

# THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE AND HOME MAGAZINE

THE LEADING AGRICULTURAL JOURNAL  
IN THE DOMINION.

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Agents for "The Farmer's Advocate and Home Journal,"  
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methods must continue to be perfected if the victories recently won are to be duplicated at the half-century mark, when soils have felt the drain of cropping and cultural methods really count.

## Recast the Rural Curriculum.

While a considerable proportion of our criticism of educational ideals and methods has been directed rather specifically to conditions obtaining in the Province of Ontario, most of it is quite applicable to other communities as well. The English edition of the Journal of Agriculture and Horticulture, official organ of the Quebec Council of Agriculture, criticizes the school system of that Province on much the same grounds.

"In a recent campaign for the betterment of rural schools attention was frequently called to the great lack of interest in the schools by the ratepayers themselves. We are of the opinion that the main cause of this serious condition of affairs was not clearly brought out and emphasized sufficiently at the meetings. So long as parents continue to see children turned out from schools poorly prepared for life's battle on the farm, so long will lack of interest prevail. For years they have observed that the young people have but little sympathy with farm and country life; and for years they have watched the long procession to the cities and towns. The real trouble, in our humble judgment, lies in the course of studies pursued in the rural schools.

"There is a great need for a reconstruction of the courses of studies so as to meet the requirements of rural life. Surely it is time that our country children learn about the things which make up their environment. A knowledge of these common every-day things, weeds, birds, insects, soils, crops and animals, is very essential to the farmer who pretends to be more than a chod breaker.

"This is not a new doctrine we are preaching. There has been advocated for many years the introduction of Nature Study, or the study of the child's surroundings, into the schools, not as a mere graft (so to speak), or an additional study to the already overburdened course, but as the main subject or trunk to which the other studies are related as branches. It appears to us that if an unprejudiced educator was to establish for rural Quebec an educational system best suited to its needs he would certainly make more of the study of country life. He would also give decided prominence to studies that prepare the children for living the fullest and most satisfying lives. As most of them will become workers and homemakers it is essential that they receive instruction in subjects that will train their fingers to work and their eyes to see, and that will prepare them for the great work of living."

Sound sense this, is it not? The writer expresses a correct conception where he urges that the study of nature and rural environment should not be engrafted as a separate subject on an overburdened curriculum, but as a trunk to which the other studies would be related as branches. Perhaps this is putting it a little strongly, but certainly the new phases of education, such as nature study, school gardening, manual training and domestic science should not be regarded as superficial additions, but rather as an integral part of rural schooling, and as such should be knit as intimately as possible with the literary and academic phases. Until they are so knit, they will not be likely to receive serious attention from the general run of teachers, trustees, ratepayers or children, and even if they did receive attention, would fail of their highest purpose and greatest benefit. The whole curriculum of the rural school must be recast, and the new phases properly correlated with the old.

## Where the Country Schools Fail.

Editor "The Farmer's Advocate":

The world sure loves a "bonny fighter," and your knock-out blow to unpractical education and educationists has certainly earned you that title, as well as arrested the attention of those who think and solve problems.

I should like to tell you why I wrote those "whys." Then your critics will better understand whose cause we are championing. Let these same critics attend the public school in their immediate neighborhood, and ascertain whether the same conditions do not prevail there as I am describing. If they are honest with themselves they will fall in line and clamor for better instruction in the things that count.

1. The first thing that awakened me was when I took my own daughter home from where she had been attending Public School in Toronto, and sent her to our own village school. In answer to my questions as to how the schools compared she told me that she liked the city school much better because it was much more interesting. There, the pupils were taught sewing once a week, for the Second and Third classes with Domestic Science and Manual Training for the Junior and Senior Fourth. Coloring with water colors and crayons also formed a pleasing break in the monotony of lessons, and their work was criticized twice a month by a competent critic.

Upon inquiry I found out that the Public-school curriculum provided for the teaching of Sewing and Manual Training, but so far as Rural Schools are concerned it is a dead letter. In our own case when it was brought before the Trustees to have sewing taught, it was turned down 2 to 1, although we have two lady teachers for between 50 and 60 pupils.

2. There is one large and constantly increasing family in our section that I have in mind as an illustration. The father works hard and I think the mother does. One cannot raise ten or a dozen children without doing some work. The mother was a home girl who picked up her knowledge of housework. She never was taught the how or why of things, so how can she teach the children. They come to school when they like, improperly fed and not always properly clothed. No one worries when they are absent, which is a goodly portion of the time. When they do come they are but half-supplied with pencils and books. They are ignorant of the first principle of hygiene. People give them clothes, but their knowledge of sewing is limited and there is no one to teach them. If the clothes fit, all right, and if they don't, all right—they wear them just the same.

As fast as they are beyond school age they work around for people, and manage to "pick

up" a way to do things. But underneath this veneer is the "no-training" of their youth. They are not competent either as farm-hands or as house help. They have a smattering of learning, but no education.

3. Another thing to set one thinking is the number of boys of fourteen and fifteen years old who seem to want to prop up the walls of the village hotel or loafing place. Suggest school to them, and they hoot at you. Why they are beyond school age, and don't "haff to go to school." Talk to their parents and they will lament to you that their "children just dreaded to go to school, and they were glad when they didn't 'haff to send them." Their excuses are: "Well, they didn't like the teacher;" or "They had to stay out and got behind, and they couldn't bear to go in a class with a lot of little kids"—etc.

4. I write of reason 4 with pleasure. The father of a large family said to me "I never had much education myself, and I have felt the need of it, and I made up my mind to give my children the best I could give them."

Now, Mr. Editor, Mr. McCready, Mr. Wilde, Christian Guardian and others:—

(a) Are you satisfied with the education the Department is dealing out to our country boys and girls?

(b) Is it right to make flesh of the city children, and fowl of the country children?

(c) Do you not think the results would be better if the antiquated Trustee System now in vogue were replaced by a Union or County Board of Trustees having control over all pertaining to educational matters in the county, leaving to the section supervision of the school premises?

(d) Do you not think there should be a woman on every school board?

(e) Do you not think a Board for each Township would be better than a County Board, and then have a Convention for these Trustees the same as the Teachers' Convention?

(f) Can you tell me the use of having so many absentees in the schools when the law provides for a child attending every school-day unless sickness prevents? The teacher has a record of those who are chronic offenders, but who is to insist on their regular attendance? Personal reasons prevent many trustees from doing so, and in the language of the schoolyard: "The teacher dasset."

(g) Do you ever attend an annual meeting in your section, and notice the interest or lack of interest the ratepayers show in educational matters? Kindly do so this year.

Every occupation, every walk in life demands efficiency, no matter if the job be washing kettles or publishing a paper. Those who are started right are to be envied, those who are not, have to spend valuable time unlearning and relearning.

Time was when I was as satisfied with our system as is Mr. McCready now, but not since I started investigating. The reward I get now is to be called "an agitator," "one with an axe to grind," and a dissatisfied person generally, but remember it is the dissatisfied person who obtains benefits for the satisfied person, that the latter would never obtain for himself.

As for Mr. McCready's plea to all work in harmony with the Department, we would only be too glad to do so. I have been sending children to school six years, and never a bulletin or leaflet from the Department of Education on any subject. It would pay them if they would consult with or advise us. Farmers are too busy to keep in touch with educational progress to the extent they would like, and like young birds they shut their eyes, open their mouths and swallow whatever the Education Department chucks down, without question.

Once in a while the farmer chances on some book or bulletin showing what other countries are doing with regard to their youth; then he awakens and demands as good or better for his own.

## OUR GOVERNMENT

catches the farmer and the farmer's wife by means of Institutes, which tell them how to do things correctly, but it leaves the farmer's boys and girls alone until they have spent one quarter of their natural life before they are roped in.

## OUR GOVERNMENT

provides well for juvenile offenders, and provides well for older offenders, but overlooks the fact that it would be cheaper and more satisfactory altogether to prevent there being juvenile offenders.

## CREDO—I BELIEVE.

And now a few words as to Mr. McCready's Articles of Belief.

With No. 1 I disagree, because if we have the best system in the world, why are there so many of the "native born" who are barely able to read and write?

With No. 2 I heartily agree.

With No. 3 I partially agree, but would add: "as well inspected as it is possible to be considering the number of schools to be visited." In our district there are 110 teachers, which means