

New Hampshire Journal of Agriculture
Manchester, N.H.
September 1, 1852

A Day with the United Society of Shakers at Enfield

Having felt for a long time a strong disposition to renew an old acquaintance with this interesting people, we availed ourself of a pleasure party ride the past week and visited them.

The Enfield Society occupy one of the most beautiful spots in the State. A long plain stretching along the west bank of "Enfield Pond" so called, (although it has a strong claim to be called 'a smile of the Great Spirit') affords ample room for dwelling houses, barns, workshops, gardens, fruit orchards with many a broad field beside. A little way back from the water, and the hills rise up steep, but are smooth and in high cultivation. We ascended this hill to the top of 'Mount Assurance,' on which is set up the 'Lord's Stone,' and the prospect from it was of great beauty. To those of our readers who have ascended 'Red Hill' at Center Harbor (and we trust all have or mean to,) it is sufficient to say that it seemed like a small piece taken up bodily and transported yet the light brown villages of the United Society, with the surpassing neatness, smoothness, and richness of their fields, constituted a feature in the view nowhere else to be obtained.

Upon the top of 'Mount Assurance' a small long building is erected, forming one side of an enclosure containing perhaps a third of an acre. This plot is made perfectly level and very smooth. It is surrounded inside the fence with a row of dark spruce, and contains within it the 'Lord's Stone.' This is a very fine slab of marble, covered with an inscription, setting forth that it was erected by command of the Lord, and having upon the reverse side a long 'thus saith the Lord.' The object of the enclosure and building is to furnish a retired place of worship, to which all the families can retire and worship together. The present church building is too small to accommodate all, so that the central or church family do not use it but meet in a hall in their large Stone House.

It was this church Family that we visited, and so many were the objects of interest that we regretted that the lack of time prevented a more thorough examination. We were received with courtesy that so eminently characterizes the 'Brotherhood,' and freely shown everything we wished to see.

Leaving the ladies of the party *our* first sally was to see the French Merino Bucks and Ewes, which they have, with commendable zeal for improvement, added to their flock. The imported Buck, selected in France by Mr. Taintor, of Conn., and for which the Society paid \$300, is a noble animal. It will be recollected that he was at the last Exhibition of the State Society and won golden opinions there. We think the wool in fineness and crimp is equal to any we have seen on similar sheep. In addition to this buck, they have a young full-blood not yet a year old of extraordinary beauty, promising to be equal if not superior to the imported animal. Both these sheep are covered with wool from the tips of their noses, to the very hoofs, and in the entire extent of the ears, and have heavy folds of skin and wool extra. They have in addition some half dozen full blood ewes.

We had a long conversation with Dr. Dyer, who was our conductor, in relation to the value of this importation to our existing flocks. His opinion as well as that of all concerned was, he said, very strong in favor of the benefit to be derived. He remarked that the lambs from their imported buck were strong and healthy, and as large at three months, as their native lambs at nine. The Enfield Society manufacture all their own wool besides much that they purchase, at their woolen mills at North Enfield. They here manufacture an article of flannel that is a delight to the eyes and touch, and would be no doubt to the back of any one fortunate enough to wear it. This they, by the invention of sewing machines, rapidly and nicely do up for the New York market into flannel shirts &c. They use considerable wool in the form of yarn, knitting mittens, stockings, drawers, and undershirts for the same market. These two last are knit by machines of which they have four in use. That these articles of their manufacture may stand A. No. 1, and deserve their position, they are striving to improve the quality of their wool.

We regretted not being able to see their flocks of natives, and half-breeds. There was one very fine half blood buck with the full bloods, and it is not too much to say that the quantity of wool that will be sheared from him will be twice that of a native buck. He was nearly as fully wooled as the full bloods, and his wool was of an excellent quality. We intend repeating our visit in connection with a call upon several of the flocks in this neighborhood, where similar bucks have been used, and hope then to be able to express more definitely, an opinion between contending parties.

Near to the sheep yards were several enclosures of fruit trees. All the trees of whatever kind of fruit were heavily laden. In one of the yards were several pear trees of standard growth, one of which was as beautiful as eye or heart could desire. It was a tall conical tree, of a very characteristic shape, and hanging as full as possible of the beautiful 'Sugar Pear' which had been grafted upon the original stock. We were treated to one or two, which however were hardly ripe, but gave evidence that when fully so they would be worthy of a more intimate acquaintance.

The Shropshire and the Summer Harvey apples had ripened to some extent and afforded us a pleasant treat. In another enclosure devoted to the finer fruits our eyes were literally feasted. There were quite a variety of Plums, some just changing their color and every tree laden with the greatest abundance of fruit. It would have been well for the trees and the quality of the remainder that the amount should have been reduced by one third or one half. The curculio, the pest of the plum, had not touched their crop. The soil, in which these trees stood, was under cultivation, but only for this crop. There were other kinds of fruit – quite a collection of grapevines, some thrifty looking cherry trees, and an assortment of young pear trees. In this matter of fruit, we have seen nothing to equal this exhibition. The pear trees were in grass ground, but were fully mulched with chopped corn-stalks for a distance of six feet around each tree. Can the vicinity of these gardens to the large body of standing water in the Pond make the difference in the success of fruit culture at Enfield, and at some other places in the immediate vicinity?

We will not attempt to particularize in reference to the vegetable garden. When we see first rate crops of garden vegetables in quarter and half acre beds, onions, carrots &c., - cucumbers, asparagus, rhubarb measured by the acres and fractions, we prefer to leave the conception to the imagination of our readers. We would however remark that the onion beds were a fair crop in spite of the attack of the fly. We were informed that they had saved the crop by the occasional application of salt during or just previous to

rain. We were informed while looking at a large and thrifty plantation of the rhubarb that they had only began (sic) to use it within tow or three years, and that it was quite popular among the in its season. The vegetable garden lies on a beautiful and gentle slope to the South East, stretching from the road to the Pond, and contains about seven acres. It will be borne in mind that this is only one of three families that compose this settlement, and contains about one hundred and forty members. There are between three and four hundred in the whole.

We visited the dairy, wash-room and the cellar of the main building. The cellar was a very extensive one, having a floor laid, throughout its entire extent of slate slabs. It was kept swept as clean as any room, and the large stores necessary for such a family were in perfect order. The wash-room was also floored throughout with slate, and furnished with every convenience. This room mostly goes by *water*. Just above is the ironing room. We were gratified by our visit to the dairy, although the sister in attendance thought there was but little to see. The cheese room was well filled with the finest looking cheeses, of from 60 to 75 pounds weight. Everything was neat, the air of the room was sweet, and not a fly to be seen. The churn made use of in the manufacture of butter is different from any we have ever seen. It looks like a spick and span new shaker tub of the largest size, with a cover in two halves. Standing up in the center is a hollow shaft, which near the bottom of the tub has four arms, likewise hollow, branching off from it at right angles. The ends of these arms come near to the sides of the tub and are scarfed to a point at one side. This shaft is fastened to another connected with a water power. When made to revolve with rapidity, a strong current of air passes down through the hollow shaft and secures the contact of the cream with fresh portions of air better than by any other contrivance. Those using this church claim that they make more butter from the same quantity of milk.

There are other and some more important, points of interest connected with the life habits and management of the United Society of Shakers, which we hope to present to our readers after another visit with more time to investigate. It is certain that the Shakers are good farmers, gardeners, and horticulturists. They accomplish much by their accurate division of labor. They have their head farmer, their fruit gardener, their vegetable gardener, their shepherd &c &c-
One thing is also certain, they keep fully up with the times and they prosper.