

it down from dictation. I could not make head or tail of it, and I fancy if it were printed it would read very much like Ayer's Almanac. Then to enliven the proceedings we had no end of bad temper and scolding. I remember a young lady gave a correct answer but added something at the end that rather spoiled it. "There you go," cried the reverend gentleman, "like a cow that gives a pail of milk and then kicks it over?" To a student who sat near me one day, he remarked, "Don't open your mouth so wide, Mr. D——, or we shall see what you had for breakfast."

Mr Editor, I am not ungrateful to the teachers I have had who treated me like a human being, and did ever so little to encourage me and help me along. But it is very hard now to smother resentment against the sham that wasted a lot of my time for nothing and worried me for half a year with snubbing and scolding, instead of teaching the subjects he was paid to teach. Surely Mr. Ross and Dr. McLellan must have some idea of this miserable failure. If not it is time the students let them know a few of the particulars. I hope the JOURNAL will agitate the question till a better state of things comes about. I hope I have not made this letter too long and that you will give it a place in your next issue.

Yours truly, AN EX-NORMALITE.

## Special Articles.

### AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION.\*

BY HON. DONALD FERGUSON.

As in nearly all other reforms, the advocate of agricultural education must centre his hopes on the rising generation, and we have not begun a day too soon to teach the children in our schools the elements of agriculture. When the day has arrived when all our teachers are qualified to give instruction in the elements of agriculture, and when the boys and girls who graduate from our common schools are taught the first principles of the profession which most of them are destined to follow for a living, a bound will be made in the way of progress of which we can now form but little conception, and the public school teacher will rise to the full dignity of his calling. And the work of education commenced in the school will go forward on the farm. The boy who has mastered the first principles of agricultural chemistry at school will be able to understand and appreciate more advanced works with his advancing years. His studies will go on, hand in hand with his work, and as he finds himself able to master difficulties, he will acquire a confidence in himself and a pride in his profession. What is the reason that so large a proportion of the sons and daughters of farmers manifest so strong a distaste for their fathers' calling? It is, I believe, because, with most of them, they are only brought in contact with the most uninteresting and repulsive work of the farm. They see in farm employment nothing but a life of drudgery before them. Teach them that a pure bred Durham, or Jersey, or Ayrshire, well cared for, can be sold as readily for hundreds or even thousands of dollars, as a scrub can for twenty or thirty; teach them that butter can be made which will sell for fifty cents, or perhaps a dollar a pound, as easily as the common article will bring twenty cents, and with no increase of labor. Teach them that success in farming does not *all* depend on hard work; but that skill will as surely earn its reward in agriculture as in other callings. When our boys are thus taught, they will gladly remain at home, not as mere "cucumbers of the ground," but as skilful

producers, and then we may hope to see Prince Edward Island take the front rank as an agricultural country, which nature designed that it should occupy.

The object of education is two-fold—the training of intellect and the giving of facilities—and the best system of education is that which turns out in the fields of the world the most skilful workmen, supplied with the best tools. How far does the Public School System of Prince Edward Island accord with this ideal is a subject well worth considering. While it may be admitted that the curriculum of our schools is well adapted for the training of mind, it may well be asked if the education imparted in our higher schools should not partake of a more practical character.

It may be replied that this instruction is eminently practical, inasmuch as it forms part of the educational training of commercial and professional men. Such reply fully admits the force of the objection, and as agriculturists greatly outnumber all other professions put together, in like proportion should the educational training of farmers preponderate in the curricula of our higher schools. A tree is known by its fruits, and systems of education must be judged by their results. And here I must express my conviction that a false idea of life is too often formed in our higher schools, and their tendency is to wean young men away from the farm. The ambition of nineteen-twentieths of the teachers, and the atmosphere of the school, lead in other directions. The result is that a medley of youths, whose natural place is at the plough, or in the workshop, are pitchforked into professions already full to overflowing, there to engage in a struggle, in which, by the process of "unnatural selection," there is not even the satisfaction arising from being assured of the "survival of the fittest."

But our schools are not wholly responsible for the false idea of life which is presented to the mind of the young. A native of the Island scarcely ever obtains a situation in the United States of greater importance than a school trusteeship with us; but our newspapers proclaim, with many flourishes, the success of another "Islander abroad." If a student from the Island wins a prize in a Dominion or American College, no matter how slight the competition or how impractical the study, the never-failing paragrapher heralds the achievement as a marvellous success.

Even a man at home who, with, it may be, little education and less capital, but a superabundance of cheek, determines to make a living by reckless speculation, is complimented and flattered; while the unassuming producer, who, by his intelligence and industry, adds to the public wealth, is comparatively unnoticed. With such false ideas held out before them, is it any wonder that farmers' sons resolve to leave the Island, and go into more attractive employments? They see nothing before them on the farm but hard, monotonous and unappreciated work, and they want to be doctors, or lawyers, or merchants, or anything that will keep their hands soft and white, and secure for them a respectable position in society.

And those who do remain at home cannot wholly repress the unbidden sigh, as they see their schoolmates and brothers enjoying present riches, and living lives of apparent ease. Time will surely bring its revenges and dispel the glamor through which such distorted views of life are now obtained. The farmer may live to see the merchant bankrupt, the doctor without patients, and the lawyer pushed aside in his profession by younger and more aspiring rivals. Take my word for it, in the end it will be found that the farmer, who skilfully practises his calling, "has chosen the better part," and that he can most favorably compare notes with even the most successful in the other professions.

\* From a lecture delivered before the Young Men's Christian Association, Charlottetown, P. E. Island, on Thursday evening, January 17th, 1884, by Hon. Donald Ferguson, Provincial Secretary, etc., etc.