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EDITORIAL.

The Teaching of Agriculture in Ontario.

A bill amending the School Law of the Province of Ontario has been introduced by the Minister of Education in the Provincial Legislature now sitting in Toronto. Among other features, it makes provision for the employment of graduates from the Ontario Agricultural College to give instruction in the schools. The clauses referring to this subject are as follows:

"(1) The Council of every municipality may, subject to the regulations of the Education Department, employ one or more persons holding the degree of Bachelor of Science of Agriculture or a certificate of qualification from the Ontario Agricultural College to give instruction in agriculture in the separate, public and high schools of the municipality, and the Council shall have power to raise such sums of money as may be necessary to pay the salaries of such instructors and all other expenses connected therewith. Such course of instruction shall include a knowledge of the chemistry of the soil, plant life, drainage, the cultivation of fruit, the beautifying of the farm, and generally all matters which would tend to enhance the value of the products of the farm, the dairy and the garden.

"(2) The trustees of any public, separate or high school or any number of boards of such trustees may severally or jointly engage the services of any person qualified as in the preceding section for the purpose of giving similar instruction to the pupils of their respective schools, providing always that such course of instruction shall not supersede the instruction of the teacher in charge of the school as required by the regulations of the Education Department.

"(3) As far as practicable the course of lectures in agriculture by such temporary instructor shall occupy the last school period of each afternoon, and shall be open to all residents of the school section or municipality."

It will be observed that the above provisions, like the authorization of the new text-book on agriculture issued last year in the Province of Ontario, are simply permissive, the word "may" being used in sections (1) and (2)—municipal councils "may" employ and school trustees "may" engage. It is also stipulated that the contemplated instructions must not supersede the regular work of the teacher as provided by departmental regulations, and the lectures of the temporary, itinerant instructor are relegated to the last school period of the afternoon. Hence, unless a large staff of traveling instructors were employed it would be a long time between the lessons on agriculture in each of the many schools in a township. Up to the present time about 90 B. S. A.'s have graduated from the Ontario Agricultural College, the rate being about one dozen per year, and a good many of them are occupying positions in similar institutions in the United States. The probabilities are that very few would be available as itinerant lecturers to serve the thousands of rural schools in the Province, providing the plan were otherwise workable and the compensation offered them were adequate.

The proposed amendment is a virtual admission that the public school teachers of Ontario as at present taught and trained are not competent to teach the subject of agriculture. If that be so, and the subject is one that should be dealt with, why not begin at the beginning, viz., the qualifying of the teachers? The question that will naturally arise in the mind of a farmer is, should not the teachers drop Latin and French and some other things from their present course and be taught agriculture and the related sciences instead? With the new scheme in view, we believe that for two reasons at least he will answer in the affirmative:

1st. It would be more economical than to pay an extra teacher's salary and traveling expenses for occasional lessons.

2nd. Instruction by the regular teachers, providing that they are competent, may very reasonably be expected to be much more systematic and efficient than when given by itinerants, who, however

well-equipped with knowledge of the facts of science, have had little or no training as teachers of children, and of whom, as already indicated, very few would be prepared to take to the road in the capacity of "lecturers."

Away with Scrub Sires!

Never in the history of our country was the necessity for improving the quality of our beef stock more apparent than at the present time. Never was competition so keen and aggressive in the markets of the world or the tastes of buyers and consumers so fastidious. Never were there so many countries so ready to cater to the British market, which is and will be our chief dependence as an outlet for our live stock and its products, and it is plain that our only hope of being able to hold our own in the race for supremacy, or even of equality, lies in our producing goods of a quality equal to the best, and in order to do this with any reasonable degree of profit to the producer we must avail ourselves of all the means at our disposal to produce them at the lowest possible cost. To this end we must have a class of stock that will give a fair return for the food consumed.

The complaint comes from all parts of the Dominion that our beef cattle as seen in the markets of our own country and of Great Britain are sadly deficient in quality and finish, and compare unfavorably with those from the United States and other countries with which we have to compete. That the complaint is too well founded few will deny. If Canada is to hold her own in this competition, immediate and prompt action must be taken to remove the imputation and the fact. The cause is patent to all observers. It lies mainly in the fact that too large a proportion of our farmers are failing to take advantage of their opportunities to improve the quality of their cattle by the use of pure-bred bulls of good quality. It is difficult to understand how a class of farmers such as we have in Canada, progressive as a rule in adopting improved methods and in keeping abreast of the times, should actually have retrograded as they seem to have done in the matter of producing a creditable class of beef cattle. Our dairymen have manifested a progressive spirit in improving their cattle from a dairy standpoint and along dairy lines by the only means by which such improvement can be made—that is, by using only pure-bred sires of proper type, weeding out inferior cows, and feeding liberally. The example published in our last issue, of the magnificent results of the application of these means in the herd of Mr. Tillson, by which the average yearly milk production of a herd of 55 cows has been brought up to 11,000 pounds, and of butter 476 pounds each, is a striking exemplification of the soundness of this principle. We are well aware that breeders of the beef breeds of cattle freely charge the introduction of the special dairy breeds with the crime of degrading the general cattle stock of the country. There is much less truth in this charge than many are disposed to believe. Very few of the cattle offered on our markets show any marks of the dairy breeds, and very few steers of these breeds are raised. Bulls of the special dairy breeds are being used by only a small proportion of the farmers of Canada, a very great majority of whom favor the beef breeds, and believe, perhaps rightly, in the beef grade or general purpose cow as being best suited for the purpose of the general farmer. The cow which will give a fair flow of milk and will produce calves which fed on her skim milk and properly cared for can be made to fill the bill for export heeves at two and a half to three years old will always, and properly, meet the approbation of the bulk of our farmers. But the question is, are the men of this great army who profess to believe in the merits of this class of cattle doing their share in the work of raising the standard of the class? There can be but one answer. They know they are not. The fact is

patent to all disinterested observers that while they have been standing at the street-corners cursing the dairy breeds for spoiling our cattle, they themselves have been allowing their own to degenerate by using inferior and low-grade bulls, with the result that instead of keeping pace with the progressive spirit of the age, they find themselves fooling with cattle which cannot be compared with those their fathers owned nearly half a century ago. The writer well remembers some thirty years ago that when a first-class bull was brought into a neighborhood it was not unusual for the owner to have a list of from 75 to 100 of his neighbors' cows on his books at a service fee of two dollars, enough in many cases to repay in one or two seasons the cost of the bull. The result, as we all know, was that good, big, breedily-looking general purpose cows were common, and plenty of well-bred steers could be found for feeding, such as were a pleasure to look upon and a satisfaction to feed. But how is it to-day, and how has it been in the last ten or fifteen years? We know many cases where men have brought high-class bulls into a district, and standing them at the same fee, have not been patronized to the extent of more than a beggarly dozen of cows in a year. And it was not because of the existence of dairy bulls in the district, for only few patronized them, while the men who profess to believe in the beef breeds and the general purpose cow were breeding from low-grade bulls of their own raising or inferior ones whose services were held at fifty cents to insure a calf. The fact may as well be faced at first as at last, that the dairy breeds are here to stay, for the reason that they are paying their way and making good money for their owners all the year round, when properly cared for; and there is no class of farmers in the Dominion standing on safer ground than are the dairymen, but there is ample room in this great country for both the beef breeds and the dairy breeds—aye, and for the general purpose cow too—and those whose tastes do not run to dairying as a specialty have just as large a field for the cultivation of their tastes and proving themselves benefactors of their country by improving the class of cattle they fancy by the adoption of intelligent methods. The man who undertakes to look up a few steers for feeding, or the man who feeds them, needs no argument to convince him of the vital importance of this subject. There is pleasure and satisfaction as well as profit in feeding the well-bred, broad-backed, square-ended bullock which pays for his feed and gives a good balance on the right side of the account, while the bony, three-cornered, ill-bred brute eats more, makes less gain in weight, makes a low-grade class of beef, and discounts the price of the whole bunch when a buyer comes round.

We believe it is safe to say that the difference in the selling value of these two classes in our best market at two and a half years old is at least \$20 a head, while the cost of producing the lower-priced animals has been greater than that of the other, which means a loss of millions of dollars on the cattle marketed in Canada every year, and this loss falls mainly on the men who raise them. A corresponding loss is sustained on all the cattle of this class kept upon the farms of the Dominion, and however much we may deplore the fact, it is certain that the remedy is not to be found in whining over the decadence of our cattle nor in harping on "the tune that the old cow died of," but by every man asking himself the question, "What am I doing to improve the situation?" and by carrying into practice a resolve to begin at home by improving his own stock by the use of the best sires within his reach, and joining in a vigorous crusade against scrub sires. It seems almost incredible that men will so carelessly neglect their own direct interest by the use of mongrel sires, when good pure-breeds can be easily purchased or their services secured in nearly every locality at the reasonable fees now current. The small extra initial outlay is a mere trifle, when the certain resulting advantages are considered. Let us have done with this "scrub" folly, and let the new leaf be turned over this very season.