

# The Mail Bag

## DEBATING AND SELF IMPROVEMENT

Editor, Guide:—I have just read the letter of R. T. Ricketts, in The Guide of June 14. A critical opinion, in one way, is more valuable than an agreeing one, for it is from divergent views that we can get a better conception of the question at hand. Mr. Ricketts, as I understand, is in full agreement with me on the importance of educational work among the members. He places slight value on the debating feature of my proposition, but instead would engage an organized body of first-class speakers.

I think no one will dispute the great good that can be accomplished by a good speaker, understanding "good" of course to mean besides oratorical ability, a knowledge, sympathy and enthusiasm for his cause. Such a person is always in demand. I presume the O.G.A. have been combing the province for such for the last fifteen years. But they are so hard to find!

A permanent demand for any product ought to result in its increased production. Why not in this case? By preparing and assembling the necessary materials we can produce efficient public speakers in any number desired. The gift of eloquence is a natural one. We can't produce it; we have to hunt for it. But it exists, and can be found, often where we least expect it. It requires practice for development. The knowledge must come from study and reflection, and the sympathy and enthusiasm are developed thru active team-work in a noble cause.

This is your prescription for a public speaker. This, in a general way, is the process of development of such speakers as we have. An important part of the purpose of the proposed debating league is to constitute a factory for the production of public speakers. Where we have one speaker now, we want a score. Let us establish the factory!

Altho this proposed institution has been dubbed a debating league, the most essential part of the work intended is the study. I agree with Mr. Ricketts that a debate is not very edifying if monopolized by two or three "rag-chewers" who have not made any previous preparation. The plan proposed is to provide outlines for consecutive reading, not by the debaters alone but by the whole membership. Many topics that will never come up for formal debate will be discussed informally at the local meetings. There will be a strong incentive to induce the debaters to dispense something more substantial than idle vapor. The local debate will be simply a try-out to select the team to represent the local in a joint debate, and the winner of this will in turn compete for the championship of the circuit. In a contest of this kind mere "rag-chewers" will be left far in the rear. The winner must produce facts and talk to the point.

I will yield to no one in my appreciation of the benefits derived from listening to speakers who know more than I do or will ever have time to find out. I hope to see arrangements made by the league at the earliest possible date for systematic courses of lectures. But did you ever stop to think that the one most benefited by the lecture is the lecturer himself? Now, we can get that kind of benefit as well as the other kind by taking part actively in this educational work that all agree is so vitally important.

There is a lazy wish that I suppose we are all guilty of harboring on occasion. We wish for a prophet, a super-man, to come along and save us without any effort of our own. Believe me, such salvation is not worth the effort expended in the wish. All we have of liberty and civilization that is worth preserving has been wrought out in pain and sweat and self-denying effort. And it is only by eternal vigilance that we can retain what we have and only by more pain and sweat and self-denying effort that we can add to it. We in Canada have many of the forms of democratic government, but we shall never constitute a democracy until we, as citizens, learn to use the same sense in regard to common interests and public affairs that we exercise in the handling of our horses and implements.

What I have written is merely my personal view and does not commit anyone but myself. Of one thing I am thoroughly convinced: That there is a very general desire for

## NEW BULLETINS AVAILABLE

**Control of the Sow Thistle**, by Prof. T. J. Harrison, professor of Field Husbandry, Manitoba Agricultural College, Winnipeg. A well illustrated, exhaustive publication, dealing with the best methods of handling this our worst pest in districts new, or old.

**Potatoes**, by C. A. Javitz, professor of Field Husbandry, Ontario Agricultural College, Guelph, Ont. A bulletin of 85 pages dealing with many varieties under different conditions. Extensive experimental results on very many phases of this crop are given fully.

**The School Garden**, a booklet of 66 pages dealing fully with school garden work for Saskatchewan. A splendid booklet for all interested in this phase of rural education. Write Department of Education, Regina.

some sort of educational work calculated to develop a higher, broader and more responsible citizenship. The debating league as yet exists only in the prospectus, but it seems, as I hope, to be rapidly approaching concrete form. There are many details yet to be worked out. Criticisms and suggestions are of especial value at this early formative period. I thank Mr. Ricketts, and I hope others may be heard from.

La Fleche, Sask.

GEO. W. ATKINSON

## SHORT LOANS LITTLE USE

Editor, Guide:—The attitude of the business men and financial magnates about farmers' credits reminds me of a story I read lately, and we can all take a lesson from it. The biggest fool in the village did not know the difference between silver and copper coins, but would always take the copper when offered him. One day a man asked him why, and he said, "If I took the silver that would be the last time they would offer it," thus killing the goose that laid the golden egg. Now, as Mayor Deacon said, a great mistake is made in charging the farmers so much as to be prohibitory, and, according to a recent article in the Saturday Evening Post, where it says a banker lent \$20,000,000 on

paper and liens in eighteen years with a loss of \$800, it shows that the farmers pay their bills. The only difficulty, from a banker's point of view, is that they don't pay on time only when they have the money. A three-months' loan or even a renewal of same is no good to a farmer, as a rule, for working capital, and it shows a lack of business foresight for the business interests not to find a way to meet this difficulty, as it is well known that the farmers as a class don't hoard their money but use it in their business, thus creating a veritable gold mine for business of all kinds. Talk about hard times; there would be none if the farmers could get the money to make the productive improvements they are planning, and it would pay everybody concerned. This farmer can't get the cattle he wants to eat up his feed that is going to waste for want of money. Another draws his water with a rope and pail because he won't go in debt to the storekeeper for a pump, but would borrow from the bank if it wasn't so dear and for such a short time. Another won't borrow from the bank because he would have to draw his grain out in the fall to pay the note, this preventing him from plowing and running the risk of a frozen crop next year. The farmer's business is a safe and profitable business and financial interests would find it so if they were not so intent on killing the goose that lays the golden egg.

N.J.K., Man.

## SCHOOLS NOT WELL MANAGED

I would like to pass a few remarks on our rural school system. First, we will take the trustee system. Only too often do we find men elected trustees who are by no means worthy of the position, or realize the great responsibility they have. I have often found that the three men elected are enemies to each other and work something like this: No. 1 and No. 2 may be on good-terms and have a grudge against No. 3. But only too often before their term is up No. 1 and No. 2 are enemies and one of them will side in with No. 3 and work against his late friend to the detriment of school, children and district. I have seen this happen many times. These isolated schools only too often are poorly built, lighted and heated, and afford no proper protection for the children. Is it fair to keep the boy or girl at home or send them to these schools and let their time for learning be wasted?

What I say is, teach the boys and girls what will be useful in every day life. The present system of trying to crowd so many subjects into their young brains leaves many master of nothing. I claim that there is no one subject so important for every boy and girl to have as a thorough knowledge of arithmetical. Now the remedy I would suggest is consolidated schools. But where these cannot be worked government schools should be established. In this way they would be designed alike, properly lighted, heated and fitted with all necessities and of standard quality. The cost would be uniform and the money from taxes would go back to the government instead of to the loan companies. The teachers would be hired by the government and some control of their ability and wages could be enforced, and I feel sure better teachers would be secured. The schools and equipment would be subject to inspection by inspectors kept for this purpose. And, lastly, the teachers could be furnished with rooms adjoining the school, and with pleasant rooms and a nice garden I think more interest would be taken in the school by the teacher.

## ONE LANGUAGE AND FLAG

### CORPORATION PATRIOTISM

Editor, Guide:—When a country, in order to safeguard its existence, asks its citizens to give up their lives—and when those lives are given cheerfully as is now the case in Canada, it would seem that the voluntary relinquishment of special privileges by corporations and others would follow as a matter of course if by so doing the holders of such special privileges could further the cause for which the life-blood of the nation is being poured without stint upon the battlefields of Flanders and of France. Yet such is not the case. It must be patent to everyone that the heaviest strain of the war will come after it is over and when the people of the warring nations

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Servitors of the "Managers." Three members of the crew with three of the people on the farm where they were photographed. On the extreme right and left are two of the party of managers. Storage rooms are now being repaired against season of this emergency and facilities are being made respecting various allegations connected with this tragic case of Lord Kitchener's vessel.