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The Scolding Habit

1915

OUR GUARANTEE

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HERE IS AN "EDITORIAL" by one of our valued subscribers. It was not designed to occupy this page, but inspired by its caption—"It is time for a Change," we think it would be well, if only "for a change," to give our readers the benefits of the sentiments that move others than ourselves, and the view they take of things as they find them. From the kindly way in which this human document was handed to us, we take comfort in the feeling that the shot is not particularly aimed at ourselves. Rather that the writer held the belief we would not treat it lightly but give it the consideration it is entitled to, coming as it does from one who is no shirker, and who takes his medicine always with phenomenal patience. He says:

"AGRICULTURAL TEACHERS and Journals complain that the farmer does not turn out to lectures nor are they impressed with the long-windy Journal editorials. The teachers and the Journals are right. The farmer has no doubt had his fill of the kind of "slush" the "Agricultural Journal" and lecturers have been feeding him on.

What has he done that he must turn out and be lectured to whenever a young stripling, with a crude knowledge or smattering of practical farming, wants to earn a few dollars in salary and expenses? The farmer's time spent in listening to such "rot" is better spent in having a little fun at home.

"AGRICULTURAL JOURNALS" no doubt call themselves "Trade Journals," and it is evident from the way they are run that they think the farming trade can only be appealed to by grumbling at everything and everybody. For fault-finding this class of Canadian publication "takes the cake." In the last two years there have only appeared two cheerful articles in the editorial columns of any of the Journals the writer has seen, and in some of them, as late as the last two months, I have counted two or more editorials severely lecturing the farmer for his shortcomings. The farmer who takes the "Trade Journal" gets his setting out, because you get him at his home. He cannot "dodge" you as he now does the licensed instructor. Would it not be well for you to try another way for a time?

THE MAJORITY OF FARMERS know more about real farming than you or the so-called instructors do. Appeal to that knowledge, ask his assistance and co-operation. It will not be so easy for you to take this line, but the writer feels sure you would meet with greater success. Anybody can lecture or scold, and when the habit is formed the scold takes pride in his so-called eloquence. You know what becomes of the preacher who scolds his congregation! Clever people absent themselves, and the others "grin" and bear it until finally their long sufferings are relieved by super-

annuation or a call to the other world. For a long time you have "pounded" the farmer for fair. Please give him a rest by showing him how much better he is off than his fellow-man whose lot is in the town or city with no work and a family to keep."

THERE'S A LOT in what this man says that cannot be gainsaid. With some little experience in directing the young mind, we do know that it is a bad plan to seek to drive the child, still worse to let the scolding method become a chronic weakness. And when we are dealing with full-grown men, who shall say that the nagging habit ever accomplished anything? The best of all teachers have ever had the least to say. Example is the great school of mankind, and mankind will move in response to no other. The teacher or the journalist has missed his mark who cannot fascinate those to whom he addresses himself to that point in which they take a real delight in digging out information for themselves. He is the "Square man in the round hole."

FAULT-FINDING IS EASY—it is a "gift" with some people, but we protest it is the last trait in our disposition. In raking up the past, since we heard from our friend above quoted, we find we did recently call attention to the case of a man (who was fairly representative of his neighbourhood) whose attempts to cultivate single-handed three-quarters of a section of land did call for something more than a verbal reprimand. That case was a matter of fact, and when we publish anything of the kind again (as we are quite likely to do) it will be facts we will relate which can be verified without expense by any open-minded person. Generally speaking, the man who is innocent of a charge can keep quite cool. It is usually the fellow who cannot "take refuge in his integrity" who gets ruffled. May it not be that our correspondent feels the sting of what has been said in the agricultural journals because it comes home to him?

OUR PROVINCE IS TO LEAD our readers to information and inspiration. We are not holding a brief for the academic or for any teacher or for any teaching institution, but we would like to express ourselves as enthusiasts in cultivating the teaching art. Some of our professional friends, we know, get so saturated with the atmosphere of the university that they forget the limitations of those they seek to instruct. Men and women, in this part of the world, anyhow, must be approached in terms of their daily life. What simplifies things and makes the acquisition of knowledge a pleasure instead of a back-breaking burden is to be commended. Anything that tends to confuse or mystify the facts of Nature is to be condemned and replaced at any cost of feeling.

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