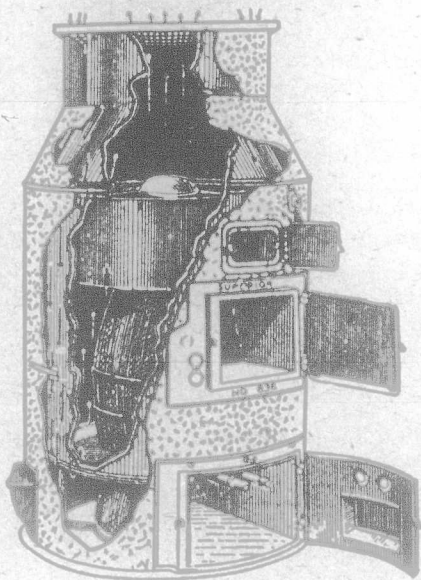


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The Rural Literary Society.

EDITOR "THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE":

In a recent issue of "The Farmer's Advocate" appeared a humorous criticism, by "Sandy McGraw," of a certain literary society, described in a previous issue by "A Young Farmer." It has been my privilege for a number of years to be a member of a literary society, and as a result I read Mr. McGraw's article with interest. I agree with him on much that he says, but not all. For one thing, I consider a banquet a valuable as well as a pleasant adjunct of a literary society. A literary society is not intended to be a profit-producing concern, and if it provides something of educational value and recreation its existence is thereby justified. However, in our society the girls supply a good deal of the cooking, and the boys pay cash to meet necessary expense. The result is the society's profits are not interfered with, though the profits of the various "dads" concerned may be. It is good for young people to eat once in a while in public, as it tends to break them off those habits often formed at home, such as resting their elbows on the table and using their knife for the "dual" purpose of knife, fork and spoon. The program which follows the meal and which includes "toasts" provides education and amusement.

Mr. McGraw is afraid some young people are likely to get swelled heads because of their public speaking. There are those who have been given in large measure the "gift of the gab," but who haven't been given any too many brains. Not considering the foregoing class I know of nothing else that will so take the conceit out of a person as making a public speech. A person may think he is a born orator and only needs a platform and an audience to prove that he is another Daniel Webster. But when the time comes and all eyes are riveted upon him, and he rises upon his trembling legs, and his heart pounds till the lead pencils in his vest pocket rattle, when his throat gets dry and parched, his ideas are vague and far away and his command of language almost gone; then he wishes he could find a hole, and a big one, that he might crawl into and hide. It has been my experience in literary society work that it is extremely difficult to get most young people to speak at all, or to say enough when they do.

I do not blame Mr. McGraw for being skeptical about the young farmer's claim that the advancement of every member of his society was plainly seen. There are always a number of people in a literary society who do not want the kind of advancement it gives. Their chief reason for being a member is that a society provides an opportunity for an outing and some amusement. Mr. McGraw seems to think that too many young men are aspiring to be leaders, and that what we want is more young men who know the best methods of farming, and of feeding calves and pigs. Knowing how to farm well is of first importance, and there is room for a good deal of improvement in farm methods; but the great trouble with the farmers of the past was that they were willing to do all the hard work and let somebody else do the leading. The result was the farmers got a raw deal, or they thought they did. Now farmers are taking their place as leaders, and are making a good job of it, too, as far as the Province of Ontario is concerned. I don't think we need to worry about having too many leaders yet, but we do need to worry, and do something more than worry, about the young men who are leaving the farm to become janitors and so on, in the city. They cannot be blamed very much for going to the city if they think there is better pay and shorter hours to be had, and they are likely to think that, if, as is often the case, they have to work for "dad" in the capacity of hired man, taking wages out in board, clothes and occasional spending money.

The young people of the present are essentially the same as those of the past have been; but we are living in a fast age, and if some of our young people seem too fast in their ideas and actions it is because of the influences bearing upon them. I think there is a good deal of wisdom in "Sandy McGraw's" article, and I would not be surprised if it were written with a smile on his face. Young people need something to steady them down once in a while, something to make them think.

RALPH W. BURTON.
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