

The Farmer's Advocate AND HOME MAGAZINE.

THE LEADING AGRICULTURAL JOURNAL IN THE
DOMINION.

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1. THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE AND HOME MAGAZINE is published every Thursday. It is impartial and independent of all cliques and parties and is handsomely illustrated with original engravings, and furnishes the most practical, reliable and profitable information for farmers, dairymen, gardeners, stockmen and home-makers, of any publication in Canada.
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Publishers Message.

The year wanes, and with its waning we are brought to another Christmas season, this year, as in the past two, mixed with joy and sadness. One year ago "The Farmer's Advocate" Christmas present to each of its subscribers took the form of a special half-century issue. This year, with all the difficulties incident to present conditions, the much-looked-for annual Christmas box goes to all subscribers free as usual, and when you have carefully perused this paper we believe you will join with us in saying that from cover to cover it compares favorably with any former effort. More than this we do not care to say, preferring that the subscriber and reader, as in the past, be the judge. It is no easy task to "go one better" each year, but by increased effort and unlimited expense the publishers are annually able to put out a special issue as a Christmas present to those who take and read "The Farmer's Advocate," and we can only hope that this Christmas Number affords those who read it as much joy as it has the publishers in preparing and giving it. It is generally considered more joyful to give than to receive.

Again we have prepared an issue for every member of every home into which the paper goes, (and more homes would be the better equipped by its presence.) The farmer, the stockman, the wife, the daughter, the son, the boy, the girl, the lover of art, the student of poetry, none have been neglected. How well we have anticipated remains to be seen in the reception which each gives the effort. All we hope is that the articles are read and illustrations studied.

It has been a "lean year" in some parts of Canada. Many a home has been grief stricken because of the great war. But withal, Canada has a great deal for which to be thankful. Canada has not shirked her duty. Her sons are making permanent liberty possible. We live in a degree of security which would have been impossible were it not for such men as our country has sent to the front to stand between humanity and the Hun. This Christmas cannot be the merriest but let us make it one of deepest thanksgiving. There are many ways in which we all can assist to make this old world and this Canada of ours a better place in which to live. Let us all help. We hope this issue is of some little benefit in this direction.

Anyone desiring extra copies as gifts for friends in any part of the world may have them at the nominal price of 25 cents per copy. "The Farmer's Advocate" wishes all its readers a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous 1917, a year in which it will be more profitable than before to farm better. We are ready to help as in the past with the best available in agricultural journalism.

My Boyhood and My Boy's.

By Peter McArthur.

The editor has asked for an article on "My Boyhood and my Boy's." Not being in the humor for making confessions I have changed the title to "The Boys of my Boyhood and the Boys of my Boy's." That is not so neat and it may be a trifle confusing but it will take me as near to the subject as I care to get.

To begin with, I say boldly that the boys of my boyhood could lick the boys of to-day with one hand tied behind their backs "and I dare you to take it up!" It was their favorite boast that they could "lick their weight in Rocky mountain wildcats" and from my memory of certain mixups I really think we—I mean they—could.

But this will never do. In order to present the boy of forty years ago to a cultured modern audience I must dress him in his best for the great occasion. Let me see—what did he wear? On state occasions, such as going to church or to the fall fair, he wore a paper collar and put butter on his hair. He also wore a home-made, full-cloth suit and copper-toed boots with pegged soles and red tops. If he was trying to be real stylish he wore a "dickey," or false shirt front, over his flannel shirt, and in winter time he wore a cap of hair seal and a big woollen scarf and home-knitted woollen mitts. I am afraid that if such a boy appeared among the correctly gloved, department-store clothed boys of to-day the modern boys would laugh—but they would do it at their peril. Inside of that uncouth clothing there was usually a boy who was sensitive to ridicule and ready to fight at the drop of the hat. The boy who laughed at him to his face would be likely to get mugged up. As I recall this phase of the boys of my boyhood a defiant challenge comes floating back through the mists of memory,—

"I'm a sun of a gun
From the land of the sun!
I'm a red-handed Arab for gore!"

By the way, that remark about putting butter on his hair is no joke but a historical fact. In those heroic days no one thought of appearing in public without having his hair oiled or greased. You could buy hair-oil in any country store and a pot of bear's grease was a treasure to be proudly shared with one's best friends. Those who could not afford such luxuries used a little dab of butter which they would rub in the palms of their hands to get the salt out of it before plastering down their hair with it. I doubt if one could buy hair-oil nowadays any more than he could buy paper collars (which used to come in much-prized, round, paste-board boxes) but both were articles of commerce "in my hot youth when Victoria was queen." In those days you would see a greasy mark on the wall paper in most kitchens and parlors, where the heads of the men and boys rested when they leaned their chairs against the wall. And this oily hair gave rise to a bit of household finery that still may be seen in some quarters—the antimacassar. As most people know, this is a little tidy that is placed on the backs of upholstered chairs, but I am doubtful if many know that it was originally used to protect the chairs from Macassar oil—the most famous and most widely advertised brand of hair-oil. This oil was so popular that Byron refers to it somewhere in his poems. In a burlesque description of a heroine he exclaims, as nearly as I can remember:

"Nothing could surpass her;
Save thine incomparable oil, Macassar!"
But the boys whom I knew could not afford Macassar oil so they used butter.

As there were still forests a-plenty in Ontario from forty to fifty years ago, the boys of that earlier age had much good hunting. The beech-knolls swarmed with black-squirrels, coveys of partridge abounded in the plentiful thickets, flocks of quail whistled on almost every farm and even wild turkeys and deer were not unknown. Of the black-squirrels, partridge and quail I can speak from personal knowledge, but I never got nearer to deer or turkeys than to see their tracks. Muzzle-loading rifles and shot guns were quite plentiful, and the scanty pocket money of the boys was mostly spent on ammunition. Where the boy of to-day has a double-barrelled breech-loader, or a twenty-two calibre rifle, and no game, the earlier boy had plenty of game and an "Injun Chief" muzzle-loader. Some of those old guns will still be remembered by the middle-aged men who once owned them, for shooting with them was not an unalloyed joy. I remember some that not only kicked but would knock a boy down and trample on him. But the black-squirrels were fat and a good mess of them was a delight that can still make a man's mouth water. It must not be thought, however, that the old-time boys had nothing to do but hunt. The land was still being cleared and there were "nigger-heads" to be picked up and burned, stumps to be grubbed out and ditches to be dug. Many of those old-time boys were doing a man's work before they were fifteen, and altogether too many of them are now broken-down men, old before their time, because of brutal hard work. But I do not propose to compare the work of the boys of the different generations. I know boys of the present day who are working altogether too hard, even though they have labor-saving machinery and all modern improvements. Let us pass to something pleasanter than work.

Of one thing I am certain and that is that the boys of my boyhood had more sports than the boys of to-day. Instead of following the sports in the daily papers they had their own ball-clubs and foot-ball teams and played

roaring games in the pasture-fields. And the reason for this is one to make us sorrowful. In this district you could easily gather enough boys within a radius of a mile to choose up sides and play ball, but now you can get ball teams only in the towns and villages. The boys are not here to play ball. It is true that the modern games are more scientific and the players have masks, pads, uniforms, gloves, bats and balls such as were not known in the past. We played in the clothes we wore everyday without gloves or masks and with balls and bats of our own making. A ravelled stocking furnished the yarn for the ball, and if a freight car with the old-fashioned rubber springs happened to stand over night on a siding there was always plenty of rubber for the cores. Many of the country boys could use an awl and wax-end well enough to cover the ball with calf-skin from an old boot-leg and anyone could whittle out a bat, so we got along very well. When we played foot-ball the local shoemaker would make the cover and we would inflate it with a bladder. Some of the best political orators of to-day no doubt owe their lung-power and chestiness to blowing up those old-fashioned foot-balls.

Next to the difference in clothes, the difference in educational opportunities is probably the most marked. With the older boys books were scarce and precious and as I remember them they ran largely to collections of sermons—what was called "solid reading." Still a boy who was a sufficiently eager borrower could usually manage to get a reading of Robinson Crusoe, The Swiss family Robinson, The Arabian Nights, Sinbad the Sailor and similar classics. Novels were frowned upon in most families but Scott and Dickens were not unknown and Wild West novels and detective stories of the blood and thunder type were fairly well known—on the sly. Of course those "Penny Dreadfuls" would be beneath the contempt of people who have access to elegantly published and beautifully bound modern novels but I doubt if they harmed anyone very much. Virtue always triumphed in those old paper-covered novels and the villain never escaped. Hark to this from the closing sentences of "The Gory Gouger of the Gulch."

"There is no escape for the varmint of Arizona" was hissed in his ear. "Vengeance demands your venomous and worthless life."

As I recall that thrilling sentence I also recall by association of ideas the smell of the hay in the stable-loft where it was read. And let me whisper something to you. Sometimes when I am skimming through the pages of our best sellers I still get a whiff of the hay. Many of the modern novels are printed better and cost more but the quality is about the same.

Of course there was a great difference between the old school system and the new, but I am not sure that the advantage is entirely on the side of the new. We were thoroughly drilled in reading, writing, and arithmetic, as well as in grammar, spelling, history and geography. The grading system was not strictly adhered to and I can remember boys who could not get beyond the second book in reading and spelling who could beat the whole school at "ciphering," as arithmetic was usually called. If a pupil showed an aptitude for any study he was allowed to rush ahead in it, no matter what his standing might be in his other studies. I am still of the opinion that this was a good plan, for the average mind does not develop evenly along all lines, but inclines to specialize. In spite of all that may be said against the school system which has been superseded, it was still good enough to over-crowd the learned professions and it even produced the scholars who are in charge of the educational system of to-day. It is easy to point out the disadvantages of the old system, but that reminds me of an ingenious essay published some years ago by John Lewis, Managing Editor of the Toronto Star. In reading the lives of great men, he had observed that almost all of them had disadvantages to contend with in their boyhood. But they overcame them—to the great benefit of their minds and characters. From this Mr. Lewis argued with subtle humor that the disadvantages they had to contend with were really advantages, and that in giving our boys every advantage in the way of education we are really doing them an injury. His essay was entitled "The Advantages of Disadvantages" and he certainly made a good case for the paradox he took as his text.

In spite of all this talk I am of the opinion that "The Boys of my Boyhood and the Boys of my Boy's" were much alike. If both could be dismissed from school at the same time and stripped of their clothes near some good swimming hole on a summer day it would take a skilful observer to tell them apart. I am of the opinion that boys have been boys since the beginning of time and that if Eve's boys had a chance they would discuss stone-bruises and hives with the boys of to-day on terms of easy equality. And as for my opening remarks about the fighting powers of the boys of my boyhood I have thought of something and I take it all back. If our boys were fighters it was due to an excess of animal spirits and led to nothing more than an occasional black eye or bloody nose. But the boys of to-day are enduring a test of courage such as we never knew. They have been called upon to face wounds and death for Canada and the Empire and have responded like men. In the name of the Boys of my Boyhood I take off my hat to the better dressed, more gently nurtured and nobly heroic Boys of To-day.