



The Art of Debating.

Very often a young farmer finds himself handicapped because he does not know how to get at the subject he would debate in public. Now, while the last word has not been said regarding this matter, the following pointers may be of value:

In the first place, let the young debater be thoroughly honest in his statements. No self-respecting man will ever attempt to make the worse appear the better argument. Nothing gives a public speaker weight like a justly-earned reputation for honesty and moral earnestness. Even in a debating society, where skill in thrusting and parrying are apparently the main things sought for, the young man who hopes one day to be an influence among men, must be careful to be honest with himself in every argument he brings forward. On the other hand, nothing weakens a debater like the habit of being insincere. A speaker who is known to be tricky, who has a reputation for telling half truths, or for concealing the truth, soon loses all influence with thoughtful men.

In the next place, learn to be fair to an opponent. It is no disgrace to be beaten in a discussion. It is base, and utterly unmanly, to adhere to a point when proved to be in the wrong. The young debater should be sure that he is in the right before he takes the platform, and this certainty can be gained only by studying his opponent's case. Lincoln was a prince among debaters. It was said of him that he always began his address to a jury by apparently giving away his case. He impressed all who listened with his willingness to have the best word possible said for his opponent. Indeed, he seemed to know more about his opponent's case than his opponent's counsel knew. His object, evidently, was twofold, to know the whole matter under discussion, and to impress all interested with his fairness. Only by knowing both sides of a question can anyone discuss it intelligently, or present valid arguments for the establishment of the reasonableness of his own claims.

Then there is the all-important matter of getting ready for an occasion. Most young men with eyes in their head can become aware of subjects that must be discussed in public at an early date. In view of such a discussion, let the young man get ready. Every fact relative thereto should be noted. All arguments, pro and con, should be duly weighed, so that when the occasion arises the young debater may be equal to it. This was the practice of Daniel Webster, who was known to have provided against one such emergency for over twenty years. The public speaker requires an open eye and a good memory.

Besides, the young man should study the circumstances under which his public speaking will have the most influence. There is a time to speak, and there is a time to refrain from speaking. Nothing is more objectionable in a young man than the habit of persistently making untimely remarks. When a man has anything to say, people will generally know it, and call upon him when his utterances are required. At the same time, a young man of proper balance will know his opportunity when he sees it, and a sense of public duty will dictate the opportune moment for his taking the platform. When such a man meets his occasion, it is not for him to confer with flesh and blood, but it is manifest duty to fearlessly speak the truth as he knows it. In this way he makes the occasion his own.

Having once taken the platform, the young speaker must keep cool at any

cost. Excited utterance carries but little weight. Let the best arguments be brought forward, and let each be supported by indisputable facts. Indeed, the young speaker will do well to confine himself to one strong statement or argument, clearly made and concisely stated. Doing so will tell more in favor of himself and his cause than a number of incoherent utterances that prove nothing conclusively.

O. C.

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Public Speaking Among Farmers Should be Encouraged.

Editor Roundabout Club:—

In response to your request in a late issue of "The Farmer's Advocate," to tell your readers of the result of the production of "Julius Caesar" by our rural literary society, I regret to say that the performance did not materialize. The failure cannot be attributed to lack of interest or confidence on the members' part, but rather to lack of time and opportunity, owing to the pressure of other considerations. Perhaps it is not to be wholly regretted, because, in the limited time at the disposal of the society, there are more important things to be learned than the ability to excel in a theatrical performance. The great desideratum, at least for the men, is to practice public speaking. It is quite evident that farmers are lacking in this necessary accomplishment, and if the Government wants to do something of real value to the farmer, it should use every possible means to encourage public speaking, first by having it taught to the higher classes in the public school, and second by providing suitable buildings for the society to meet in. At present, the latter obstacle is a serious one to the success of a rural debating society in many sections of the country. The school-houses are not apparently available under the present law, and, even where they are obtainable, there is no shed in which to put the horses. In a few sections, this is not the case, but there is always the danger of injury to school property, and consequent dissatisfaction in the section. The school law should be amended, compelling the section, on petition of ten per cent. of its ratepayers, to erect a shed for the horses, and provide, if necessary, constables to preserve order. This would do much to popularize public speaking and co-operation among farmers, but it is probably too much to expect from any Government till the time comes when the high cost of living in the city will compel legislation for the general betterment of the farmer's lot.

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The Roundabout Club

Results Study II.

We were somewhat surprised to find that not a single student chose to write on the first subject suggested for Study II., viz.: "Which do you prefer, photographs or paintings, and why?" And now the puzzle is to understand just why this ignoring occurred,—if so negative a thing as ignoring may be said to "occur." Was it because farmers are not interested in art? Or because their opportunities for seeing really good paintings have been so limited?

If the latter be the case, may we suggest that a fairly good idea of most of the great pictures and statuary of the world may be had at very little expense,—if one knows just how. And here is the "how": The Perry Pictures Company, of Malden, Mass., (also the

"Brown" and "Cosmos" Companies), make a business of issuing reproductions of famous pictures, at a price so low that few indeed are debarred from obtaining them. Nice little prints, suitable for framing in passe-partout, or even with wooden frames, if one cares to go to the expense, are sold by this company at the price of one cent apiece, the only proviso being that one must take 25 pictures selected from their catalogue. Very much better prints are issued at two cents apiece; still larger and better at five cents; and very fine ones indeed at 75 cents each. Now, who need have walls decorated with cheap, ugly "chromos," when these reproductions of the masterpieces of the world, in soft, sepia tones, can be bought for so little? Of still more importance, who need miss the fascination and the cultural influence of finding out something about the art of the world when such opportunities are offered? We surely cannot afford to miss any avenue, so easily won, by which this world of ours and life itself may be made more interesting.

(The one-cent and half-cent sizes, by the way, are excellent for scrap-books.)

To come back, however, to the work of our Literary Society: All of our students, then, chose the second subject, "Suggest ways, profitable as well as entertaining, for spending winter evenings," and very creditable were the essays submitted.

Most of the writers dwelt especially on reading, as a most desirable means of spending, happily and profitably, the long winter evenings. No choice, surely, could be better. True, the debating club, attendance at Horticultural Society, and Farmers' or Women's Institute meetings, with an occasional "party," may well take up a number of evenings during the winter, yet for the substantial "bread and butter" of life during the many remaining evenings, there is nothing like reading, especially, as one of our students has noted, if one OWNS the books, and can mark and write marginal notes on them to heart's desire.

"Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body," said Steele, very truly. "Reading maketh a full man," remarked Bacon, in words that have become proverbial. With many others, Norris, of Bemerton, has emphasized the point so well brought out by "Ploughboy," that READING MUST GO HAND IN HAND WITH THINKING. "Reading, without thinking, may, indeed, make a rich commonplace, but 'twill never make a clear head,"—that is, of itself.

There exists, in many minds, a curious and incomprehensible prejudice against reading and those who read. It is imagined by these warped minds that those who are devoted to books do not, as a consequence, think, that they are impractical, and quite unfitted to "get on in the world." It may not, perhaps, be out of place here to say that it only remains for these prejudiced folk to give the matter a fair trial, to begin reading themselves—along right lines—and to keep at it, that they may find out the great, unchangeable truth, that reading of the best kind is one of the greatest stimulators of thought in the world. Even to read sentiments with which one must disagree, stimulates thought. It is not necessary to accept all that one reads; it is necessary, however, to exercise one's judgment, and who could study such books as, for instance, Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations," or writings by John Stuart Mill, Henry George, or Tolstoj, without doing some hard thinking, whether to agree or disagree?

Nor may books of the more purely literary order be despised. It is sometimes advisable to give one's self up to

the purely pleasurable in life, and in these books, as Professor Alexander, of Toronto, never ceases to press upon his audiences—you may have heard him,—may be found, by those possessed of the key thereto, an "exquisite pleasure," which may be cultivated and enjoyed, more or less, by all those who apply themselves to the study of the beautiful in literature. We enjoy the delightful in music, we enjoy looking at beautiful pictures, why should we not, in like manner, enjoy the really exquisite in poetry or prose?

Judicious reading can never make a man less practical, less likely to "get on in the world." If he is not practical, do not lay the fault to his reading; the chances are that he would not be the less so if he never saw a book. How, in the name of all that is fair, could it harm any man or woman to have made some acquaintance with the best thoughts of the greatest minds the world has ever known?

As a last word, is it so sure that even the "mere bookworm" (and, since reading should never submerge action, it is granted, readily enough, that no one should become a "mere bookworm") has all the wrong on his side? Is not "mere" money-gathering, "mere" getting on in the world, if pushed to the exclusion of other things, as reprehensible, perhaps immeasurably more so, than mere bookwormism? "Mere" gold, or "mere" property, we must give up with the grave; the mind, we must acknowledge if we believe in future existence at all, will go with us. Then, is it not a shame—one cannot say this too emphatically—that so many people devote so very large a proportion of life to the accumulation of mere personal wealth, and so comparatively little to development of the mind? After all, the mind is the man, the man who will go into the future, the man who must live, and act, and exercise influence in the present.

It is an encouraging sign of the times that this truth is becoming recognized more and more in our day, and that more interest is being evinced every year in books, in the foundation of home libraries, and, in the rural districts, of rural improvement clubs.

Now, to return,—the prizewinners in Study II. are: "Ploughboy," Middlesex Co., Ont.; "Taps," Wentworth Co., Ont.; T. J. Rutherford, Grey Co., Ont.

Among the other essays submitted, the best were written by "Rue," "Marie," and Sherard McLeay.

Some of the Prize Essays.

WAYS PROFITABLE, AS WELL AS ENTERTAINING, FOR SPENDING WINTER EVENINGS.

"Oh, Winter! ruler of the inverted year,
I crown thee king of intimate delights;
Fireside enjoyments, home-born happiness,
And all the comforts that the lowly roof
Of undisturbed retirement, and the hours
Of long, uninterrupted evening, know."

So wrote Cowper, and it lies with each of us to welcome winter evenings' charms with equal joy.

Winter is the season of stock-taking and balancing of books, and as we carefully consider our past season's physical labor, noting the failures and making resolves for the future, it will be well for us to do some mental stock-taking, surveying the past with its too often stagnation, and mapping out a course of study and employment that may benefit our fellows, aid us to be more efficient in our chosen vocation, and at the same time store our minds with thoughts and