.

HENRY LITTLE, *President.*

E. HOLMES, *Secretary.*

STATE OF MAINE.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, }
February 11, 1854. }

Laid upon the table, and 350 copies ordered to be printed
for the use of the House.

JOHN J. PERRY, *Clerk.*