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EDITORIAL.

Can We Look Forward to This?

A writer in Farmer's Review pleads eloquently for the teaching of agriculture in public schools, quoting in support of his argument the following from a prominent American Agricultural lecturer: "It is well for the mental development of the child that the origin, composition and uses of the objects by the roadside between his home and the school be understood, and far better for his success in life than to be taught the heights of mountains that he may never see, and intricate problems in the higher mathematics, or the dead languages."

We believe that this is an agitation along the right line, and that the proper teaching of agriculture in our rural schools will do more towards raising a crop of interested, successful farmers than any plan yet invented. Our Agricultural Colleges and Farmers' Institutes are all right—indispensable components of every really prosperous agricultural Province. At the same time, it must be recognized that the actual agricultural college training, leaving out of account its indirect effects and the admirable literature circulated by the institution, touches but a very small percentage of the thousands of farmers in the Dominion. The farmers' institutes, too, useful as they are, are of necessity somewhat intermittent in character, but the rural public school course touches every child who will ever follow a furrow, and that, too, at a time when the child mind is most retentive, holding for "keeps" things which would be remembered with difficulty if presented later in life. For these reasons the effects of judicious and systematic teaching of agriculture in such schools must, within a generation, be tremendous.

We repeat the word "judicious." Some years ago "agriculture" was introduced as an "option" into our public schools. The experiment was a failure. In the first place, the recommended text-books, admirable as auxiliaries for the teacher, were mostly written by those who, though thoroughly up in the subject themselves, seemed to lack that long experience with children, and possibly that peculiar teachers' variety of sympathy with them, which is necessary to every one who would write a successful text-book for juvenile use. In the second place, the subject was taught by those who, as a rule, had had little training in the subject themselves, and, possibly, less interest than training—crude boys and girls, for the most part, using teaching as a stepping-stone to something else, and provoked at the "nuisance" of having a new subject added to a curriculum which already seemed full enough. Little wonder the experiment was a failure.

In order to have successful teaching of agriculture, two things are most evidently necessary. First, those who presume to teach it must themselves understand the subject, and be in thorough sympathy with it. We have always thought that rural teachers should be rural born. Young teachers from the town have, as a rule, but little sympathy with, or interest in rural life. Secondly, the text-books must "begin at the very beginning" of the subject, and be as simple, as practical and as interesting as it is possible to make them. Children readily learn anything in which they are interested. The consolidated school—like the one at Kingston, N. B., described in the last issue of the "Farmer's Advocate"—with its

spacious garden, would be, of course, the ideal place for teaching this really fascinating and profitable subject, but for it we must of necessity wait yet a season.

In conclusion, then, we think there is much sense in the words of the American lecturer re the advisability of eliminating some of the comparatively useless things with which our school courses are packed and padded to make room for a reasonable amount of practical matter. It is all right to be able to tell the "heights of mountains one may never see," or the "dates" upon which some fusty old king of centuries ago began his reign and ended it; it is all right to be able to calculate to a dot how long it will take to fill up with a quart measure a keg leaking at a rate which would prevent any sane creature from attempting to fill it without stopping to fix the leak, or to know how to divide a sum of money among A, B and C, in all sorts of tangled ways such as no sane will-maker would ever stipulate—provided there is plenty of time for these things. Such mental gyrations doubtless have their value as a training, but it does seem as though the gyrating might as well be done to a greater extent along those lines which will be of actual value and interest by and bye.

As the school system stands now, the boy who graduates with "Entrance" or "Leaving" from the rural school is little likely to know a rag-weed from a cloutbar, much less how to rid a field infested with these weeds. He is utterly at sea as to what grains grow best on certain soils, the best methods of cultivation, and a thousand other things which he needs to know right away. He is not made interested in the things in the country world about him—the birds, the plants, the processes of nature; he is not taught to observe nor trained to do things, unless it be "sums" and the like, and, least of all, to respect at its worth the avocation of the farmer. If his father happens to be an A 1 farmer, and if he himself has sharpness enough to observe, and application enough to buckle down to studying really good agricultural books and papers, there is hope for him. If any or all of these essentials be lacking, he either finds himself up against a host of perplexities, or else—what is worse still—goes on half doing or wrongly doing things, without realizing his loss. The day has passed in which he might have been taught those things, and another may not present itself.

The change, giving agriculture a larger and some other things a smaller proportion of attention in school, might, possibly, necessitate some changes in the examinations for High-school Entrance, but it seems that this is a difficulty which might easily be obviated. In all of the cities nowadays a great deal of attention is being paid to "nature-study." Why should not agriculture be incorporated with nature-study in our rural public schools, with a separate examination paper expressly for rural pupils? More difficult things have been accomplished by our educational authorities.

Economical in Spots.

A few weeks ago the Postmaster-General, some private members of Parliament and a lot of newspaper organs were rolling up their eyes in a fine spasm of economy when it was resolved to turn down the proposal to give the farmer free rural mail delivery. Such ruinous extravagance was not to be thought of for one moment, but the scene changed with lightning rapidity when a huge salary grab came to be rushed through in the dying hours of Parliament. It was a case

of "Help ourselves, there's money to burn," and friends and foes (politically) joined in a generous saw-off, but the farmer was not in it. He comes in handy to grow the crops that foot the bills, but if he doesn't want to walk six miles three days a week for his mail after a harder day's work than most M. P.'s perform, he can hitch up the old gray mare to the buckboard.

Stock-raising in Asia.

As a result of the present war between Japan and Russia we shall see a new Asia spring into existence, with new customs, habits and manners. The demand for meat and other animal products from Canada is bound to increase in Japan. Her soldiers are learning the meat-eating habit, which will become national. Already we have sent pure-bred stock for breeding purposes to the little Island Empire. China is bound to follow Japan in adopting Western ideas.

There should be a rapidly-increasing demand for our pure-bred live stock from Japan. In consequence of the friendly attitude of the British Empire towards her, she will be naturally disposed to patronize Canada in such purchases, and the Dominion Department of Agriculture should put forth every reasonable effort to facilitate and encourage the development of a trade in pure-bred stock, as well as in all farm and animal products in that quarter of the globe.

United States Vice-Consul Cloud, writing from Hangshan, states that up to the present time the Chinese seem to have had little or no appreciation of the economic value of the vast areas of their verdant hill and mountain regions other than to use the scrubby trees as lumber or the brushwood as fuel. Apparently, the idea of using these vast areas of pasturage for grazing cattle, sheep or horses has never occurred to them, or, if it has, they have never put it into execution. In Chekiang province alone there are thousands of acres of hill land covered over the year round with a luxuriant growth of nutritious grasses, enough to feed and fatten almost countless cattle and sheep. Yet all this vast storehouse of wealth has been allowed to waste since the early days of the race. The fact that these hills and valleys abound in many varieties of deer, wild pig and various other wild animals is proof of the nutritious qualities of the flora of the region. The teachings of Buddha against meat-eating are now being unheeded, and now all classes of Chinese eat meat when they can get it, so that the supply is painfully inadequate, and prices so high as to make it almost prohibitory except to the well-to-do classes. Pork is the mainstay, with mutton a good second, and then beef in any form. Thus far desultory attempts at importing foreign cattle into China have been made, yet these attempts have been attended with most satisfactory results wherever they have been made. The German colony in Shantung has imported a number of heifers into that region, and farmers who are giving the matter serious attention are realizing most handsomely on their venture. Indeed, their profits are much greater relatively than they would be on the same amount of labor and capital employed at home.

There is an excellent opportunity for several enterprising stock-growers and dairymen to establish a most profitable business in the fertile and ideal grazing region adjoining Shanghai, the growing foreign metropolis. The stock-raiser would soon find a growing market for his breeders and meat cattle, while the dairyman would find an eager demand for all of his dairy products.