

## THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE AND HOME MAGAZINE.

THE LEADING AGRICULTURAL JOURNAL IN  
THE DOMINION.

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### Agriculture in the Public Schools.

To the Editor FARMER'S ADVOCATE:

DEAR SIR,—A recent number of the ADVOCATE contains an interesting letter from Mr. John I. Hobson, on the teaching of agriculture in the public schools. He enumerates the value of this kind of teaching, the list culminating in the following words: "And what would be even still more important, it would prepare the pupils to study such subjects (the sciences bearing on agriculture) more intelligently when they come to take them up systematically afterward." The context shows that he means by "afterward" the time when these pupils will be farmers.

Now, sir, I believe that every educationist who has carefully studied this question will endorse Mr. Hobson's position, that the chief aim of the teaching of sciences bearing on agriculture should be to prepare the student to study and understand that book, when he shall get it, which we call his own farm. In other words, it is to train the boy to be an investigator, to give him a start and as much training as possible in the use of his own powers of observing and reasoning upon his observations in order that he may derive the greatest pleasure and profit from his farm and the most benefit from the failures and successes of his neighbors.

The value of an elementary education in science is correctly measured, not by the information thereby deposited in the memory, but by the training obtained in its acquisition. Ten facts acquired by the learner's own investigation and discovery better qualify him to study his own farm, by and by, than a hundred learned from books and hearsay.

It is no more difficult for a teacher to store an attentive boy's memory with a hundred pages of the names of plants, composition of soils, lists and relative values of different breeds of stock, and feeding ratios, and many other classes of facts relating to agriculture, than to teach the same number of pages of history or geography; but it is not an easy matter to train him to discover the several qualities that give weeds their aggressiveness, or to recognize soils, or to know Herefords from Holsteins by studying the animals (not the pictures) and their respective merits by observing what the animals accomplish. A bolus of information concerning agriculture, or any other science, divorced from its objects and processes will oftener prove, in real life, a hindrance than a help. Hence the contemptuous references one too often hears to what is called "book farming."

Consider the time and effort required at the public and high schools, and at the model and normal schools, before a person becomes fairly well qualified to teach reading, spelling, arithmetic, and the ordinary literary branches. Comparatively little time is devoted to the sciences auxiliary to agriculture. If the teachers have not learned the elements of these sciences, and the distinct and difficult art of teaching them by the scientific method, what use will it be for either the Education Department or the trustees to say to them, you must teach these subjects? One might as well say to a teacher who doesn't know a note, or cannot run the scale, you must teach these children music.

Mr. Hobson holds that leaving the introduction of these subjects optional with the trustees is

"a mere farce." Three attempts already made, ending in as many failures, have shown that the farcicalness rests not with the trustees, but in the lack of knowledge of the subjects and how to teach them on the part of the teachers. Failures will likely result from future attempts unless the teachers are specially instructed in the high schools and trained in the model schools and normal schools.

But if the teachers were properly qualified to teach these subjects, who else than the local authorities could see that it is done? Possibly it is expected that the Education Department should at once make the teaching of agriculture obligatory. We know how the Education Department can do that. It is by putting it on an obligatory written examination. A written examination can test knowledge, but cannot test power. The written examination in this kind of work inevitably entails the result that Mr. Hobson rightly describes as "lifeless routine bookwork." Than that result, better not have the subject at all.

If the high schools are to continue the work of educating intending teachers, and to receive public support therefor, they should seriously undertake teaching the elements of the sciences in a thoroughly practical manner, having in view the end that they are training young people to be teachers.

Further, a training in the investigation of natural phenomena, while of such obvious benefit to boys who are to be farmers, is just as valuable to girls who are to be housekeepers, and scarcely less valuable in artisan, commercial or professional life. Therefore, instruction in the elements of the sciences—now often spoken of as nature study—should be the right and privilege of every child, whether in town or country, and every teacher should be trained to impart it.

To summarize:—My contentions are: 1st. That persons who aspire to be teachers should be taught at the high schools a course in the English branches, mathematics and sciences, that will well qualify them to teach these subjects efficiently in the public schools, and at the same time make them generally well-informed. To these groups, at the option of the candidates, may be added a study of foreign languages, but such languages should not be allowed to supplant the essentials.

2nd. That the training schools, normal and model, should give as much attention to methods of teaching elementary sciences as to the teaching of the other groups of studies.

3rd. That pupils in all kinds and grades of schools should have the benefit of some scientific training, and that in rural schools such training ought to be given as large a bearing on agriculture as is practicable.

Yours truly,  
J. DEARNESS.

London, Ont.

### How Shall Agriculture be Taught?

The teaching of agriculture or agricultural science in the public schools is a subject of very grave interest in more than one Province of Canada. The publication of the new agricultural text-book written by Mr. C. C. James, which now occupies a tentative position as far as the school curriculum is concerned, has revived interest in the subject in the Province of Ontario. In our October 1st issue Mr. John I. Hobson began a further discussion of the subject, and his suggestive letter is the subject of a thoughtful communication in this issue by Mr. John Dearness, I. P. S., a well-known educationist and investigator in natural science, who very forcefully presents the modern conception of what useful education in science really means, and which is not favorable to the commonly-understood text-book method. We noticed in the *Saturday Evening Post*, of Philadelphia, recently, a severe arraignment of the modern system of education, which is set down as a brilliant failure. The writer declared that colleges had degenerated into mere knowledge factories where the youth was stuffed with facts after the food-cramming plan of fattening geese at Strasburg. "The education of the future," concluded the writer, "will be a simple system of training and exercising all of the senses, teaching him (the scholar) how to think, and making his mind ready on the instant." This indicates a revolt in the popular mind against old notions, and may be extreme.

There are signs of a rising movement in cities and towns in favor of technical education, presumably to follow the more elementary work of the public schools, and with the growing specialization of agriculture the foundation for more technical information applicable to the profession of agriculture in its various branches must be laid at least in the rural public schools. There is great danger that foreign languages, and some other subjects as well, will continue to hold sway, supplanting or blocking the way against those that have a more direct bearing upon the successful pursuit of the country's greatest industry—that of the farmer. We welcome Mr. Dearness' letter as a valuable contribution to the discussion of this theme, which we trust will be taken up by others of our readers.

### READ THIS COLUMN FIRST!

"Proud of the Farmer's Advocate."—W. J. Young, Adler, North Dakota, U. S. A., writes us as follows: "We get a number of agricultural papers at this farm, but I want to say that I feel quite proud of the FARMER'S ADVOCATE as a Canadian farm journal. It has a fine appearance, better cuts, more practical reading matter for the farmers and stockmen, and a greater freedom from fake advertisements than any paper we get."

The above note, just received from a reader on the American side of the line, is a fair sample of the appreciation in which the FARMER'S ADVOCATE continues to be held. We honestly strive to give the farmers the best that can be furnished in agricultural literature; hence subscribers write us like the following from Mr. H. N. Bingham, of Simcoe Co., Ont.: "I consider that every number is worth \$1.00 to me." But the FARMER'S ADVOCATE does not stop at that.

A New Dress.—Among the many improvements in the FARMER'S ADVOCATE for 1899 will be a complete new dress of type, which will add greatly to its present handsome appearance. It will be worn for the first time in the Christmas number to be issued December 15th next.

Our Christmas Number for 1898.—It will be unique in agricultural journalism, and we hope worthy the splendid attainments of the Canadian farmer. The pictorial features will, perhaps, be the most striking, embracing views of a large number of the best-appointed farms in every Province of the Dominion, examples of what has been accomplished in different branches of farming, such as stock-raising, fruit culture, dairying, grain-growing, etc. Many of them will be full-page representations, and others over one-third page in size. There will also be engravings of the Dominion Experimental Farms, and the Agricultural College at Guelph, Ontario, and a score of other attractive illustrations. They will be executed by the foremost artists on the continent, and accompanying them will be articles of interest and practical value written by various members of our editorial staff. A fine series of contributed articles out of the beaten path, and a few in lighter vein suited to the season, together with a glimpse at the home life of a typical European farmer, will afford something of interest to every reader. On the part of artists, engravers, editors, and contributors, it entails some six months' labor, and a very heavy outlay on our part. The price has been fixed at fifty cents per single copy, but all regular subscribers will receive it without extra charge.

New Subscribers Get It.—Every new yearly subscriber receives the balance of the present year's issues, the magnificent Christmas number, and all the issues for 1899 at the ordinary subscription rate of \$1.00.

Grand Cash Prize Competition.—As a special inducement to our friends who will aid in extending our subscription lists, we have decided to offer a cash commission of 25 cents for every new subscriber sent in, together with \$50 in cash, to be divided as follows among those sending in the seven largest lists during November and December. Prizes: 1st, \$15.00; 2nd, \$12.00; 3rd, \$10.00; 4th, \$8.00; 5th, \$4.00; 6th, \$2.00; 7th, \$1.00. Everyone sending in one or more new subscribers will receive at least the 25 per cent. cash commission, and also stand a chance of earning one of these handsome cash prizes. Names and money should be sent in as fast as obtained, and will be credited the person getting up the club. Renewals will not count in competition. Our regular salaried agents and agricultural society or farmers' institute lists are excluded from this competition. Send for free sample copy and subscription forms and begin work at once, in order to make the best possible use of the two months' time. Every new subscriber receives the balance of this year, the Christmas number, and every issue of the paper issued in 1899. No subscription must be taken at less than \$1.00. The 25 per cent. commission may be retained as the names are sent in. Final lists in cash competition must be mailed before January 1st, 1899.

A Great Teacher's Bible Offer.—Many of our readers will remember the beautiful new Bagater's Teacher's Bible which we gave last year to those sending us in the names of three new subscribers. We are glad to be able again to bring this volume of inestimable value within reach of our readers, and on even more favorable terms. A copy will be sent post free to each one sending us the names of only two new subscribers, at \$1.00 each, during the months of November and December.

Our New Self Binder.—Each copy of the FARMER'S ADVOCATE, as received, is safely secured as in a fine cloth-bound book. Handy, handsome, durable. Will be sent post prepaid to any subscriber sending us two new yearly subscriptions, or to any subscriber who, during November or December, sends in his or her renewal for another year, accompanied by one new yearly subscription.

How to Get the Paper Free.—Any present subscriber sending in two new subscribers and \$2.00 will have his or her subscription extended for one year.