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The Boy's Conversion

1919

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THIS is not an "editorial": it is only a story, but as it is a good one and relates an actual experience, the chances are that it will serve the purpose of this page better than any stilted preachment such as one usually finds in the cut and dry "editorial." Moreover, the editorial is only what one man thinks: this is a plain statement of what one old man *did* to one very young boy, a farmer's boy, a boy who up to a certain point had very little "use" for the farm, a boy who had made up his mind that there was nothing in life like one of the "professions," but who in the twinkling of an eye, by the magic spell of one man's dinner table talk on Shorthorns, was "instantaneously converted" from Law to Livestock.

I think it was Law, if not it was Medicine. But it matters not. His father is a Cabinet Minister of the Province of Alberta, and is well known all over North America as an enthusiast the moment that well bred stock is mentioned in his hearing. He was in Scotland with his boy a month or so before the War broke out, and on one particular day, the

pair were the guests of one of the greatest living breeders of Shorthorns in Great Britain. This worthy is a bachelor and has advanced well beyond the three-score-years-and-ten, but is still a boy when he meets the real boy, and his big family of Shorthorn "lassies" and "lads" are his own dear children.

The usual thing when a man is entertaining a Cabinet Minister would be to place him on the immediate right of his guest at the table, but on this occasion, the old gentleman gave the young shaver the seat of honor. During the entire course of the meal he directed his remarks to the boy, and the history of the tenants of his cattle barns and clover fields formed practically the sole theme of conversation. Francis Drake did not listen with greater rapture to that old sailor of the Spanish Main than did this scion of an Alberta farm home to the old Aberdeenshire farmer as he discoursed on those wonderful dams and sires, born and reared with all the care that is given to royal offspring.

The boy was a livestock enthusiast from that day. His wise old dad had been his chum from the dawn of his memory, but the father had sense enough not to *drive* his lad into the cattle barns. He knew that there is but one royal road to a boy's heart, and he had consistently travelled it. A little counsel and encouragement administered here and there with tact, did the trick, and when it was capped by a trip to

Europe to see and hear the story of the very finest the world knows of in the specific object he is pursuing, the transformation was complete. Now there is no keener livestock man in Alberta to-day than that young lad, and if some country town has lost a second rate lawyer or medicine man, Western Canada has gained a first-class convert to her chief interest, her real concern "whose influence in bringing others to the faith will travel on and end only when time itself blows out."

No "reconstruction programme" is worth the paper on which it is written that does not take account of the young people. They must be the "first line" in everything that concerns future regeneration or recreation. "Give us the young," says Mr. Benjamin Kidd in his wonderful book, "The Science of Power;" "give us the young, and we will create a new mind and a new earth in a single generation. There is no object which a people or a race can set before itself which is not possible through the organization and the transmission of an ideal in its social heredity." We have preached this doctrine since we knew the responsibility and the unspeakable satisfaction of fatherhood, and having experimented with phenomenal success at every trial, we'll preach it if we may carry on till doomsday.

In the series of great meetings of Live Stock men and Grain Growers held in Brandon in the early days of this month, there was no sentiment that received such an ovation as that which greeted this declaration of the Minister of Agriculture of Alberta: "The big thing for Provincial Governments, as I see it, is to give the boys and girls an agricultural training, especially in the breeding and care of live stock, without which there can be no good farming. The big thing for Federal Governments is to take every burden off the farmer in the way of taxation on what he has to buy, give him a free market in all parts of the world, and when he is making money, as he soon will, tax his income to the last dollar needed in liquidating the country's debt."

We are not sure if the "farmers' platform" has any young folks' plank in it. If not, have it incorporated at once. So much of the old timber has sickened of the dry rot, the entire fabric is in danger of dropping in pieces in these days when nothing but sound timber will face the strain that is coming.

"So put me in touch with the heart of the boy,
The heart of the man to be."

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