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EDITORIAL.

HOW SHALL THE RURAL SCHOOL BE REFORMED?

In an article entitled "The Undoing of the Farmer," "The Farmer's Advocate" for November 7th discussed a luminous address, at Syracuse, N. Y., by United States Secretary of Agriculture Wilson, on the "Unproductive Farm," in which he charged the educational system with tempting the youth away from the soil and equipping them only for other pursuits. He commended the agricultural secondary schools, which would be feeders of the agricultural colleges, and open to students who go no further opportunities for beginning the study of what pertains to their life-work. "But why," we asked, "should the 'beginning' date in the Secondary or High School, when it is in the public school that the foundation is laid, and, for the great majority of our growing population, the educational superstructure, in so far as schools can rear it, is completed?"

An attentive and critical reader of "The Farmer's Advocate," whose opinions we highly value, writes, though not for publication, interpreting the article as not altogether approving the beginning of agricultural instruction in the High Schools, as is now being tried in Ontario. Now, we have welcomed the inauguration of these classes as a hopeful sign in the movement for a reform of the public school, but expressed a caution against speedy and great expectations, an attitude, we believe, shared by those who planned and administer them, with the hope that the work will not remain in these High Schools, but gradually work down through the public schools by means of the agricultural instruction given those whose purpose becoming public-school teachers. These six High-school class teachers are carrying on a campaign in the counties where they are situated, attending meetings, arranging for short courses, and showing to farmers that they can give instruction of value to their sons and daughters, in order to create a widespread demand for it.

Our correspondent states that he does not see how agricultural instruction can be expected in the public schools without a pretty thorough reorganization of the school system.

That is precisely what we are contending for. Thoughtful people have begun to realize at what a cost to themselves their children have been lured from the country, and inspired with no love nor ability for success in its pursuits if they remained there. Confessedly, there are difficulties, but the problem will not be solved until solved aright. All but a comparatively small fraction of the total school population, cities and towns included, receive their education in the common schools, and 58 per cent. of it, we are officially told, depend upon the rural school alone. Its character is, therefore, vital to the education of the people. Agriculture being the most important industry of this country, the school system should have some relation to it. A reform at the base will benefit the whole edifice, right up to the university.

In the Ontario school system there has been an optional provision for teaching agriculture as a specific subject, but with very indifferent results. To teach agriculture, per se, as an art, or the actual operation of farming, in the common schools is not yet practicable, and the young women, who chiefly preside over them, could not be expected to undertake the task; nor would the mere memorizing of a mass of technical terminology be of real educational value.

We are asked what more can be done?

First.—Improve the grounds, buildings and equipment. Good schoolhouses and churches are an index of a neighborhood, and enhance the value of its farms. Make the grounds roomy and pleasant, so that the young folk will delight to go there and be proud of their schools. Provide a school garden for growing flowers and other plants. Teach the students to use their hands. A more mistaken notion never got abroad than that education is just accumulating facts in the memory. To be educated, is to be so trained as to use aright all the powers of the man—physical, mental, and moral or spiritual. (Watch "The Farmer's Advocate" of Dec. 19th for a splendid resume of the experience of teachers in school-gardening and its benefits.) Inculcate the dignity of labor and the wholesomeness and superiority of country life. Let the pictures on the walls and the apparatus idealize and relate to the farm and the farm home. Have plenty of bright books on nature and the farm in the school library, with some that parents can, if need be, refer to. Don't fill it up with a lot of weak stories, but make it cultivate a taste for good literature.

Second.—Revise and improve the text-books. Put more of the beauty and purpose and atmosphere of the farm and farming into the readers. Color arithmetic with problems that relate to the work of the farm and the farm household, provoking home enquiry. Give the mathematical phases of the mechanics, chemistry and commerce of the farm at least equal prominence with brokerage and commission. The geographies might make more of the intimate relation between that subject and farming.

Third.—Elect school trustees who will carry out an enlightened and liberal policy, giving the preference, at a better salary, to a man or woman teacher brought up on the farm and in sympathy with farm life, rather than one from a city or town whose experience, interests and ambitions prevent him or her from estimating life from the farmer's point of view.

Fourth.—Greater care by county councils to select men for the position of rural-school inspectors who are in sympathy with agriculture and agricultural education, and who have had successful experience in rural public-school work. The Departmental regulations governing the qualifications of inspectors should lay as much emphasis there as on his university attainments.

Fifth.—Wherever possible, maintain the advanced or continuation class; do not allow the school to be run as a mere feeder of High Schools. Restore the prestige and efficiency of the rural and village school, saving to parents a great deal of extra High-school education outlay, maturing the scholars under the more wholesome home and local school conditions, cultivating their self-reliance, and sustaining the progress of the teacher by keeping up advanced studies. These classes should be encouraged by inspectors in every way possible, instead of crowding them into the High Schools.

Sixth.—Modify the public and High-school courses. Since it is in the latter that teachers secure much of their academic training, it follows that the programme of studies, which has been biased in favor of "professional" pursuits, such as law, pharmacy, medicine, etc., and mercantile occupations, should be overhauled, so as to restore the balance to those studies that relate more directly or indirectly to agricultural life, and which can be used to quite as good educational purpose as foreign languages and Ancient History.

Seventh.—Readjust the teacher-training in Model and Normal Schools. Here, in our humble judgment, is the key to the whole situa-

tion. In these institutions the teachers are made and public-school teaching receives its complexion and bent. We should like to inquire, through the Provincial Minister of Education, exactly what is being done at the Normal Schools that will minister to the needs of the masses engaged in farming. What is to be the character of the new Normal Schools being established? Are the staffs being chosen to man them in touch or sympathy with agriculture and rural life? Why not locate one of them in conjunction with the Ontario Agricultural College, where an infusion of its spirit might be received? We are told in the newspapers that, along with their training in the science and art of teaching, the Normal students are to receive much more academic instruction. Is it to be of the old High-School-University pattern, or upon the broader lines of The New Education? A new and younger president is now the head of the Provincial University, and the Minister of Education is turning a new educational page. What shall it be?

ECONOMICAL FEEDING OF CATTLE.

The summary of results, given on another page of this issue, of an extended series of experiments conducted by the Missouri College of Agriculture, in wintering young cattle on different forage crops, alone, and combined with different grain rations, should prove of special interest to feeders at the present juncture, when in certain districts fodder is unusually scarce and grain and millfeeds high in price. It is important that farmers should have an intelligent knowledge of the most economical methods of carrying over young stock and dry cows, in order that the former may continue to make some increase in weight, and that the latter may be kept in condition to make the best use of their feed when coming into milk again. And the experiment stations, having the necessary facilities for determining the results of different methods of treatment and feeding with greater accuracy than private individuals, their investigations should be accepted as throwing valuable light on these problems.

Among the important lessons conveyed by the bulletin in question is the relative feeding value of clover and of timothy hay and cornstalks, showing clearly the superior nutritive effect of clover, especially for feeding in combination with the carbonaceous fodders, such as corn and timothy, and strongly emphasizing the importance to the farmer of sowing and growing in liberal quantities this commonest of the legumes, and the one requiring the least expense or skill to grow, harvest, store or feed. Clover is one of the most valuable stock foods produced, and, instead of impoverishing the land, adds immensely to its fertility and its power to produce more bountiful crops of grain or roots or corn, gathering from the air nitrogen, one of the most valuable and efficient of fertilizing elements, and storing it in its rootlets for the benefit of future crops, supplying humus for the conservation of moisture in the soil and food for the plants that follow. As a sequence, the gospel of clover-growing, which is the salvation of farming in this country, should be more earnestly than ever preached, and taught in season and out of season, through the press, the Farmers' Institute system, the dairymen's associations, and every other available channel, so that enthusiasm for the culture of this great forage crop, in conjunction with its legitimate running mate, corn, may become more general and widespread.

In view of the unusual scarcity and the probable high price of clover seed for next spring's sowing, the questions of the most profitable quan-