

The Farmer's Advocate

and Home Magazine

"Persevere and Succeed."

Established 1866

Vol. XLII.

REGISTERED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE COPYRIGHT ACT OF 1875.
LONDON, ONTARIO, NOVEMBER 7, 1907.

No. 789.

EDITORIAL.

DEFECTIVE DISCIPLINE IN THE SCHOOLS.

Editor "The Farmer's Advocate":

As few questions seem to be of more general interest to your readers than that which pertains to our educational system, I may be pardoned for adding to the contributions already received. I have been following, for some time, the arguments presented in your columns, both for and against present conditions. One side declares that our system is not ministering to the needs of the masses, that our public-school teachers are incompetent, and that the results obtained are not equal to those obtained twenty-five years ago. The other side simply contradicts those statements. Now, without discussing the merits of either side—for both are partly right—I do not think that the real weakness has yet been touched. The fault is not with the system; that, while not by any means perfect, has been working in the direction of progress. But the fatal defect in our schools is the lack of discipline, the failure and often inability to inculcate principles of obedience and respect. Discipline was the strong feature of the old log schoolhouse, and made up for many defects, both in the school system and in the academic or professional qualifications of the teacher. And, after all, discipline is three-fourths of education, since the acknowledged aim of education is the formation of right habits—in short, of character—and, without proper discipline, that object is utterly impossible of attainment.

Two things at least are responsible for this loss of discipline, the disappearance of all but a few male teachers, and the laxness of the home training throughout the length and breadth of our land. From the time a boy reaches the third book, until he leaves the public school, he should be directly under a male teacher. Not that I mean to say that there are no female teachers who can enforce discipline in the ordinary meaning of the term, under any circumstances, but there is a certain training and influence which a boy needs at that age that he must get from contact with a masculine spirit, or else not at all. To recognize clearly the evil results which have attended the supplanting of male teachers, it is only necessary to refer to some of the American schools, both High and Public, where there is not a single male teacher on the staff. The discipline of such schools is notorious. This is a defect hard to remedy, especially in a time of national prosperity like the present, but one essential of any scheme must be increased salaries.

The second cause to which I referred is simply one phase of our national life from which there is no present escape. We have passed from a sort of Puritan discipline to the other extreme. But the records of history warrant us in assuming that time will gradually bring us to a middle course. Until that happens, any system which can be devised will be more or less unsatisfactory. At present, residence schools seem to be solving the problem with a fair degree of success; but here, as elsewhere, the results depend upon the ability and personality of the person in charge.

As yet, our educational system is only in the experimental stage, but the next ten years will probably see a vast change in it—a change, too, which will not tend towards reduced cost. More and more the spirit seems to be gaining ground that, if people want education, they must pay for it.

H. S. BERLANGUET.

Kenora, Ont., High School.

THE UNDOING OF THE FARMER.

United States Secretary of Agriculture, James Wilson, if he is a Yankee, is yet a Scotchman, and disclosed, in his speech on "The Unproductive Farm," at Syracuse, N. Y., the other day, some of the thinking characteristics of his forbears. First of all, he dispensed a little American hifalutin about the prosperity of the "best in the world," but quickly settled down to a close analysis of the way in which the people have wasted their inheritance, describing them as soil-robbers, wood-robbers, water-robbers, and mine-robbers. He declared that conventions such as that before which he was speaking might be called in every State to consider the decreased productiveness of the soil near great centers of population. Why the decrease?

The old-fashioned farmer fought a good fight. He struggled to educate his children, and the education which the State gave them did not help them to success in living on the soil, but actually led them away from the farm and left him to battle alone. Everything taught them had a tendency towards anything but agriculture for a career. The nation offered new farm lands for nothing. It gave away mines and forests for nothing, encouraged railways and protected the factory, enabling these industries to outbid the farmer when he wanted help; and the schools equipped the boys and girls for every vocation but the farm, and tempted them away.

Have we not been doing precisely the same thing in Canada?

Secretary Wilson next recounted the varied and costly educational efforts made by Federal and State Governments for the resuscitation of agriculture, such as the provision for agricultural and mechanical colleges in every State and Territory, and, more recently, research and publication work through the Department at Washington. He referred to the improvement of the farm papers and the introduction of agriculture in the secondary schools, as has been done in Alabama, Georgia and other States. These schools are expected to be feeders of the agricultural colleges, and will, observed Mr. Wilson, open up, to students who go no further, opportunities for beginning the study of what pertains to their life-work.

But why, "The Farmer's Advocate" desires to ask, should the "beginning" date in the secondary or High School, when it is in the public school that the foundation is laid, and for the great majority of our growing population, the educational superstructure, in so far as schools can rear it, is completed? Indeed, in this fatuous policy we have one of the anomalies of the age, which Public-school Inspector Hughes, of Toronto, fittingly characterized, in his note in our last issue, as an educational policy thirty years behind the times. Faulty at the base, the educational edifice of the nation can never be right, no matter how much is spent upon secondary schools, colleges, experiments and Government demonstrations. Public-school grounds and buildings, the courses of study, the pedagogical training of the teachers, and their subsequent oversight, must all be lifted to a higher plane, unified in their purpose, exalting the ideals of a life nearer to nature, and so training eye and ear, hand and head, that there will be the disposition and the capacity to turn with confidence to the soil for a competence, and find upon the land the life worth living.

Turning to Secretary Wilson's observations on the decreased value of farms in the Eastern and Middle States, because growing the old staple crops in the old-fashioned way had become un-

profitable, he discerns that these very lands are particularly well adapted to special crops and special industries that new conditions will make most profitable. As one illustration of a persistent and losing adherence to outworn methods, he cites the management of pasture lands, the area of which increases as help becomes scarce. Instead of one lonesome variety, the pasture should have growing upon it all the grasses and legumes suitable to the soil and climate, making a more perfect ration, and the cheapest for the production of meat and milk, replacing organic matter to resist drought, and feeding subsequent crops. There are few first-rate pastures anywhere. Farmers are caught napping in this respect oftener than in any other feature of the farm.

Mr. Wilson, in conclusion, predicted that these neglected Eastern lands would be brought back to their primitive fruitfulness, because, being within hearing of factory whistles and school bells, within sight of church spires and colleges, they only need intelligent management to return paying harvests.

FOR DRYNESS AND FRESH AIR WITHOUT DRAFTS.

A sermon of wisdom is contained in two sentences of Mr. Gilbert's article on poultry-housing in "The Farmer's Advocate" of October 31st. "To-day," he says, "the great aim is to have houses so constructed as to admit as much fresh air, without draft, as possible. We are trying to make our birds fit the climate, rather than the climate the birds."

Stockmen and physicians are discovering that the same principle applies to horses, cattle, sheep, swine and human beings. Nature never intended that animal life in northern zones should live all the year round at summer temperatures, and attempts to produce such artificially in winter are bound to result in excessive cost, while the important considerations of ventilation and exercise are almost certain to be sacrificed, to the serious impairment of constitutional vigor, and at the risk of untoward results from those occasional unwonted exposures which the best of care cannot always insure against.

In writing thus, no plea is urged for pioneer rations of "brouse," or for pitiless barnyard exposure. Judicious shelter from weather inclemency is an essential factor in profitable stock husbandry, as it is in the comfort and well-being of the human race. But there is a happy medium between inhuman exposure and irrational pampering, and the judicious stockman who hits upon that medium is, as a rule, far less likely to be inconsiderate or cruel than the unthinking farmer who lowers the vigor of his animals by confinement in close, damp, ill-ventilated stables, and then compels them betimes to shiver in the marrow-chilling current of a morning stable draft, or maybe of a bleak barnyard prospect. There is or should be common sense in all things.

For winter stabling, we believe in moderate protection, without coddling—moderate protection implying the provision of an atmosphere that will be fresh, dry and well ventilated, without perceptible drafts. In the past builders have labored under a vague impression that a house or a stable would be warm so long as it were tight, hence we built basement cellars and strove to chink up all the cracks, too often forgetting to make any provision for systematic ventilation. In time we found that these stables were unwholesomely stuffy and damp, while many were surprised to find them only moderately warmer than the more open byres, proving that considerable heat is lost