

The Farmer's Advocate AND HOME MAGAZINE.

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DOMINION.

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and the produce merchant could pay alike for all grades because he needed more butter than he could get.

The Ontario Department of Agriculture stands on neutral but very interested ground in this matter. The Minister and his officials are the guardians of the industry so to speak, and it would seem fair to say that when the best of those immediately concerned are anxious for improvement but afraid of each other, the need for action rests upon the neutral but interested guardian. The present Government is, to quite an extent, a producer's Government. Moreover, the present Minister of Agriculture is a well-known supporter of dairying. We believe that he will be ready to take the responsibility that comes to him by the virtue of his office and his calling and force an immediate improvement. We have no desire to minimize the difficulty of working out a satisfactory solution and do not anticipate that any solution will be entirely satisfactory from the first. However, as we view it the responsibility now rests on the Department, and whether it will be deemed necessary to enact a compulsory grading law is for the Minister and his advisers to decide.

An Injustice to School Children.

Dr. Sinclair, a well-informed educationalist now connected with the Department of Education for the Province of Ontario, recently stated publicly that there are one thousand schools in the Province of Ontario with an attendance of less than ten pupils each. This is a situation that requires careful consideration, by both the Department of Education and by the inspectors, trustees and ratepayers in the country. Teachers are demanding and deserving of higher salaries, yet the expenses in connection with one of these poorly-attended schools will appear rather high. Consolidation in the country districts will not get around or lessen the expense of educating a few children in sparsely-settled districts, but it may do it better. It appears that some changes will have to be made, for sections with only ten pupils attending school will not purchase the necessary equipment or employ the best teachers; under these circumstances the pupils in poorly-attended schools are suffering under a disadvantage which constitutes an injustice.

Duncan McGregor's Views on Spiritualism.

BY SANDY FRASER.

I had Duncan McGregor over yesterday, helping me kill a couple o' pigs. It's a cauld job for this time o' the year but ye have to be doing something when the prok-barrel rins dry.

It's quite a few weeks since I had a chance for a chat wi' Duncan and he had plenty to say, ye may be sure o' that. He could always do two things at a time if one o' them was talking. The wark he would be at never interfered wi' the conversation.

Duncan had been readin' the papers about Sir Oliver Lodge an' the lectures he has been delivering in New York an' ither places an' he was ready for an argument on the subject o' spiritualism as soon as he kenned whether I was for or against auld Sir Oliver. Duncan was always fond enough o' a debate to be willing to tak' either the affirmative or the negative side.

"What do ye think o' this idea o' communication wi' the speerits o' the dead," he says to me, after we had got the first pig oot o' the barrel o' hot water an' were startin' to scrape it doon. "Dae ye think it's possible?" says he.

"Oh, I dinna ken," I replied. "It's easier tae believe it than tae look for proof. Besides, it's no' the fashion to be denyin' the possibility o' anything these days. Ye can hardly dream about a thing noo but what somebody will be inventin' it an' gettin' oot a patent. Have ye seen the latest about the wireless telephone? Ye can talk to yer friends in the Auld Country noo, gin ye want to—and hae the price. Nobody's surprised at anything ony mair. We tak' it all as a matter o' course. An' it's a reasonable attitude too, in a way. I've always said that when ye admit the fact that such creatures as we are exist on a world such as this, ye have admitted something that is as wonderful an' as much past oor understanding as anything can be. If we could get at the bottom o' that secret the solution o' all these ither problems wad be easy. So why may it no' be possible to talk wi' the departed?" I concluded.

"It's against Nature's law, I'm thinkin'," returned Duncan. "That's why I dinna believe in it. Of course there's no tellin' what powers mankind may develop in the next couple o' hundred thousand years, or so, but at present there doesna' seem to be reason to believe that his brain is capable o' recordin' ony messages that may be coming frae the land o' the speerits. What hae they got in this line, so far? Juist nonsense, mostly. Nothing but what the mind o' man has already imagined a thousand times. Gin we ever get tae the point where we can carry on a conversation wi' those that hae gone across we'll be gettin' some information, believe me you. It winna be the gossip that ye might be gettin' frae yer neighbor across the line fence."

"Weel, I dinna ken," I said, when Duncan came to a stop. "Maybe ye are right, but I'll be wonderin' sometimes if it wouldn't be a guid thing for the world if the next life was to become a wee bit mair real like tae them. It might hae the effect o' givin' them an interest in a future existence. Sort o' divide their time an' attention wi' the present one, as ye might say. The future life was pretty real tae the auld folk, dae ye mind, Duncan," says I.

"It was that," replied Duncan. "I mind o' an auld neighbor o' mine, before I cam' oot tae this country, that lived in Inverness wi' his wife an' a couple o' sons. He was a blacksmith, but, some way or ither he never could mak' the twa ends meet. There was a mortgage on the house they lived in an' it was the aim o' his life to get it paid off. But it was too much for him an' he died when there was still mair than fifty pounds owing on the hoose. The boys kept on wi' the business and wi' better luck than the auld man. At last their mother took sick an' tauld them she was dying, as she was, wi'oot ye'll soon be with my father. Na doot ye will hae much to tell him. But dinna forget this mither, mind ye, tell him the hoose is freed. He'll be glad to hear that."

"And there was anither story I used to hear them tell," went on Duncan. "In some places in Scotland the people used to wear these wooden clogs that ye've maybe seen in yer time. If ye did ye'll ken the clanking kind o' a noise they wad be makin' on the sidewalks. Onyway there was an auld woman at Hawick that was says to her, 'Weel, Jenny, ye are gaun to Heeven, an' weel.' 'Weel,' Jenny replied, 'Gin I shud see them I'll tell clanking through Heeven lookin' for your folk.'"

"Good for her," says I, when Duncan had finished. "The next world an' this were all one to her. Like his father was going to go to heaven when he died. 'Yes,' says the teacher, 'I guess he will.' 'Weel then,' says the boy, 'I'll no' gang.'"

Duncan sat doon for a meenute on the edge o' the barrel that we were scaldin' the pigs in. "Sandy," he says, "We can laugh at these people for their auld-fashioned ideas, but, when ye come to think about it they are mair logical than some o' the rest o' us. We say actions seem tae indicate that this world is the only one that we tak' much stock in. We're a bunch o' extremists. Those o' us that are not clean oot o' breath chasin' the dollar are rinnin' after this spiritualism idea till we're weel on the way to the lunatic asylum. Half way betwixt two extremes is where ye are going to find the truth. It's all right to work hard for a living an' to put a wee bit past for the rainy day. But the point

is that we should keep in mind the fact that in the course o' this life-time o' work, and worry, maybe, we are getting an education that, in the very nature o' things, must be a preparation for anither existence a little different, na doot, tae the one we're sae familiar wi' here. Juist a case o' passing frae the common school tae the high school, gin ye like to put it that way. An' it's hard to tell how many college an' university courses may be coming after that."

"Ye're pretty ambitious for an auld chap, Duncan," I remarked. "I dinna ken how ye mak' oot that I'm auld, Sandy," returned Duncan. "As I see it I'm only a bairn begginnin' to learn his A B C's oot o' that wee First Reader that aye gives us mair trouble than a' the ither big books that come after it."

"Go to it, Duncan," says I. "It's going to tak' some time for ye to get yer schoolin', I can see that, but ye'll be among the college graduates some day. A couple or three milleniums frae noo, I suppose."

Nature's Diary.

BY A. BROOKER KLUGH, M. A.

The migration of the Bohemian Waxwing into Ontario this winter seems to have been fairly wide-spread, as is shown by the data received from several correspondents who have been kind enough to respond to my request for information on this point in a recent "Nature's Diary."

From Orillia W. T. R. writes as follows:—"These birds attracted our attention first about January 1. Yesterday while driving along the Muskoka Road I noticed two of them in a hawthorn tree quite close to me, close enough to identify them from your description. There was still some fruit on the trees, also on a bitter-sweet vine which was entwining the thorn. I did not see which fruit they were eating, as they flew to a nearby maple."

W. K. W. B., Toronto, says: "I saw a flock of fifteen near Upper Canada College. They were eating the old frozen fruit of a hawthorn."

W. A., writing from Watford, says: "We kept a sharp lookout for waxwings as I noted that you wished to be informed of their visits, and to our intense delight on the morning of January 28, a flock appeared and on the 29th their numbers were augmented until we counted fifty. They would perch on trees not over fifteen feet from our back window and we could thus see them distinctly. Their crest or topnot was quite prominent and they could raise or depress it at will. At times we thought the crest had disappeared, but if we raised our hand it immediately re-appeared. They seemed to be able to fly straight up from the ground and would congregate close together on the branches of the trees. During the night, we are sure, they remained in a clump of Spruce trees west of our house. They lived on a black berry, a little larger than a black currant, which was on a bush originally planted for a hedge."

Some other winter visitors besides the Bohemian Waxwings, Tree Sparrows, Snowflakes, Redpolls, and Pine Siskins which have appeared this winter are the Pine Grosbeaks and the Whitewinged Crossbills.

The Pine Grosbeak is a bird of the Finch Family, as are most of our winter visitors, and has, as its name would indicate, an even heavier bill than most members of that family. This species is about eight, and a half inches in length. The adult male is carmine red, paler or whitish on the abdomen, darker and streaked with dusky on the back, with the wings and tail dusky, the former having two white wing-bars. Towards spring the plumage of the adult male becomes brighter and glistening, this being due to the fact that the minute barbs of the feathers, particularly those of the feathers of the head and neck, in which regions the greatest brightening occurs, have been worn away, leaving the glistening carmine barbs exposed. The young males of this species are pale olive-brown above and smoky gray beneath, with deep yellow or orange on the head, uppertail coverts and rump. The wings and tail are dusky and the former has two white bars. The yellow of the head and rump assumes a golden sheen towards spring in the same manner that the plumage of the adult male becomes brighter.

The Pine Grosbeak breeds in the Spruce forests of Labrador, in Newfoundland, in the Mackenzie River district, in the Rocky Mountains and in Alaska. Writing of this species in the Kowak Valley, Alaska, Grinnell says: "One morning, the 18th of February, found me across the river skirting the willows in search of Ptarmigan. Although it was nearly 50 degrees below zero, a Pine Grosbeak, from the depths of a nearby thicket, suddenly burst forth into a rich melodious strain. Again one day in March, during a heavy snowstorm, a bright red male sang at intervals for nearly an hour, as summer approached their song was heard more frequently. Not until May 25 did I discover a nest. This was barely commenced, but on June 3, when I visited the locality again, the nest was completed and contained four eggs. The female was incubating and remained on the nest until nearly touched. The nest was 8 feet from the ground on the lower horizontal branches of a small Spruce. It was a shallow affair, and consisted of a loosely-laid platform of slender Spruce twigs, on which rested a symmetrically-molded saucer of fine dry grass. The eggs were pale Nile blue, dotted and spotted with pale lavender, drab and sepia, the larger ends being most heavily marked."

The Pine Grosbeak is a fairly regular winter visitor to southern Canada, though like all our winter visitors it is irregular in its abundance, and may not even put in an appearance in a given locality for several consecutive winters. While here it feeds on berries and fruits of various kinds, as well as on the buds of the Spruce and other trees.