

The Brain Growers' Guide

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TAKING EDUCATION TO THE FARMERS

In this issue we publish an article entitled "The County Agent," which deserves the careful consideration not only of farmers but of all those interested in improving agricultural conditions in this country. This story gives an intimate account of the work done and the results accomplished by a county agent in the State of Minnesota. The function of the county agent, we presume, would be somewhat the same as that of the agricultural secretaries now being appointed in some of the municipalities of Saskatchewan. It will be a matter for the governments and the farmers to decide upon as to whether the conditions in this country would warrant the appointment of county agents to assist farmers in making their business more profitable, their farm homes more comfortable and their social environments more pleasant. In Minnesota the Federal Government, the State Government and the local authorities have united to support the county agent, and this record of the work in one county demonstrates beyond a shadow of a doubt that the venture has been a great success. In Western Canada we have experimental farms located centrally and we have agricultural schools and agricultural colleges. Undoubtedly each one of these institutions is doing a splendid work, but all of them reach no more than a very small percentage of farmers on the farms. A great many of the disadvantages of farming in Western Canada are due to economic handicaps, but it is also certain that the majority of our farmers, like the majority of men in other lines of business, could greatly improve their methods with correspondingly better financial results. It is generally recognized that the future prosperity of Western Canada is almost completely dependent upon the prosperity of the agricultural industry, and it is an absolute fact, tho not quite so widely admitted, that the agricultural industry is more heavily handicapped than any other industry in this country. The county agent proposition has been tested and proved to be a success in Ontario, where several counties have shown exceptional development due to the work of these local agricultural representatives, and now that everybody is talking "back to the land," it must be understood that the "back to the land" movement can never be a success until farming is placed upon a profitable basis. The county agent has proved successful in Minnesota and Ontario. Why should not the same institution be successful in the Prairie Provinces?

THE VALUE OF GOOD BOOKS

There is no one thing that will bring to the farm home more lasting enjoyment and more wholesome pleasure than a shelf of real good books. The farmer and his family are in a peculiarly favorable position to secure more of the benefits and pleasures from books than any other class of people. The farm home is located miles from the moving picture show, the theatre, the lecture halls and those other attractions which occupy so much of the time of people living in cities and towns. The farmer and his wife and his children spend more winter evenings around

their own fireside with their family circle complete than any other class of people in the world. Sometimes this isolation gives the farmer and his wife a feeling of loneliness, but thousands of families out on our farms are never so happy nor so comfortable as when sitting around the fire of a winter's evening, each one reading a book or listening to one member of the family reading aloud. There is as much real enjoyment to be derived from reading aloud a good book as there is from any other source, and every good book that is read develops a taste and a desire for more books. The farmer is vitally interested in more subjects than any other man, and for that reason he has a wider range of books to select from. There are books dealing with his business of farming that will help him to improve his system of work; there are books dealing with questions that affect him as a citizen; there are books dealing with the work of the farm women, and there are just real good books that deal with life that appeal to all human beings and that make everyone who reads them better men and women. The farmer and his family have more time for reading in the winter than the town or city family because their evenings are not so much interrupted and there are not so many demands to attend to other things of doubtful importance. This fact is the very reason why farmers are the most thoughtful people in our country. They have more time to think over the questions about which they read than other people have. The reading habit is a good one to encourage, and if nothing but good books are read it develops into a pleasure and almost a passion that fills the vacancy that otherwise would exist in the farm life. Not many years ago books were pretty expensive, but every year sees them growing cheaper. A few dollars every year spent in the purchase of good books will soon develop a library that will be the most valued of household treasures. When once a good book is read it becomes a personal friend. Many people when they find a good book, keep it and read it every year and find something new in it every time they read it. The farmer's book-shelf need not be a large one at the beginning. Half a dozen good books on the shelf, side by side with the Bible and "Pilgrim's Progress," will furnish an excellent beginning, and if a few more are added every year there will be a splendid selection by the time the children have grown up large enough to enjoy reading them along with their parents. No farmer can make a mistake in spending a few dollars every year for the purchase of good books.

PROSPERITY AFTER THE WAR?

Without the least desire to encourage pessimism we feel that it is necessary at this time to say a word of warning with regard to the extravagant predictions which are being made as to the prosperity which is to come to Canada on the termination of the war. A great flood of immigration, we are told, is to turn towards Canada as soon as the conflict in Europe is over, and hundreds of thousands of French and Belgian people, whose homes have been destroyed and whose homeland has been

devastated, are to make a new start alongside hundreds of thousands more British ex-soldiers in Western Canada. During the first decade of the present century Canada received a large immigration and enjoyed great prosperity. Consequently the over-enthusiastic optimists have at once jumped to the conclusion that when the tide of immigration once more flows into Canada, prosperity will again smile upon us and we shall all become rich. There will undoubtedly be a revival of immigration after the war, but immigration alone will not bring prosperity to Canada. It was not immigration alone that brought the prosperity of the last decade. Ten years ago Western Canada was able to offer the immigrants who came into this country the boon of cheap land. Free homesteads at that time could be obtained within a reasonable distance of an existing railway or right on the route of railways which have since been constructed, while the best of land close to town could be bought for a few dollars an acre. Farmers, with a small amount of capital, were consequently able to establish themselves upon the land and make farming pay, thereby winning prosperity for themselves and providing employment for the workers in the towns who were engaged in handling the products of the farm and in the manufacture and distribution of goods needed by the farming community. It was cheap land and the opportunities which cheap land gave, that attracted immigrants to Canada from every quarter of the globe and enabled them to prosper ten years ago. To-day there is no more cheap land in Western Canada. There is still land available for homesteading, it is true, but except in very rare instances, the land which a homesteader can secure at the present time is either so far from railways and markets, or of so poor a quality, that to make a living upon it is a very serious problem. Neither can the new settler in the West obtain cheap land by purchase. Land that was sold for \$5 an acre ten years ago is now held at \$25, and before a man can put that land to use he must pay the price of ten years ago in cash and a similar amount, plus interest, every year for four years to come. Another thing which contributed to the prosperity of the last decade was the readiness with which British and foreign capital was poured into this country for railroad construction, public works, buildings and other purposes of development. Without this borrowed money, and the money which many of the settlers brought with them, we should not have been able to employ or to house the immigrants who have been coming to our country, and everyone knows how the curtailment of loans from Europe brought business depression to Canada long before the war broke out. It is not likely that European capital in any large amounts will be available for investment in Canada immediately after the war, and the great majority of the Belgian, French and British people, who are expected to emigrate to Canada, will reach this country penniless. Under these circumstances the immigration authorities will be faced with the most difficult problem of their lives in finding these people employment, and it is open to