

*Prospects for Agricultural Education in Ontario.*

NOTHING is ever at a standstill. All things in nature must either go forward or go backward. If there is no life in a body to produce a healthy change in growth and replenishing of tissues, then decay steps in, and still a change goes on, by disintegration and dismemberment. So it is with Institutions; which, unless they give evidence of power to adapt themselves to the ever-varying conditions upon which they depend for health and growth and life, must appear even to the most hopeful and most sanguine mind to be struck with disease and death.

What are the prospects for Agricultural education and the Ontario Agricultural College? The College has done good work in the past. In spite of all that science and scientific methods have done for agriculture in Ontario, there is still a good deal of scoffing and disbelief in the value of these studies and methods as applied to agriculture. But where there is an atmosphere of interest or belief in, or reliance upon these principles, it has been created largely by the Agricultural College. She has sent abroad over the Province many young men who have come to her for instruction, and these have become centres of intelligence and influence in their several districts. She has systematized and greatly enlarged the work done by the Farmers' Institutes of the Province. And with all this she has advanced steadily in power and influence and excellence of equipment, against the factious opposition of politicians and the indifference and prejudice of those for whom she was working and who should be her warmest friends and supporters.

In this latter respect her prospects are brightening. She is becoming popular. Year by year thousands of farmers, with their wives, sons, and daughters, visit the College, and while some inspect only to find fault and condemn, still it is only just to say that the farmers of the Province who visit the institution during the months of June and July are awakening to an intelligent appreciation of the earnest and faithful work that is done by the College.

But summer excursions can disclose only a very partial view of the work undertaken by this school of agriculture. A still greater and more fruitful cause for the growing popularity of the Institution is found in those who have spent a sufficient amount of time in the College classrooms to be able to appreciate properly the instruction imparted. Now, it is not the purpose of this article to decant upon the elevating and refining influences of a course of study in Scientific Agriculture, or in any branch of education. Perhaps, too much has been said, or said in the wrong way, upon this question. Still less is it intended to advertise the College by announcing it as the best equipped and best managed institution of its kind on the continent. It may be that. It probably is that. But this College must stand, not upon what it can say for itself through the members of its staff, but upon what it can do: upon the results it can achieve in the general improvement of agriculture and agricultural methods, and especially upon the regard which students and ex-students have for it as the place where they have obtained a large share of their intellectual furnishing. For assuredly the approval or condemnation of the great body of students may be taken as a fair guarantee of the worth or worthlessness of the College as a teaching centre. They are prone

enough to criticize, when they see anything wrong. Their approval is never given until it is faithfully earned. We are not complaining of this in the least. It is as it should be, for expressions of approval under such circumstances are all the more gratifying. Now, how do students express their love for and faith in their Alma Mater? In a silent, but quite unmistakable fashion. Not so much during their course here, where they are too near, both in space and time, to judge impartially, but after they have left the College and have had time to estimate how large a space it is which their "benign mother" holds in their affections. Then we find them returning occasionally for a visit. They try to be in attendance at the Commencement Exercises or at the Experimental Union. And they express, in many ways, their interest in College affairs. But the strongest and most convincing proof of the faith that our ex-students have in the College is seen in the number of students now in attendance that have been directly influenced in taking this step by old students. Thousands of dollars have been spent in advertising the college course in newspapers and periodicals; parents sometimes make this College their choice as a finishing school for their boys, after due consideration of the merits of other institutions; other factors may operate in adding to the number of our students. But neither advertising, parental choice, nor any other influence, can be at all compared with the influence of the ex-students. It has been already commented upon, more than once, but the fact will bear repetition here, that this matter of influences has been put to a numerical test at the College this year with the result as above stated. And it is but reasonable that the College staff and management should accept this as significant of the degree to which their work as teachers, and experimenters, and managers, is appreciated, and as a very fair proof of the success that has attended their work in the past.

Another very strong reason for hopefulness in the future of the College is found in the signs of the unrest that at present pervades the general educational system in Ontario. It is well known that we have one of the best systems of education in the world. It is cheap and excellent. The manner in which the Public Schools, the High Schools, and the University dovetail into one another is calculated to ensure the least possible waste of energy. But in spite of the general excellence of the system, a few evils have crept in; evils that could not have been foreseen, and even if foreseen, possibly could not have been prevented. For they belong to that numerous class of evils attending human affairs that must work their own cure through reaction from excess.

The whole tendency of the High School and Collegiate Institute and University has been to educate for the professions. The course of instruction laid out by the Education Department for the guidance of our High Schools has in the past inevitably led to preparation for a profession. The policy of the school management has also been to encourage preparation for professional examinations.

Public sentiment is largely responsible for this condition of things. The popularity, even the security of situation of the teacher has been made to depend upon the number of pupils he can push through the examination for the Education Department and for the University. His success as a teacher is estimated by the number of his successful pupils whose names appear in the different examina-