

# THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE & HOME MAGAZINE

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## CONTENTS.

- EDITORIAL:—  
357—Illustration. 358—The Dominion Experimental Farm Staff. 359—Notes on the Dominion Experimental Farms Report; Indispensable on the Farm. 360—The Purpose and Plan of the Canadian Experimental Farm System; Australian Prospects; Our Premium Wheat; Editorial Notes; The Manitoba Crops. 361—Should Have Started Sooner: The Education of Farmers' Daughters. 362—"Our Canadian Prairies"; Winnipeg Industrial & Financial Success; Prof. Robertson's Retirement; Bloat from Rape.
- STOCK:—  
362—Our Scottish Letter: Horse Breeding from a Western Farmer's Standpoint. 363—Prince Edward Island and Its Government Stock Farm; The Kingston Exhibition; Comments on Mr. A. W. Smith's Paper; Cattle Raising in the Argentine Republic. 364—Periods of Gestation.
- FARM:—  
364—British Columbia Experimental Farm; Experience with Rye; How to Save Corn Fodder; Toronto Industrial Exhibition. 365—Illustration. 366—That Funny Nitergen.
- DAIRY:—  
366—A Co-operative Dairy in Belgium; The Fall Feeding of Dairy Cows. 367—Our Western Dairy Interests; English Butter Tests.
- GARDEN AND ORCHARD:—  
367—Autumn Strawberry Planting; The Earth Mulch—Its Value in Fruit Culture.
- POULTRY:—  
367—Cross-Bred Fowls. 368—Hints on Turkeys; The Hens in Autumn; Shipments of Poultry to the British Markets by Cold Storage.
- APIARY:—  
368—Failure of the Honey Crop.
- QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:—  
368—Veterinary; Miscellaneous.
- LIVE STOCK MARKETS:—  
369—Toronto Markets; Montreal; Chatty Stock Letter from Chicago; Canadian Bacon Popular in England.
- FAMILY CIRCLE:—370.
- THE QUIET HOUR:—370.
- MINNIE MAY'S DEPARTMENT:—371.
- CHILDREN'S CORNER:—372.
- STOCK GOSSIP:—373, 375, 377, 378, 379.
- NOTICES:—374.
- BOOK TABLE:—375.
- ADVERTISEMENTS:—373 to 380.

### Should Have Started Sooner.

J. E. B., Ontario Co., writes:—"Although I have taken the FARMER'S ADVOCATE only two months, you cannot imagine how much I have learned from it."

### The Education of Farmers' Daughters.

[Paper read by Mrs. McEwan before the Manitoba Central Farmers' Institute.]

I have come to you to-night with no elaborately prepared essay pointing out how the daughters of farmers should be educated, but simply with a few thoughts on the subject, hurriedly put together in the rush of a busy life. That these may suggest points worthy of your consideration is my earnest desire.

Allow me first to place before you, by way of a dark background, a picture of woman's condition in one part of our beloved Queen's dominion, which will serve to throw up in brilliant colors the glorious privileges and possibilities of the daughters of Canada.

Said a highly-cultured Hindoo gentleman, speaking of the daughters of India: They are unwellcome at their birth, untaught in childhood, enslaved when married, accursed as widows, and unlamented when they die. Could words picture a sadder contrast to our lot as Canadian girls and women? Thank God for birth in a Christian land, for woman owes everything to the Gospel, which enthrones her queen of hearts and home. Woman with Christ's love in her heart is the true home-maker. There are no homes in heathendom.

How differently we welcome the girl-babies of our land: Their baby fingers unlock our selfish hearts, and we find our lives enriched and blessed by all the love and service we pour out upon them. But they are not merely playthings, not only sources of joy and pride to us, but beings for whose training we parents are responsible. They are soul, body and spirit, a threefold nature bound up in one personality, with spiritual, intellectual and physical powers and faculties, forming one wonderful whole. True education must lay hold of all three of these parts of their nature and draw out and strengthen the latent powers of each, thus developing well-balanced and symmetrical lives. Such education will fit our daughters for filling their places worthily, not only as members of the home circle, but also as citizens of our vast Dominion.

When my babies were in the nursery of our city home, I used to think what a good time babies in the country have, with room and freedom to move about, with numberless object-lessons on flowers and grain, insects and animals, lying on every hand and awaiting the loving and intelligent mother's help to open up to her little one, by easy and natural steps, the wonders of botany and natural history. It is so different in the crowded streets of a city. What a prize a dandelion by the wayside used to be? How often have we gone miles to show our children a cow with her calf, and a goat with its little kids on the outskirts of the city was a rare treat to them. Yes, for little children there should be no happier, better life than that on a farm. But that they may get the most out of it, the mother must herself be trained to observe the beauties of nature so that she may lead them to enjoy the glowing sunset or the play of the lightning among the clouds, or the loveliness and perfection of the tiniest wild flower.

This knowledge of things around them will broaden and expand their lives so that as they grow older no object, however small or trivial, will be without significance to them; no scene, however dull or dreary the day, but will beam with interest; while the treasures of field or grove bathed in the light of the sun will give joy and happiness not dreamt of by one whose mind has not been instructed or whose eye is untrained. I could wish that all mothers on farms were trained kindergartners. How easily and naturally their children would acquire much useful knowledge in a natural way. How well they would be prepared to learn thoroughly and accurately the more difficult branches of learning as they are from time to time placed before them. They would become students in love with study for the sake of the knowledge to be acquired.

The training of a girl's physical powers should not be a difficult problem upon the farm. If, as physicians say, there is no better exercise for the whole body of woman than just what is called housework, in its different departments and countless duties, then the farmer's daughter is not likely to lack plenty of this branch of training. The pity is that in the pioneering work in a new country most women, older and younger, have so much of this kind of work to do that the poor body is overtaxed and burdened to the injury of the whole nature. Before leaving this point it is but right to say that there is no reason why farmers' daughters should not share with the daughters of the city father such healthful and exhilarating outdoor sports as riding, tennis-playing, skating, tobogganing, etc. In most cases all that is needed is to recognize the right of the girl on the farm to have such recreations and enjoyments and they will be provided for her.

We are told that part of the aim of education is to fit the children for usefulness in their future stations. Well, so it is. But who knows what may be the future station in life of the farmers' daughters? Of course, many will become farmers' wives, and the special knowledge of farm duties which they have acquired will then stand them in good stead. But many others will be taken to grace homes in the city, or will go forth to win name and place for themselves in "the world's broad field of battle." How wise, then, to give them as liberal an

education as possible. By this is not meant a smattering of all the "isms" and "ologies" of the schools, so much as an honest, thorough grounding in the correct use of our own language at least,—a knowledge sufficient for practical purposes of arithmetic and bookkeeping (I name the latter, for I believe a conversance with it would tend to do away with unbusinesslike habits in women); acquaintance with the history and geography of their own land and of as many others as possible. To these I would add such a knowledge of music as would enable them to make home happy and attractive. Training in vocal music should be a branch of the early education of both the sons and daughters of farmers. Besides this, there should be intelligent reading of the best books of the world's best authors, in so far as circumstances permit. This age is one of great privilege in education as in other matters, and to have a good sound education is a birthright of every Canadian girl. By thus familiarizing our daughters' minds with the best thoughts and experiences of the wise of earth, their own minds become ennobled and their whole nature broadened and enriched. No matter how poor one may be or how obscure one's dwelling if the works of the world's great writers have there their abode, and if that sacred word which is truly "The power of God unto salvation" of the whole nature, physical, intellectual and spiritual, have there the most honored place, one will never lack intellectual companionship or cultured society. Oh! the starved minds and narrow, petty ambitions of many of our women! One cannot help exclaiming, "The pity of it, the pity of it, in a land of plenty!" The fault lies not in the minds themselves, but in their lack of training. How many farmers seem to be of opinion that books, except, perhaps, the needful school text-books (and some grumble even at their number), are an uncalled-for expense. Oh! be careful how you refuse nourishment for your daughters' minds while you provide food without stint for their bodies. Remember, "Tis the mind that makes the body rich." Take fresh, bright magazines for your daughter—such ones as she finds helpful and stimulating to her. If she cannot leave home to travel in other lands, let her in imagination, at least, roam the world over with those who have been more fortunate in this respect and have given us the story of their journeys. If possible, give her the opportunity from time to time of visiting some city, so that she may have a taste of the rich feasts there provided for eye and ear and mind.

I was very much startled some years ago to learn that in Ontario by far the largest number of the insane come from the ranks of farmers' wives. At first I was inclined to question the fact. I thought this could surely not be the case with women whose lives were spent away from the crowded, bustling city, and amongst the beauties of nature, sunrises and the sunsets, the waving grain and the flowery meadow. Upon reflection, I saw that the trouble lay in the almost unbroken monotony of their lives. Whilst their husbands frequently met with other men and discussed matters social and political, they themselves rarely left home, and not being trained to find pleasure in the society of good books, gradually grew morose or melancholy and finally insane. The mind in common with the body needs that variety which is called "the spice of life." Farmers' daughters are citizens and should be taught the duties of citizenship. They should know how our country is governed, should be encouraged to study politics, as they affect women and children in their homes, that they may rightly use their influence in furthering the welfare of society. I have little sympathy with the woman whose interest in the well-being of her country is not enough to make her inform herself on the vital questions of the day. There is too much reading of newspapers for the sake of the trivial, and ignoring the progress of movements that do or may affect the peace and purity of the home. Education is not a hindrance but a help to woman in doing well the daily duties of the homelife. Experience and observation teach that the homes, either in town or country, presided over by women of education and refinement are those where one may look not only for good, intelligent conversation and ability to discuss the affairs of the world, but also for those excellent creature comforts, well-prepared food, daintily-cared-for tables, neatness and attention to the minor courtesies, which, after all, so much enhance the pleasure of living.

True education, instead of puffing up, really humbles, for the more one knows the more one finds there is yet to know, and if we have become true students the love of knowledge will draw us upward and onward, broadening and enriching our natures till we rise nearer and nearer to that standard for which we were created. After all, character-building is the best test of true education. The value of all our mental training is to develop our powers of analysis and investigation, to make us thinking and reasoning beings, to enlighten our understanding and correct our tempers. The stores of facts we acquire will only be really useful to us in so far as after passing through the alembic of the brain they furnish food for reflection or motive for action.

"With all thy getting get understanding," says the wisest of men, and there is no more significant truth to the student than that. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Until one learns this, however otherwise informed and instructed, one is really ignorant.