

THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE AND HOME MAGAZINE.

THE LEADING AGRICULTURAL JOURNAL IN THE
DOMINION.

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JOHN WELD, MANAGER

AGENTS FOR THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE AND HOME JOURNAL,
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sent for exhibition last year to leading Provincial shows in England and Scotland, to promote trade. The fruit crop was large, but the fruit was somewhat softer than usual, and prices too low. Vigilant measures are being enforced to keep in check the brown-tailed moth, about 10,000 nests being destroyed in the past three years. This is most commendable, when it is remembered that, within from 4 to 6 years after the moth invaded Massachusetts, it became so destructive a pest as to involve the expenditure of above a million dollars to fight it. The year was particularly favorable for live stock, prices for animals and products being alike high. Great improvement is being made in dairy stock, and the growth of interest in heavy-horse breeding is phenomenal. As an example of what can be done with cows, the whole Agricultural College herd, including Jerseys, averages nearly 10,000 pounds of milk per year. Standing field-crop competitions were inaugurated last year, with encouraging results in stimulating the growing of better grain. The Dominion Department of Agriculture aided in the work, and 39 competitors entered in the six competitions. Though but five years have elapsed since the Agricultural College was organized upon its present basis, the attendance in the regular course has doubled, and in the short courses increased sevenfold, while at the Rural School of Science for teachers affiliated with the Normal College, 102 teachers were in attendance. Graduates receive a diploma, and extra grants for their work as teachers from the Government. This is encouraging. Not more than five per cent. of farm boys, as a rule, attend agricultural colleges, and it being a sound principle to establish such institutions to educate students for life on the farm, it is self-evident that for the rural public schools of Canada special preparations should be made, that the education imparted shall relate to the noblest and most important of material pursuits—agriculture.

Part II. of the report under review contains a valuable series of educational articles by specialists upon "Soils, Soil Cultivation, and Crops in

Nova Scotia," well worth reading in other Provinces and States.

In Part III. is given an admirable resume, in condensed form, of the work of the Agricultural Societies and Associations, by the Superintendent, F. L. Fuller. The outstanding feature of the present year's work in Nova Scotia will be the development of the drainage policy adopted, a traction ditcher having been ordered, with which drainage will be done for farmers by the Department of Agriculture, at actual cost, and on payment of expenses, as in Ontario; experts will be furnished to lay out farm-drainage systems.

Some Educational Topics of the Hour.

"Children's power as to what they can take in at any one time is limited. Time is wasted, and the child is injured by endeavoring to drive the subject in beyond that limit." So said Dr. Balliet.

Towards "bureaucracy, rather than democracy," was Principal Burt's description of Ontario's educational drift.

"Better," said Principal Lyman C. Smith, "break every commandment in the decalog than depart one jot or tittle from the regulations. Absolutely, the sole object of inspection appears to be to see whether the regulations are carried out."

These are samples of hot sparks from the reports of the big convention of teachers which met in Toronto recently.

The Ontario Educational Association has just closed the largest convention in its history of forty-nine years. Its work is done in a score or more of separate sections, but these unite in groups for the discussion of subjects of common interest. Three general meetings were held to listen to addresses by President Ward, and Dr. Balliet, Dean of the Teachers' Training College of Columbia University.

The latter, in an address on "Fads and Frills in Education," surprised those who have not been following the recent trend of educational thought, by declaring that reading, writing, spelling—subjects often honored as the essentials—are really the "fads and frills"; that is to say, the novelties, while nature study, manual training, drawing, cooking, sewing, are the essentials. To this, some people, we fancy, will immediately exclaim, "Bosh!" but, were they to follow his argument throughout, they might have difficulty in refuting it. He argued that the essential quality of education is to produce the fitness and competence of its subject. A cook is discharged not because she cannot spell correctly, but for incompetence or unfitness for her duty. The use of writing and books goes back less than one-sixth of the history of human development. In its earlier periods, education almost entirely consisted of house-building, food-getting, clothes-making; in other words, nature study, manual training, cooking and sewing were about the whole course of education. The three R's have been added only within a few hundred years. The greatest leaders of the race are, to a small extent, if at all, the products of book-learning.

In another connection, the same speaker argued for a single type of public school, with a manual-training course, and three types of High Schools, into which the public-school graduate would enter according to his bent or circumstances. These High-school types would be the literary, commercial and technical, and at the head of each he would have a principal specialized by training for the objects of the school.

We present Dr. Balliet's views thus freely, not as agreeing with them, for in our opinion they are extreme. While thoroughly in sympathy with these phases of education such as nature study and manual training, calculated to relate the child more closely to his environment and balance off the too bookish tendency of our schooling, still we hold that development of character and culture should be the pre-eminent aim of education, and furthermore we must recognize that the three R's, so-called, are the means of access to the true

literary, scientific and other knowledge which the modern world has inherited from the ages.

Public attention was most strongly attracted by the fierce onslaught on the new Ontario readers and spelling-book. The attack on the primer occupied so much time that the other books almost escaped. Its subject-matter, arrangement, and lack of phonic sequence, were roundly denounced. It had not a single defender. The resolution to revert to its predecessor was opposed only by another to leave it optional. The determination to get relief from it was evinced by the fact that lady teachers from all over the Province, by a standing vote, defeated a motion to adjourn the discussion, although the time was past the dinner hour. The chief faults found with the new spelling-book are that it heavily and unnecessarily burdens the children to learn solid columns of difficult words that they may never need to use, and that it teaches the archaic and more difficult forms of many words, such as "favour," "checquers," "cosey," etc. A resolution declaring its unsuitability was carried, without opposition. Another resolution, to reduce the punishment for a mis-spelling, at the entrance examination, from two marks to one, until a simpler spelling-book is authorized, was also carried.

Had it not been for the text-books, the proposed new curriculum for public schools would have been the leading topic. The proposal to make eight classes, instead of the present four, did not carry. The rural-school teachers are pretty unanimous in preferring four classes, with the power to divide them, so far as advisable, into junior and senior.

Improvement of Spelling.

In connection with the Provincial Teachers' Convention, held at Toronto University recently, the friends of Spelling Reform held meetings, at which four interesting addresses were delivered.

J. S. Lane, B. A., a modern-language specialist, reviewed the lines of reform pursued by the several European countries, save Portugal, which has now the worst spelling in the world, except English. The last official report of the French Minister of Education contains only about one-ninth as many irregularities as if it were printed in the French spelling of a dozen years ago. French still carries a heavy load of silent letters, but they are used consistently.

J. Dearness, M. A., reviewed the progress of the movement to improve English spelling during the past year. The British Society, headed by such men as Sir Wm. Ramsay, Sir James Murray, Dr. Henry Bradley, Right Hon. James Bryce, T. J. Macnamara, M. P.; Stanley Jevons, Prof. W. W. Skeat, and Wm. Archer, entered its second year with fine prospects of successful work.

Nova Scotia, as in some other matters educational, leads the Dominion. The pupils in its schools, and the teachers, are permitted to use the S. S. B. simplifications affecting about 3,300 words. Dalhousie University extends the same privilege to its students, and the Nova Scotia Normal College, the most important single training school in Canada, teaches the improved spelling, and prints its calendar in it.

Quite as satisfactory progress is taking place in the leading Normal Schools of the Middle Western States. The Simplified Spelling Board, among its 25,000 signers, numbers over 7,000 university professors, collegiate and other teachers.

The losses occasioned by our present spelling were set forth by William Metford, the chief one of which is that "it deprives English-speaking children, as compared with those learning reformed languages, of about one-fifth of the education they ought to receive in the public school. British supremacy is more seriously threatened by English spelling than by German warships."

The situation in Ontario was the theme of Robert Alexander's paper. There is a disposition on the part of teachers and people to make cautious progress. The "our" of "honour," "labour," "harbour," etc., was decently buried in Ontario forty years ago. The foolishness of bringing it out of the grave and forcing it on the present generation of school children can only be described. The order has produced a general feeling of resentment.