

FARM AND FIELD.

FOR THE RURAL CANADIAN

WALKS AND TALKS AMONG THE FARMERS. NO. XI.

Two red-letter days at the Ontario Agricultural College, crowded full of "walks and talks," especially the latter, supply more than sufficient material for this paper, even though it should be somewhat longer than usual. The "Agricultural and Experiment Union," as it is called, was in session. This organization is composed of past and present officers, students and ex-students of the College. It now comprises a membership of over three hundred. A convention is held annually extending over two days, at which questions of interest pertaining to agriculture, and matters connected with the welfare and usefulness of the College, are discussed. These meetings are open to the public, and ought to be much more largely attended than they are by the farmers; they would be if they were properly alive to their own interests. On the occasion now referred to, the convention was chiefly made up of students and graduates, with here and there an older head or a grey-beard sprinkled in among the "boys," who so greatly preponderated.

The idea of such a union, by whomsoever organized, was a wise and happy one. In College friendships are formed which it is well to keep up in after years. There is much of unavoidable isolation about farm life, and whatever tends in any degree to counteract it is valuable. It was pleasant to see with how much cordiality old class-mates greeted one another, and how happy they seemed to be in each other's society. Evidently, there was much of the sympathy that is born of a common pursuit, and it was particularly interesting to hear the details of experience, whether with success or failure, and to note the eagerness with which these narrations were heard by the young brotherhood of expectant or newly-fledged farmers, once more assembled in the halls of their Alma Mater. Attachment to the institution, already existing, is thus fostered and increased. Much that transpired during the recent meetings of the Union indicated a warmth of love to the College which resented unmerited attacks on it from any and every quarter, while the question of its future prosperity, which came up in various forms, roused more enthusiasm than all the other subjects of discussion that were presented to the assembly. The Ontario Agricultural College has a strong and increasing body-guard of defenders in the members of this Union—a fact which augurs well for its future.

The programme embraced papers as follow:—"On the Ontario Agricultural College," by C. H. F. Major, an ex-student; "Relation of Science to Agriculture," by Professor Panton; "Report of Experiments," by a Committee of the Union; "Clover and its Uses," by Dr. Hare; "Bees," by R. F. Holterman, an ex-student; "The Points of Horses and Breeds," by Professor Greenside, V.S.; "The Dairy of Canada," by Professor Brown; "Higher Education of Farmers," by J. L. Campbell, an ex-student. All these papers were forthcoming, duly read, and thoroughly discussed, with the exception of Dr. Hare's, that gentleman being unable to take the part assigned him, owing to illness in his family. The papers of Messrs. Major and Campbell went very fully into the merits and demerits of the College, and the discussions which arose upon them led to the adoption of a series of resolutions asking for certain changes in the rules of the institution, and for the appointment of an Advisory Board to aid the Commissioner of Agriculture in its manage-

The first change sought is the requirement of at least a year's experience of actual work on the farm as a condition of admittance to the College. At present the students consist of two classes:—Farmers' sons who are thoroughly familiar with farm work, can plough a straight furrow, or handle a hay-fork or dung-fork deftly; and young men from towns and cities who know nothing at all about agricultural manipulations. It was argued with much force that young men wholly destitute of experience could not appreciate the scientific instruction given at the College, did not know their own wants, could not judge of their adaption to agricultural pursuits, and were much more likely to turn away to some other occupation when through with their course of instruction, than those who had already gained some practical knowledge, learned wherein they were deficient, and tried farming sufficiently long to judge as to making it a life pursuit. The proposed change was opposed by some of the English students, who thought it a hardship that a young man just out from the old country should be obliged to spend a year on some Canadian farm before being eligible for admission to the College. *Per contra*, it was urged that none needed such a rule more than young men just arrived from Britain, owing to their ignorance of the country to which they had come; and that so far from the proposed rule inflicting hardship upon such, it was doing them a kindness, as they would study to much better advantage after a year of life on a Canadian farm. This view was upheld by two or three students who had spent a year or two at farm work in this country before entering the College.

The second change sought is a reduction in the hours of manual labour required of the students. At present, five hours per day is the rule. There was a pretty general feeling that this is too long, and that part of the time could be better employed than at farm work. Some complaints were made that insufficient instruction is given to students unfamiliar with farm work, that they are not shown how to do things, but are left to find out for themselves after many awkward attempts and failures. Another grievance is that they are kept too much at mechanical tasks requiring no skill, and only involving monotonous hard work, such as digging, forking over manure, hoeing, and the like—that, in fact, they are treated more like labourers, out of whom it is desired to get as much work as possible, than like students who are to be taught and trained. Complaint was also made that owing to the number of hours devoted to labour, there was no time for private study and the reading even of text-books. A resolution looking to the reduction of the manual labour one-half was adopted with entire unanimity, no dissentient voice or opposing hand being raised in regard to this matter.

The most important point broached was a method for taking the College out of the arena of party politics, and, after much discussion, the conclusion was reached that the only step at present practicable in that direction was the appointment of an Advisory Board composed of practical farmers belonging to both political parties, with whom the Commissioner might consult, and who would be, to a certain extent, responsible for the management of the institution. It was felt by all that the attacks made on the College from time to time with a view to the manufacture of political party capital are damaging to the institution, and that it should, if possible, be taken out of the hands of the politicians, and put into those of practical farmers. In the absence of an endowment, and so long as the College is dependent for

it is idle to talk of taking its management out of the hands of the Government of the day, and committing it to a non-political body. But surely it is quite practicable to have an Advisory Board, composed of members of both political parties, on whose recommendations the Commissioner and the Government can act, and so be relieved to a considerable extent from exposure to party criticisms. It is understood that the present Commissioner has expressed a desire for an Advisory Board of practical farmers, because of his own want of agricultural knowledge and experience. The College does not lack friends among members of the party now in opposition, and there should be no difficulty in finding men of both political schools who will work harmoniously together for the advancement of its best interests. It is true that the Provincial Exhibition has been managed. The Board of Agriculture and Arts has been composed of leading agriculturists of both political parties. Men, the antipodes of each other politically, e.g., Mr. Rykert and the late Senator Christie, have worked side by side for years on that Board, and the result of this arrangement has been that the Provincial Exhibition was never made the foot-ball of party politicians. It is believed that a similar Board would allay, if not wholly remove, the political rancour which has assailed the Agricultural College; and while it is desirable that this institution should some day be put on a basis of independence as complete as the Provincial University, it is plain that this cannot be done until its investiture with an adequate endowment. On this third point, the Convention was entirely unanimous.

The discussion on bee-keeping which followed the reading of Mr. Holterman's paper was animated, and indicated much interest on the part of the students and ex-students. Bee-keeping is the only agricultural interest which does not receive attention at the College. In the original plan of the institution it was provided that "there shall be a Bird and Bee Department," but this part of the outline has not yet been filled up. In view of the importance bee-culture has assumed of late years, and the vast addition that might be made to the national wealth if it were properly installed as one of the industries of the farm, it seems very desirable that this lack should be supplied in some way. The students are anxious to obtain practical instruction in apiculture. This desire was so manifest that President Mills intimated his readiness to have a Beekeepers' Convention held within the college walls at an early day, and it is hoped that this arrangement will be found to be practicable. But, sooner or later, there must be an apiary at the institution, and thorough instruction given in this as well as in other branches of practical agriculture.

A social reunion on one of the evenings of the convention, and a literary entertainment on the other, were enjoyable occasions. At the present time, the College seems to be going on efficiently in its various departments; there are good order and discipline among the students, and the relations between them and the officers of the institution appear to be all that could be desired. Judging by the speeches at the social gathering, nearly all of which were made by students, ex-students, and officers of the College, also by conversations with one and another, the writer was most favourably impressed with the condition and prospects of the College, which he has watched with deep interest from its inception until the present time. Without disparagement to their predecessors, the students now in course of