

How Tom Caught On!

By James Mark

SAY, Mac, what are you going to do about Tom?"

This question, asked by a kindly neighbor, was on the lips of everyone in the neighborhood regarding Tom Macdonald. Tom's father was the sort of farmer who had managed to drift along without doing anything in particular in agriculture or standing for any special interest in the neighborhood. Though Mr. Macdonald was not looked upon as enterprising, he had managed to keep his head above water financially and to retain the good-will of his neighborhood. When his son, Tom, showed signs of not turning out well the matter elicited the sympathy of the countryside. Not that Tom was vicious in any way, but he was listless and apparently indifferent to the welfare of the farm. Supper over, it was his custom to half dress himself and to betake himself to the village grocery, there to spend the evening in story-telling or engaging in the village gossip.

When, therefore, a neighbor asked the foregoing question, Mr. Macdonald hung his head, scraped the dust into a neat heap with his foot, and replied in a hopeless way, "I can't say. He doesn't seem to catch on. I'm afraid that he'll be off to the city one of these days."

"Look here," the neighbor replied, "try this. Buy one of my pure-bred cows. I'll make the price right and give you time to pay. Get the best feed, and do as I tell you about caring for her. I know this breed of cows pretty well, you know. Let Tom see what's going on. Give him a share of the dairy profits. Have him milk this cow. Keep records, and we'll see what we'll see."

The father was wise enough to act on the suggestion. To Tom's surprise, the new cow gave as much milk

as any three of his father's grade cows. He was quick to note the difference and to see that a gate that meant opportunity was opening before him. He found that he was milking one of the best cows in the neighborhood. He was proud of her performance. When the monthly milk cheque came in he was still surer that their dairying business had struck a new gait. It was not long till Tom and his father had determined to sell out the poorer cows in their herd and to invest in another pure-bred.

Tom is no longer a puzzle to his father or to anyone else. He is looked upon as a young man who is going to arrive some place that is worth while going to. He never is found at the corner grocery unless he is on business bent. Instead of looking upon milking as a task, he is now milking three times a day in order that he may establish a record.

The whole farm is changing. Macdonald has come to see that the pure-bred stock is the only kind that makes large profits a possibility. He is breeding up his poultry, His swine are improving. He is grading up his horses. He has had some reverses and disappointments, but no more of these than he encountered in the old days.

There is no mistaking the good effect of the new life upon his family, especially in the case of Tom. Growing profits, interest in the whole work and life on the farm, and the healthy pride and satisfaction that accompany the achievement of something worth while—These are some of the facts that have saved Tom Macdonald from restlessness and loafing to contentment and good citizenship. Throughout rural Canada there are thousands of farm lads who are waiting for a similar opportunity to make good, and the rural problem will never be solved till they find it.