interest to carefully prepare their paddy fields and attend to the growing crop; as well as to grow their chena crops in rows and give them also proper attention. No doubt the system at present in vogue has been practised for some generations, till the cultivators of today have begun to look upon it as established in those parts, and one which needs no improvement. It is in just such situations as these that good work can be done in reforming the existing systems.

It will be a great day when the Railway intersects the various provinces of the Island. Then will the resources of the country—which in many parts is rich in resources—be developed to their full extent and the prospects of the cultivating class be brightened.

The idea which at present dominates the mind of the rural cultivator seems to be that there is no necessity for him to raise more produce than is required just exactly for his food requirements, and to endeavour to raise it with the least difficulty to himself and generally of the poorest quality. He need to be impressed with the true object of agriculture which may be stated thus:—To produce the largest crops of the best quality at the smallest expense and the least permanent injury to the land. TRAVELLER.

WOOD ASHES.

Wood ashes as manure do not seem to be thoroughly appreciated in this country, although they are so generally prevalent, the reason being that their value as manure is not thoroughly understood. It is considered by those who do use them, that their benefits are to be attributed solely to the potash they contain, whereas they are really a complete fertiliser so far as the mineral elements of the plant food are concerned, containing the whole residue of plants after being burned, except that part which is returned to the atmosphere whence it was originally derived; the nitrogen and the carbon of the trees alone being wanting in the ashes. There is, of course, a difference in the value of wood ashes dependent on the kind of trees from which they are produed and the character of the soil on which they grew. They also vary according to the parts of the plant from which they are taken, those from young branches being more valuable for horticultural purposes than those from the heart wood, the proportion varying from 5 to 20 cent. Professor Storer has investigated the question somewhat in detail, and has found by analysis that selected specimens contain 8½ per cent. of potash and 2 per cent. of phosphoric acid; or 4½ lb. of potash and 1 lb. of phosphoric acid for one bushel of ashes.

The bark of trees is still more rich in lime than in potash. But lime is not sufficiently used by orchardists or other gardeners, it being especially required by stone fruits, as well as others. Besides, the production of nitrogenous plant food goes on most easily in soils that have a considerable proportion of lime in them. Indeed it may be said that this supply of lime is indispensable to the action of the nitrification bacteria, which must have lime within its reach for proper development.

The power of potash to make the nitrogen of the soil available for plants is strikingly shown in clearing wooded localities, for wherever a heap of wood or scrub is burned, the vegetation that grows afterwards is particularly rank and luxuriant.

Investigations have proved, says a writer in the *Gardeners' Chronicle*, that commercial fertilisers are decidedly inferior for plant growth to wood ashes. The explanation of this fact, he says, seems to be that the sulphate and the chloride of potash are devoided of the alkaline quality which is so marked a peculiarity of carbonate of potash, which is the effective agent in wood ashes.

An illustration of the value of wood ashes as a fertiliser for grapes is given. Two vines yielded only 20 lb. of grapes in a season, but, the following year, they having been heavily manured with a mixture of wood ashes and kainit, the two vines yielded 120 lb. of grapes of excellent quality. The potash in the wood ashes combined with the potash of the kainit, matured the wood of the vine and developed the fruit.—*Australian Exchange.*

THE AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY OF CEYLON.

We have been presented with copies of the Proceedings of the Ceylon Agricultural Society during the year 1843 and 1844. To judge from a perusal of these booklets the Society would seem to have been a most useful one with the Governor as Patron and the Colonial Secretary as President. We learn that it was established in the year 1842, but what led to its dissolution we have been unable to ascertain. The list of members as given in the Proceedings includes about one hundred and fifty names, and in merely reading over this list one is led to the conclusion that in these years the cause of Agriculture had no lack of influential support. Apart from promoting and encouraging agricultural shows, the Society appears to have done much good work as a means of intercommunication not only between those interested in the cause of agriculture in the Island, but also between the Ceylon Society and other agricultural bodies. The result of such communication as shown in the pages of the Proceedings must undoubtedly have resulted in mutual benefit that cannot be too highly valued. The pity is that we have no such association as the Ceylon Agricultural Society at present. True, we have a so-called Agri-Horticultural Society, but the difference between the character of the past and present Society is all the difference between activity and lethargy, between earnestness and indifference, between the real and the nominal. What we want is a body that will work in real earnest and show a keen solicitude, in an active manner, for the welfare of agriculture in the country. Such a Society holding meetings say once a month at the School of Agriculture we should greatly desire to see established, and are ready to help in inaugurating, if sufficient support is forthcoming.

ZOOLOGICAL NOTES FOR AGRICULTURAL STUDENTS.

The order *Hyracoidea* is represented by a small number of living members. It is interesting as including the Hyrax Syriacus, which occurs in the rocky parts of Syria and Palestine, and is believed to be the "Coney" of Scripture.