

The Time of Seed Sowing.

It is the time of sowing—a time of work and a time of faith. Man sows the seed, but God sends the rain. If it is necessary for him to know that he must earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, it is equally necessary for him to know that his life must be one of dependence and implicit confidence in a Power greater than himself.

THE SOIL.

Now, Providence has been kind to us who live in this western land. Nowhere on the face of this old earth is there a richer acreage. "It is but necessary for man to tickle the ground in order to make it break forth into smiles." But he who would preserve his land rich must learn how to plow it aright, how to cultivate it so as to coax the moisture to the surface. Moreover, he must observe the laws of crop rotation, must know the principles of fertilization, and above all must recognize the necessity of alternation of rest and production, if his land would remain fruitful throughout the years.

THE SEEDS.

Then, too, he must select his seed with care. He must winnow it until it is free from all impurities, and sow it at proper time and in just sufficient quantity. He must protect it from mildew and wash it until all parasitical growths are removed. Then he must be content to scatter it in faith, believing that He who feeds the sparrows will not disappoint the children of men.

THE SHOWERS.

Nor is faith limited to the act of sowing. Every day brings its anxiety. It may be that a drought will weaken or kill the young plant while it is still in the germ, or while it is a tender shoot, or even when the milk is in the newly-formed grain; it may be that frost will blight when the plants are just covering the ground, or when the grain is just turning from green to gold; and it may be that the hail will ruthlessly destroy just as the fields are reaching maturity. Which of us, knowing the frailty of mankind, and his inability to endure material prosperity, which of us, realizing that "no nation ever attained permanent destruction in act, legislation, or morality which won its wealth too easily from the soil," would quarrel with Providence for sometimes denying to us His best gifts? Then as we toil let it be in all humility so that in our lives the twin virtues of faith and works may be justly balanced.

THE MOST IMPORTANT SEED.

There is a sowing from day to day that is of infinitely greater importance than the sowing of grain. It is the sowing of ideals in the minds of our people, more especially in the minds of our youths and our children. The sowers are the parents, the teachers, the public press and all the other agencies with which we are familiar. It is a comparatively small matter whether, as a country, we produce No. 1 hard or No. 2 northern, and whether we produce a few million bushels more or less than we expected, but it is a matter of the utmost importance that our citizens shall rank high in intelligence and morality, that they become industrious and loyal and worthy of the traditions which we cherish.

THE PARENT AS SEED-SOWER.

When we find a parent who considers the effect of every word and act upon his children, when we find him seeking to place before them all that is true and lovely and of good report, when we find him living for them, considering it more important for them to be right in character and conduct and manner than that he should possess money and lands and position—when we find this we take heart and think that it may yet be all right with our land in the years to be. But when we find a parent in whom greed and but they may lead them into the possession of the lust for gain have choked out every generous impulse so that there is no kind and loving thought for

wife and children, no real unselfish joy and pride in the merits of his offspring, no lively concern in their intellectual and moral progress, no patience with their moral faults and no pity with them in their failures, when we find that he is careless as to the habits, tastes and dispositions that are being formed from day to day, regardless of speech and behavior and attitude, then we have reason to fear for our land, for we know only too well that it cannot prosper unless its people possess that righteousness which exalteth a nation.

THE PARENT'S OPPORTUNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY.

What an opportunity the parent has for seed-sowing! While the child is still in arms it may have planted in its heart the seeds of affection and reverence, loyalty and obedience. Foolish is the parent who thinks that these virtues can be acquired later in life if they are not cultivated in early childhood. So also there may be inculcated good habits of thought, speech and action. The old parable of the wheat and the tares applies with peculiar fitness in this field of habit, for wrong habits once acquired are practically incapable of eradication.

For parents to do their duty in the education of their children they require to give time and effort and make no small expenditure of money. Those who are not prepared to give this much should not accept the responsibilities of parenthood. To sow the seeds of intelligence means the installing of a suitable home-library. Why can not every farmer spend the value of ten or twenty bushels of grain in the purchase of readable books for his children? Why can he not also get one or two books with good wholesome pictures, and a few musical selections worth hearing? The conditions in not a few homes are perfectly disgraceful. Never can we attain to permanent greatness and glory unless we set the verb to be above the verb to have. This needs to be appreciated in not a few homes to-day.

Nor will books alone suffice. The parent must give his own life if he would produce life in his children. Except a grain of wheat die, it abideth alone, but if when cast into fruitful soil it dies it brings forth fruit a hundred-fold. So every parent who gives forth affection, and who spends time upon his children, who surrounds them with all that is beautiful and true and good, will find his reward not only in the returned affection and thanksgiving but in the knowledge that his loved ones have grown pure and sweet and helpful because of his sacrifice and devotion.

THE TEACHER AS SEED-SOWER.

Then the teacher must come to the aid of the parent. Often she does more than the home to present proper ideals of life and behavior. Yet our schools are far from being as efficient as they might be, because of the lack of proper support. The apparatus and teaching conveniences are lacking, and worse than all the money expended is not sufficient to attract teachers of first-rate ability. Nor can members of the farming community say they are over-taxed for education. A man should be willing to give all he has for his children. They are all that he has to live for in the long-run. It is infinitely better for a parent to spend a few hundreds when alive than to bequeath a few thousands at death. The cost of taxation in country districts is ridiculously low when compared with the cost in villages and towns and cities. It is low when compared with rates in other lands. It is ridiculously low when compared with the expenditure for other purposes. Let any one figure it out and see for himself. If our country is to be great we must have an educated people. This means that we must have good teachers, and this means that we must pay the price. The situation in Western Canada is positively alarming if the reports of those who are in a position to know are worthy of credence.

But given teachers of proper qualification what opportunities they possess! Not only may they in-

fluence their pupils with a desire to know and to do, acquired wisdom of the race, and train them for efficient service in a world of active workers. It is no sinecure this teaching school, and it is more than likely that every faithful member of the body works more hours per day and more days per week than most of us. Yet it is just possible for them as for parents to skimp the work, and to cultivate the ground carelessly and sow seed that is not properly cleaned and winnowed. It is for them as for the parent and the husbandman to enter upon their duties in all lowliness and in meek dependence upon Him who dispenses love and wisdom. While they must toil as if everything depends upon their labors, they must ultimately depend, just as does the worker in the field, upon Him who sends the sunshine and the shower—the God of love and wisdom.

THE PRESS AS SEED-SOWER.

There is a seed-sowing in our books and magazines and in the daily press, and in the cities there are countless other agencies at work and many of them of a pernicious kind. But what of the books? Silent teachers they are but powerful in their appeals. They present ideals lovely or unlovely, inspiring or degrading. Unfortunately the grain has not been winnowed, and the parent and the teacher who neglect to supervise are criminal in their negligence. Yes, whether the parent proceeds to tell a story or read a book she must not only learn from the husbandman the art of tilling the soil, of watering it in love, of changing the crop, but she must be above all careful that no noxious weeds find their way into the furrows. Clean books, clean magazines, clean newspapers—these we must and will have at any cost. The blighting effect of the expressions of party bitterness, the damning power of reports of wrong-doing, can not be measured. The press is the greatest power in the land to-day, but is a power for evil as well as a power for good.

THOSE WHO SOW TARES.

There is a negative side to seed-sowing—a dark and terrible side. "And the enemy sowed tares." Yes it is all in vain that the parent cultivates the soil of the childish hearts; it is in vain that God sends the sun and the rain; if the tares abound. Need any one name the malign forces in our land to-day? Chief among these is the saloon—the common grog-shop. Have you, my good reader, ever thought of the danger to your boy and to your girl in that licensed institution? Will you not join in the crusade to abolish it from our land? Will you not winnow the grain that you are sowing in the minds of your little ones? Yea, even as your truth must contain no admixture of superstition and prejudice and exaggeration; even as your beauty must contain nothing of the deformed, the ugly, the distasteful, even as your good must be free from guile and filth and deception, so your moral atmosphere must not be contaminated by the presence of those institutions which are born of hell, and which have no redeeming feature. And as for other evils they are too well known to be mentioned by name. Is it too much to ask that in the name of childhood and in the name of our country we shall join in a common resolution:—

"As a tiller of the soil I pledge myself that henceforth I shall use all diligence in the cultivation of my land, and exercise all care in the selection of my seed. As a cultivator of the minds of my children I shall make it my endeavor to place before them in the most effective way and at the cost of my own life, all that is pure and true and beautiful. Above all I shall discountenance and oppose to the utmost of my power everything in the social, political and industrial life of my country that makes for dishonesty, immorality and vice. And with God as my guide and support I trust that the seed I sow shall be watered by His hand, so that my children will be more efficient than I have been, and my country more glorious in the future than it has been in the past."