

THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE

AND HOME MAGAZINE

* AGRICULTURE, STOCK, DAIRY, POULTRY, HORTICULTURE, VETERINARY, HOME CIRCLE.*

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EDITORIAL.

A Few Plain Words with Legislators.

Some time ago we noticed several articles in an influential British paper on the subject of "Private Enterprise vs. State Aid," strongly favoring the former, and it will be remembered that the suggestion of State aid made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer of England to promote the pure-bred live stock industry last year was coldly received, not meeting with favor by the breeders themselves, and with opposition in the press, based mainly on the experience of European countries, where similar grants gave unsatisfactory results. Maritime Province breeders have protested against the action of one Government buying pure-bred stock for the people, especially when through incompetent judges inferior animals were imported. England is singularly free from meddlesome paternalism, and in that land farming and stock-rearing have reached a degree of perfection that challenges the world's admiration. In the line of scientific agricultural investigation, that carried on for half a century past at Rothamsted by Gilbert and Lawes entirely by private enterprise probably stands without a peer. It is on this continent of boasted independence and freedom that we have seen the plans of officialism to "help the farmer" reduced to a fine art. It has almost become a fad, worked out in various schemes designed to make political capital, create offices and patronage, and promote the prestige of officials. Witness the scandalous Yankee free seed distribution, the free publication business, a great deal of which is simply wasted, petty devices for advertising the wares of individuals at public expense, and so on. We do not wonder that men of independent spirit have cried out, It is time to call a halt! Farmers know perfectly well that they have largely to pay the fiddler. Unless for legitimate educational measures, subsidies to assist any branch of business, as a general rule, savor of class legislation and discourage individual effort. To train up any class to hang on the skirts of the Government is to lower the standard of ambition. The greatest success in the line of live stock improvement has been attained by private enterprise and healthy rivalry. Pap-fed industries are dependent, lacking in self-reliance, always asking for more help and doubting their own ability to cope in the open field, something which has not and need not be said of the Canadian farmer or breeder.

The Governments, Federal and Provincial, of Canada have ample legitimate work to do in relation to agriculture. Let them exert their powers to preserve fair rates of transportation and suitable accommodation for the shipment and marketing of animals and agricultural products from great corporations that by virtue of subsidies and bonuses are entitled to render an adequate return, facilitating access to new markets and guarding the farmer against combines. Here is real work to be done; let legislators roll up their sleeves and tackle it.

Again, exhibitions of various kinds are essential to the progress of agriculture and the general well-being. Most of them cannot be made self-supporting, hence Government aid, given through our excellent live stock and other associations, is needful, though some of the larger expositions, like the Toronto Industrial, have been successful without Government grants, while the old Provincial failed with them.

Reference has been made to educational work, such as that carried on by our dairy, fruit-growers', beekeepers', poultry, road improvement associations, and so on. Besides these, we have the more recent Farmers' Institute movement, which is proving the means of bringing farmers together occasionally to discuss the best methods, develop-

ing platform talent and stimulating social or fraternal relations.

Governments may also very properly institute and carry on agricultural schools and colleges, or schools to promote dairying and horticulture, such as we have in the Maritime Provinces, Manitoba, and Ontario, but students should not expect to get all the advantages of these institutions gratis at the public expense no more than the students for any other avocation or profession.

Our experimental farms and stations afford ample opportunity for undertaking investigations in connection with animal husbandry and the science of agriculture with which private individuals may not be able to cope. That all the details of such investigations should be carefully recorded in reports for the use of farmers and students is obvious, but in the U. S. we have seen such work wastefully overdone. The press of Canada is a credit to any country; in fact, is unsurpassed, and so cheap as to be within access of everyone. Every farmer can have his agricultural paper, his general news or county paper, and his religious paper, and, as heretofore, these can be depended upon to serve the best interests of their readers, keeping them thoroughly posted on agricultural and other matters, so that the Government printing-press need not be run overtime. We have been rather surprised to hear the suggestion to tax this splendid agency for the use of the mails, while loading the service with free Government literature of all sorts, political campaign sheets included, towards the cost of which agricultural and other publishers are taxed, and we think it will be freely admitted that the agricultural press has generously co-operated with the experiment stations and the stock breeders' associations in disseminating information regarding their work.

Representing specially the farming interests, it might be thought that the FARMER'S ADVOCATE would throw up its hat in favor of bigger subsidies and more officials to boom the cause of agriculture. Now, at the last session of the Ontario Legislature, the large sum of \$214,000 went through the House, we are informed, without scarcely being challenged. Both political parties either must have thought it all perfectly right and wise, as most of it may have been, or else they had their eye on the so-called "farmer vote." At the same time, all such expenditure should be closely scrutinized just the same as in any other department. Being the backbone industry of the Province, it deserves reasonable aid, but subject to the same common-sense principles that apply to all other public expenditure.

Detailed statements of the outlay of these large association and other grants should be furnished our Parliaments for publication so that the people may know that their money is being wisely spent, not doing for individuals what they can as well do for themselves, nor imposing on the rights and enterprise of others.

The Chair of Biology in the Ontario Agricultural College.

We notice in the Guelph *Mercury* that the students of the Agricultural College are feeling uneasy about the Chair of Biology in that institution, left vacant by death of the late Prof. Panton. It is said that certain Guelph politicians are pressing the Government to appoint a young, inexperienced graduate who, the students say, is not qualified for the position. We hope that there is no grounds for the fears referred to, but we venture to utter a word of warning. Under President Mills, the Guelph College has been singularly free from politics, and Hon. Mr. Dryden, the Minister of Agriculture, has discreetly made his appointments without reference to politics or religion; but now that he is in the shade, politically, for a time, there may be danger of the other members of the Government yielding to pressure from men

who seek appointment on the ground of political services or church relationships. If Mr. Hardy is wise he will resist all such pernicious solicitations. If he yields to them, he will make the mistake of his life. There are appointments in which such considerations may be taken into account, but they have no place in agricultural educational institutions. The Chair of Biology (dealing with botany, entomology, zoology and geology) in the Agricultural College is a very important one. The occupant of that chair will be in constant intercourse not only with the students but with farmers and fruit-growers, and it must not be filled by an inexperienced youth, nor by one regarding whose practical judgment, scholarship or attainments there is any doubt.

Township Fairs.

At a meeting of representatives of fair associations, held in Toronto on Feb 16th, a discussion arose as to the advisability of doing away with township fairs. We are not aware that any resolutions upon the question were adopted, and from the meager report of the convention published we judge that no agreement was arrived at and no decided action taken. The question is one on which we are aware there is considerable difference of opinion. Some are of the opinion that township shows, especially in the older settled districts, should be discontinued, and the county fairs only sustained, while others claim that the township shows are, as a rule, more successful than are the county fairs, and productive of quite as good results. Viewing the question on the whole, and from a disinterested point of view, we confess to a feeling of sympathy with the local associations, and favor their encouragement. We believe that, as a rule, they are doing good work, are fairly well conducted and are approved of by a large majority of the people of the districts in which they are maintained. We do not wish to be understood as counselling an increase of the number of fair associations in the districts contiguous to the large central exhibitions, or where union exhibitions of county and township associations are held. If in these districts the people are content to join for the support of the large show it is well, but whenever the people desire and are willing to maintain a township fair, we say by all means give them encouragement. The local fairs have an influence in promoting a healthy rivalry in the improvement of stock and in the cultivation of the best varieties of grain, roots, vegetables and other products of the farm. It is well known that the beginner in the breeding of pure-bred stock cannot afford the expense of taking a single animal, or a pair, to the large shows, and if he undertakes it he has small chances of winning, but at the local show he can make a start which gives him encouragement to continue and to aim at the larger shows in the course of time when he has had the benefit of more experience. With this end in view we can see no valid objection to limiting the competition to residents of the municipality in which the show is held, if a majority of the members of the association so decide, in order to shut out the professional showman, who is not always a breeder in the true sense, but often buys up a set of animals to make the circuit of the fairs and scoop in all the prize money hung up. We would gladly see the local shows, and the larger exhibitions as well, made purely agricultural, and free from the horse-racing element and the counter attractions which have become so common in connection with most of our agricultural exhibitions, and the tendency of which is to distract the attention of the people from the useful and educational features of these institutions, but we counsel the farmers to exercise vigilance in seeing that any movement looking to the abolition of the local shows, or the diverting of the Government grant for the encouragement of the township associations into other channels without the consent and approval of the majority of those immediately concerned, be met by a vigorous protest.