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FOR WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 16, 1913

No. 42

How to Keep the Boy on the Farm

A New Force in Ontario Agriculture. The Rural School Fair



A Feature of the Rural School Fair—A Full Line of Sporting Events

"BACK to the land" was once the all but universal cry. "How to keep the boy on the farm," now ranks as a more important question, and one that promises to solve the problem of food production for the nation a lot more efficiently than by moving inexperienced city dwellers into an entirely new environment.

For years the call of the city has been reaching many of the brightest and best of our rural lads and lassies. As a result, we may find pleasant country communities all over Eastern Canada where young people are few and the older people are working the farms with the assistance of immigrants from other lands. True, our country lads are "making good" in the cities of their adoption. The nation is progressing industrially because of their efforts.

But it is a one-sided development that robs the country to build up the city. How true it is that no country can rise above the level of its rural population, we are just beginning to realize. How then are we going to interest our bright boys and girls in the things of the country to such an extent that they will be willing to stay on the old farm and add their efforts to the making of rural Canada? Many believe that they have found the answer in the Rural School Fair and the work that goes with it.

WHERE THE IDEA ORIGINATED

A few years ago the Ontario Department of Agriculture established a few branch offices in various counties. Young men, graduates of the Ontario Agricultural College, were placed in each. It was their duty to assist the farmers in all of their problems by every means in their power. This movement has proved so popular that there are now 40 such "agricultural doctors" located over Ontario. It was with one of these, Mr. F. C. Hart in Waterloo county, that the School Fair originated, and it is through the efforts of the other representatives of the Department of Agriculture that the idea is being put in operation in scores of townships throughout Ontario.

Long before Mr. Hart commenced to preach the rural fair idea he recognized that the rural school as constituted, is a potent factor in turning the minds of boys and girls towards the city. In all the curriculum he could find nothing that tended to give the pupils a higher conception of the dignity of agriculture, or would materially assist in solving the problems of the farm. He recognized that the tendency of the rural school was to exalt the life of the city and the dignity of the professional man at the expense of the farm and the farmer. The result of his meditations was the rural school fair idea, a movement designed to prepare the boy and girl for the farm, to make them more efficient workers, more practical thinkers, more intelligent citizens. The rural fair does this by taking the children into the fields, by making them think in terms of the farm, and by teaching them the value of labor skillfully applied.

In brief, the plan of the rural fair is somewhat as follows: The children of certain selected schools (it has not yet been possible to extend the movement to all schools) are given the opportunity to select seed grain, roots, and vegetables of varieties well suited to the neighborhood. They plant this seed either in their own gardens at home or on their plot in connection with the schoolgrounds, attend to their crops according to directions sent them by the Department, or in their own way if they consider their own better, and in the fall the crops are harvested and the School Fair is held. If some of the children prefer they are given a setting of eggs from the O. A. C. bred-to-day strain of Plymouth Rocks, and exhibit their poultry at their own fall fair. During the summer the children are visited by a representative of the local Department of Agriculture, who inspects their plots, scores them, points out how they might be improved, and leaves the children with an altogether new conception of "farming with brains."

But it is at the school fair itself that the greatest enthusiasm is aroused among the children. There is nothing like competition to stir up interest. Sometimes each little school holds its own fair and the boys and girls who have competed with each other so often in spelling bees and games, have an opportunity to compare their abilities as farmers or cooks. The crowning event of the season, however, is the township fair, at which all of the schools of the township compete.

A TYPICAL SCHOOL FAIR

One of these township fairs, that at Cavan in Northumberland Co., Ont., was visited by an



An Idea of the Interest Taken in Rural School Fairs May Be Gained from this Illustration

Fully 450 people turned out to the Rural School Fair in Cavan Township, Durham Co., Ont. When this photo was taken the crowd was just beginning to assemble. In the big tent are over 700 exhibits all made by school children. In the small tent to the right were the exhibits of cookery and needle work. A more interested lot of people never turned out to the best county fair under "grown up auspices." This one was run entirely by the children.

—Photos by an editor of Farm and Dairy.