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EDITORIAL

The Public School and Its Critics

Public schools, rural and urban, are being constantly criticized for failure in one department or another. The country school, it is said, gives the farmers' boys and girls a wrong impression of life, stuffs their minds with matter that will never help them one iota to gain a livelihood, turns them away from farm life and makes them restless and discontented with country surroundings, and trains them for anything but the business which seventy-five per cent. of them will have to follow. Town and city schools come in for the same kind of criticism. They succeed fairly well in laying down a foundation for advanced education, but they are not outstandingly successful in training for usefulness in life. At least their critics claim not. The problem then is to devise some system of education in both rural and urban schools that will give to the pupils in each a correct outlook on life, that will train them for the station they will fill in the world and develop them for useful citizenship. To accomplish this there is no end of suggestion and not a little experiment one way and another going on, but as yet we seem little nearer to a perfect, or even useful and applicable system than we were before faith was lost in the present one, before self appointed critics arose to assail it and lay bare its glaring defects.

Public schools, both country and city, are to a certain degree defective. It is unfashionable nowadays to see merit in them at all. At the same time there is a danger that in our zeal to save the boys and girls and train them into better men and women, we may over-shoot the mark, over-emphasize these so-called bread and butter subjects, and leave the institution in about as bad a way as it was before. Men are prone to do these things. They always run to extremes and the whole mob runs together. Too much bread and butter earning education would be more dangerous than none at all, especially if the child got little else. The distinction between the man whose education ceased practically when he left the public school, and the fellow who went on for higher training, would then be more clearly drawn. The time worn phrase "hewers of wood and drawers of water" would hardly describe the relationship of one to the other.

But this is viewing the problem from the other extreme. It is somewhere between this possibility and the present day system that the happy medium lies which we, in our day, will hail as the proper system just as our fathers in their day viewed the public school as they created it, suited to the educational requirements of the age and ample for all time. Methods in education, like human methods in everything else, are in constant state of evolution. They will never be perfect and never complete. Each generation as it comes along will find something to add, to alter or to reject. Just at present we, with the guidance of some over zealous critics, notice some serious defects in the inheritance the passing generation is bequeathing to us. We shall alter it somewhat, probably; change it radically, perhaps. An ideal system may develop. But it will be so only for a time. Our notions of the ideal change as the conditions do from which the ideal is viewed. That, primarily, is the trouble with present day critics. They are looking at the public school differently to what its founders did. They want different results from it and they will agitate very likely until they get them. The business of the rest of us in the meantime is to hold them from going too far.

Summer Fairs Before Experimental Farms.

Our short season has imposed another problem. In reply to the query raised in these columns a few weeks ago as to why the Brandon people did not encourage excursions to the experimental farm, we have been informed that such excursions would detract from the attendance at the Brandon fair. Here is a matter to consider.

We have hope that in the near future the provincial governments will establish experimental farms for the purpose of working upon provincial problems. If such should be the fortunate consummation, it would be well to note the experience of Brandon, and in fact, Regina is in a somewhat similar position since the holding of excursions to Indian Head on the 29th and 31st, interfered with the putting on of excursions to Regina exhibition last week, or was said to have interfered. Over-lapping and clashing of agricultural educational agencies is something we should guard against.

We have experimental farms established, and also at present, in the case of those already established, we want the public to get all possible benefit from them, else they will fail to discharge their full function, educationally, socially and (never let us forget) politically.

It seems to be the general consensus of opinion that one "big time" in a summer is all that can be pulled off at one place. July is the month of excursions and fairs and only one of these at a place can be expected to be a success. But is this true, and if true is not one agency suffering or lacking in use for the benefit of the other? Might we not rightly suppose that in the case of Brandon many people would rather go on an excursion to the experimental farm than take in the fair, and in the case of Regina many would prefer the exhibition if the excursion train took them there instead of to Indian Head. In a condition of absolute satisfaction one institution should not be affected by the other, or the functions at each should be mutually beneficial.

This latter presupposes a working together, so that visitors to Brandon, for instance, could get both the benefit of the work being done at the farm and the inspiration of agricultural and horticultural problems solved together with the recreation and education of the exhibition.

It is quite within the range of ordinary observation that things at present are not wholly satisfactory and it is not expecting too much that those upon whom falls the responsibility of giving satisfaction will be able to find a solution. Failing this, provincial governments are warned not to establish agricultural colleges and experimental farms in a district where there is a progressive summer fair.

On Giving Reasons in the Judging Ring

Theoretically it seems highly desirable for a judge to give reasons for his placings in livestock rings. The feature is strongly educational. It increases interest in the judging work. Spectators see clearly why he has placed one individual above another. The explanations and the animals in the ring give them a better idea of type, of quality, and the other points considered in judging than they would gain from following for years the work of judges who did not give reasons. From the spectator's standpoint and for increasing the educational value of exhibitions no other feature probably could be of greater worth.

But on the other hand the position of the exhibitor has to be considered. However fair minded a breeder or exhibitor may be, he dislikes to have the weaknesses of his animals pointed out to the public by an expert judge. Theoretically a man ought to thank a judge warmly for pointing such defects out, for showing wherein his stock could be improved, and profit from the criticism by setting to work at once to remedy the weak points. But in practice this doesn't always fol-

low so harmoniously. The public too frequently, when an animal's defects are indicated, over-rate the significance of the weaknesses pointed out, form an erroneous estimate of the individual's worth, and the owner of a horse or bull, the defects of which have been laid bare by an expert judge, suffers loss from no fault of his other than that he was willing to put the animal up as part of an educational demonstration for the public.

These are two views of the question, but there is another one as well. Judges themselves and some of the best of them are a little diffident about offering publicly explanations for the placings. A judge who talks too much is liable to have his reputation shattered rather prematurely, sometime. He gets into trouble sooner or later and the public, which he has been trying to instruct in the intricacies of the judging art, is as ready to turn him down and out as it was to lower its estimate of the animals whose defects he laid bare.

The Family Fetish.

A rather observant novice remarked in the course of a discussion upon some of the animals at our recent shows that one had to see the pedigrees to know how good the stock really was. This observation serves to recall incidents in the history of successes in animal breeding, some of the most pronounced of which might, in their inception, be regarded as accidents, so unpremeditated and unexpected were they. The great Clydesdale sire, Darnley, so potential a factor in the uplift of the Clydesdale breed, was, we are told, practically a catch colt, the product of mating his dam, who had been bred all season to the Keir stud horse, with Conqueror, "with no other thought than that of getting a foal out of her somehow," the result proving a "prince of the blood."

In Shorthorn history, we are informed that Hubback, the most influential of the early sires of the breed in the foundation of the erstwhile popular Bates Duchess family, was a little yellow, red and white bull, of no special pretensions, serving cows at a shilling a head when bought by the Collings for ten guineas. And Champion of England, the sire which made the Cruickshank herd famous, and well-nigh transformed the type of the breed, was the product of a sire bought at butcher's price, of which the purchaser was so nearly ashamed that the bull was kept out of sight in a back field with a few cows that had proved difficult to settle in calf, one of which was a plain cow that from this mating produced the prodigy whose blood, more than that of any other, has coursed the veins of champions galore in the leading Shorthorn show-rings of the world in the last quarter of a century. The success of these outstanding individuals in their influence on the character of the breed was doubtless due largely to the superior judgment of their breeders or owners in using them and their offspring in a system of judicious inbreeding to intensify the potency of the blood; but when that system became a fetish, and the "family" fad was practically worshipped, as in the case of the Duchess tribes, inferior and disreputable specimens being used for breeding purposes, the result was the wreck of the family, and of fortunes as well. The danger lies in paying more attention to pedigree than performance, to breeding from inferior individuals because of their more or less remote relationship to a star performer, and not on account of superior merit in themselves.

An important lesson to be learned from the history of prepotent sires is the wisdom of retaining the services of such as long as their usefulness lasts, rather than relinquishing them for untried or unproved ones. And danger lies in the use of inferior or even mediocre scions of a noted family, when better individuals of sound breeding and respectable relationship are available.