

## A TEACHER'S REPLY TO MR. RICE.

Editor "The Farmer's Advocate":

Having picked up a recent issue of "The Farmer's Advocate," I was much interested, as a teacher, in the discussion at present going forward in your columns re the lamentable status of our public schools. I was particularly interested in the alarmingly broad statements from the vigorous pen of Mr. Rice. Indeed, it was the perusal of Mr. Rice's letter that has led me to venture a few observations on rural-school matters.

First, let me say that such a discussion as your pages are at present accommodating should do considerable good among the class of readers who subscribe to your paper—the farmers of Ontario—if it is carried on intelligently. It is time our rural residents were taking a little interest in educational matters. As a mass, their interest in educational progress has not hitherto extended beyond keeping down the school rate.

Mr. Rice scores our schools and teachers pretty heavily when he grows reminiscent and declares that "pupils of the fourth form to-day are not so well educated as those in the second form of twenty years ago." As this is a charge, however, which Mr. Rice cannot prove, and as it is one which our best educationists will deny, and easily demonstrate as erroneous—and they are the most competent judges in such questions—it will be well for Mr. Rice's neighbors to take plenty of salt with his indignant charges.

I believe it is the opinion of our experienced inspectors that our public-school teachers are, on the whole, doing better work to-day than ever has been done hitherto in Ontario; that their methods are based more truly on psychological science; and that teachers, as a body, have a greater knowledge concerning the mental processes of the child's mind, as well as the prescribed subjects, than did those of the "good old days." It is a truth which many would-be reformers are continually forgetting, that the true aim of public-school education is not to turn out embryo farmers, or miniature artisans, or professionals-in-the-bud, but to logically train and develop the reasoning powers as an equipment for any phase of life. This being so, the question of curricula does not agitate the true teacher very deeply; to him, the curriculum, with its terminal examination, is not the end, but the means thereto.

It is not my purpose, however, to quarrel with Mr. Rice, nor to screen our pedagogical weaknesses. We all know that the teaching profession has not kept pace with the progress made by other professions, though its field of research is the widest of all. Both Mr. Editor and Mr. Rice cite cases where pupils were helpless when required to do a little impromptu calculation. I don't doubt their experience. They have touched upon one of the weakest points of our pupils' training. Too many teachers devote the entire arithmetic period to text-book problems, when two-thirds of the period could be invaluable spent in "mental" arithmetic, involving every-day operations. No pupil in school should escape a generous, daily shower of such problems, to be worked "by head"—these problems dealing with practical, every-day occurrences, and logically adapted to the pupil's experience and power. If the teachers throughout Ontario would follow this procedure, there would be such a marked improvement in alertness, accuracy and assurance on the part of our public-school graduates that even Mr. Rice would be mollified.

I am glad, also, that Mr. Rice touched upon the examination nuisance. His children are evidently attending school where the plague has secured a foothold. Hundreds of teachers throughout the Province are blindly hugging to their bosoms this viper, despite the warnings of their enlightened brethren. I know teachers in my own district who unfailingly have monthly examinations, and publish the reports in the local papers, presumably to show the parents how each pupil compared with his fellow classmates, as if any pupil's standing or progress could be measured by so shallow a gauge. These teachers do this year after year, taking no note of the discouragement offered to those pupils who always foot the lists, and who may have done better work, and certainly need more encouragement, than the stars who shine at the top. The teacher who cannot tell when to promote a pupil, without a written examination, must have a very distant acquaintance with the pupil's mental dynamics.

But I am forgetting that "The Farmer's Advocate" is not a school journal. In conclusion, let me remark to Mr. Rice that the day when a pupil may secure a High-school training without going to the city is a rather distant prospect, as it is a notorious fact that our rural residents have looked upon the ordinary school-tax as a burden to be borne only with much squirming and self-pity. Moreover, we cannot agree with Mr. Rice's arguments against a boy attending High School in town. We consider the three or four years' life in town as an excellent and broadening factor in a boy's education. However, as statistics show that less than one per cent. of our

rural public-school graduates ever attend High School, Mr. Rice should not be alarmed.

Our school system is not perfect, but it is improving. The only true way in which it may be further improved is to raise the standard of the profession and demand a better class of teachers. These will be forthcoming when there is sufficient remuneration to attract them. Hence, the people have the remedy in their own hands.

Let me finally intimate to Mr. Rice that the excellence of the old log-school system is like the peculiar flavor of his boyhood's pumpkin pies—existent only in his reminiscent imagination.

Oxford Co., Ont.

R. H. DARLING.

## HORSES.

## "AMGREYS."

The following discursive article on the latest American horse-breeding experiment, is taken from the Daily Mail, of Manchester, Eng., and is well worth reading, not only by draft-horse breeders, but by the light-horse men as well. It will be recalled that, as explained in "The Farmer's Advocate" of Sept. 5th, the intention is to use gray Shires and Clydesdales for a foundation, possibly infusing some gray Percheron blood later on:

"The American Government, led by President Roosevelt, has made up its mind to rob England, if it may be, of her undoubted supremacy in heavy-horse breeding. An extremely interesting experiment, suggesting—perhaps founded on—the wise ordinances of Edward I., is now being undertaken with this view. The official horse-buyer for the Republic has been touring Britain throughout the summer, as the usual habit is of American buyers,

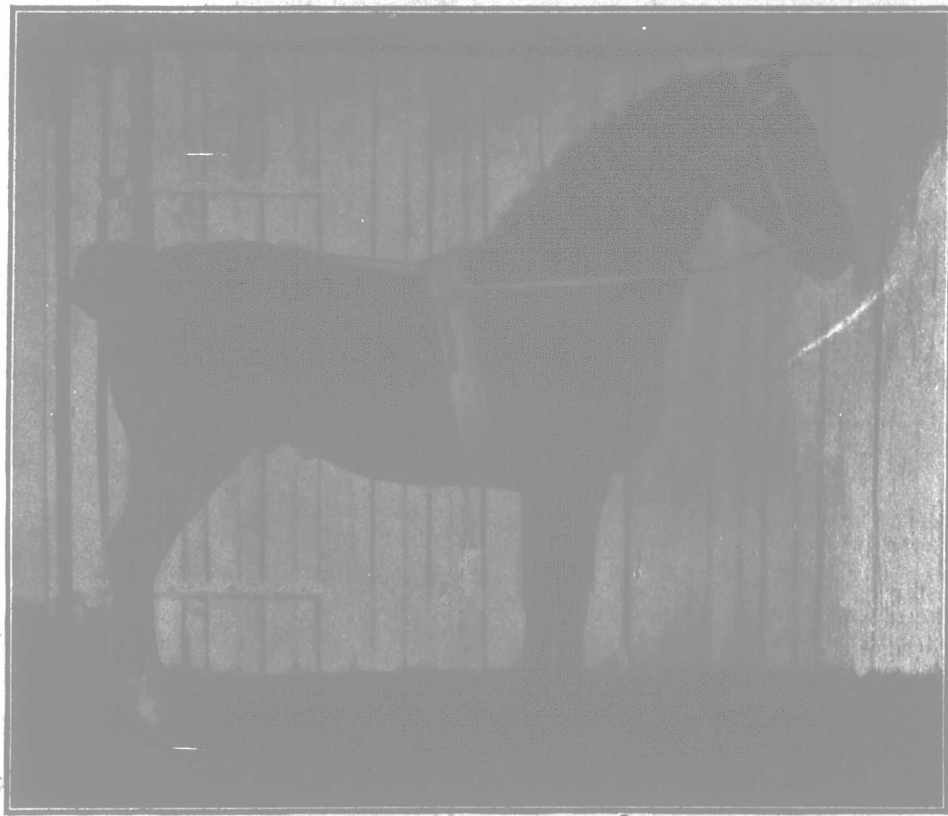
proved that a gray can keep his looks as well as a bay if he be strenuously groomed. They reckon, perhaps, without our weather; but there is certainly no bona-fide objection other than æsthetic to gray color. It may even have distinct virtues. Some of the best judges of a horse; and those who have most closely studied the more practical problems of heredity, consider it proved that grays are distinctly longer lived than other horses. It does not, of course, follow that the color is dominant and can be maintained as one of the distinctive marks of a breed. Still, the preference is interesting, and the experiment worth making.

"No better bree's than the Clydesdales and Shires could have been selected. The one defect of the Shire is clumsiness, the one defect of the Clydesdale lightness. On this ground, it has for some time been agreed by English breeders that the two breeds ought never to have been separated; and the Clydesdale certainly shows a tendency to develop nimbleness, at the expense of the cardinal qualities proper to the heavy horse. Hence the wisdom of the American Government. Their experiment should especially concern every English horse-breeder, and one could wish that our own Government would feel similar concern. Its attention to horse-breeding as a part of the agricultural wealth of the country has terribly deteriorated since Henry VIII. set up his draft-horse studs in the neighborhood of Newmarket. The American Government has kept its scheme very quiet, but now that the first purchases are made, there is no reason for withholding criticism.

## PERCHERON OR SHIRE.

"The tour of Mr. Armour's grays, now on their way to New York, has been partly responsible. It has clinched the old belief that English heavy

horses are supreme the world over. We all admired his team of six grays. Their docility was as astonishing as the capacity of their trainer. Even the wheelers, weighing well over a ton, had paces that suggested a Welsh pony rather than the Galatian carrier of 'a ton of flesh.' Nevertheless, as draft horses, they do not compare with our Shires in the judgment of any specialist. They have not the bone; their weight is largely due to the fatness which rounded their limbs, and certainly lent them spectacular virtue. Their feet, an admirable touchstone for draft horses, are indifferent. Nor have they the power of 'stroke.' All who have admired the horses in Rosa Bonheur's picture will at once recognize the breed. There is no doubt about the Percheron, and few more



Hackney Stallion, Clerkenwell —147— (6688).

First and sweepstakes in carriage or coach class, and first for stallion with three of his get, Western Fair, London, 1907. Owned and exhibited by Wm. Mossop, St. Mary's, Ont.

and has shipped a number of fine mares and stallions.

"The majority have been brought from Wales and the northern counties, and consist of more or less equal numbers of Shires and Clydesdales. These are to stock a new stud farm, and from the cross a new breed, with a special studbook, and a distinctive title, is to be established. I understand that the name selected is "Amgrey," which carries its derivation on its face. The American Government, with the same curious preference asserted both by Mr. Vanderbilt and Mr. Armour, has only purchased gray horses, of the pick of which England is now bereft, since, as well as the purchases of the American Government, Mr. Armour has taken the two best geldings he could find. The expectation is that gray color will be as permanent an attribute of these 'Amgreys' as their peculiar shade of chestnut is of the Suffolk Punches.

## THE LONGEVITY OF GRAYS.

"In England, some prejudice exists against grays, though the old gray horse is still an almost proverbial presence on the farm. They are especially objected to in a park team, but perhaps there is something in the American contention that the prejudice is wholly due to English laziness. Both Mr. Vanderbilt and Mr. Armour have

comely horses are found. Many hundreds have been imported into America from Normandy, and for some years they have been taken as the ideal type of draft horse.

"They have never been so considered in England. Even those who most unfeignedly admired Mr. Armour's grays had to recognize that for the proper work of a draft horse, they were inferior, not only to our show horses, but to many of the workaday Shires on the farms. Indeed, the two breeds cannot very well be compared. They are as different as chalk from cheese; the fine feathers on the legs, reckoned so highly by English judges, are as pleasing in English eyes as the Percheron smoothness to the Normandy dealer. In a great measure, owing to this difference of taste, the King's Shires were not universally successful in competition in the United States, but it is now almost universally acknowledged that their breed is supreme when hard and continuous work is in question, and, in our eyes, their manifest power is the proper basis of their beauty.

## CLIMATE AND STAMINA.

"Several vital questions in breeding, indeed in general questions of heredity, are likely to be illustrated in this American experiment, in which it is understood that Mr. Roosevelt, a great judge of horseflesh, is showing keen personal interest.