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EDITORIAL.

OUR IRRATIONAL SCHOOL SYSTEMS.

The teacher of Agriculture in a Pennsylvania High School has instituted a cow census, for the dual purpose of educating his pupils and benefiting the owners of the cows. The school proposes to test the milk and tabulate the record of every cow whose owner is willing to weigh each mess of milk and take samples for the Babcock test. The work will be done at the school much as it would be at an ordinary creamery. The idea is a splendid one. By impressing on the pupils, as it is bound to do, the fundamental importance of knowing the performance of every cow kept, and, best of all, by familiarizing them with the actual testing, an influence will be set at work that cannot fail to have a telling effect when they grow up, not only upon their dairy practice, but their whole system of farming.

The enterprise of the Pennsylvanian carries a suggestion that might be adopted elsewhere. If some Canadian teachers, for instance, could take up more work of this kind, as practice in mathematics, it would be infinitely more to the purpose than these endless problems about movement of the hands of clocks, A and B doing work on shares, or difference in the time it requires to row ten miles up and ten miles down stream. We are not contending for the teaching of agriculture as a subject in public schools, because it seems very difficult to introduce agriculture as a subject and have it taught in a beneficial way. Our teachers are not qualified for it, and even though they were trained as well as they could be in Normal Schools, many of them would still be liable to present the subject in an absurdly impractical light. But in this country, where agriculture is admittedly the foundation of material progress, and where the great national problem is how to keep a sufficiently large proportion of our bright young men and women on the land, why not give our schooling an agricultural trend? We should have the text-books revised, and, wherever possible, more problems, exercises and passages introduced that will tend to interest and instruct the pupils in things pertaining to the farm, rather than those tending so frequently to the professions and the trades. Also there should be an especially earnest attempt made to introduce nature-study and school-gardening.

Some may wonder in what way our schooling has tended to fill the trades. A little reflection will show that man is a gregarious animal—he is prone to companionship—living in groups. This desire asserts itself with increasing emphasis in the individual whose social character has been somewhat developed, as it generally is by schooling. The desire to live in a town or city, or to work in a gang, induces many a lad, influenced mayhap by his girl friends, also of cityward inclination, to choose a trade, or even the lot of an unskilled town laborer, in preference to farming, which, of course, involves a more or less isolated life and solitary work. To regulate or balance the well-marked cityward tendency of the schools, we must take particular and unceasing pains to educate the boy to appreciate nature and open his eyes to the possibilities the farm offers in the way of a happy, prosperous life. Heretofore our school education has lacked this essential corrective or counterbalancing influence.

The fact must be recognized that the vaunted school systems of our Canadian Provinces have tended strongly to depopulate the country, draining it of much of the flower of its young manhood and womanhood, because the effect has been to incline far too large a proportion of our

people towards urban occupations, such as the professions, clerical employment, and the trades. For the services of these classes the home demand is limited by the number of people engaged in the basic productive industries, especially agriculture and manufacturing—two lines for which we have done far too little to educate our people. In the overcrowded professions and trades congestion has been automatically relieved by exodus to the neighboring Republic, a combination of circumstances having developed that country rapidly and afforded larger opportunities for all classes than we have had at home. As a rule, therefore, it was our best men who were attracted thither, and the effects on Canadian development were the more serious for that reason. It kept Canada almost standing still, and the longer we lagged behind, the greater became the disparity between opportunities at home and abroad. Of late years the outgoing tide of population from the Eastern Provinces has been fortunately diverted to our own West, though small thanks is due our school systems for this fact. But for their adverse influence, continually prying our people from the land, the southward current would have turned west long ago.

We are glad the West is being settled at last, but the necessity for better adapting our school systems to our needs still remains. When immigration of farmers from foreign countries to the West slackens, while at the same time opportunities for profitable investment by our own people in western lands diminish with the approximate settlement of that country, we will again realize acutely the need of an educational system which will help to make our people better farmers. At present many in the West are accumulating money, not so much by their farming as by the holding of lands that are rapidly appreciating in value. When this opportunity is closed, not a few will despair of agriculture and again turn their backs upon the farms, unless, meantime, we have been training the rising generations to esteem the occupation and make a genuine success out of farming in spite of difficulties.

Then, too, we have a more immediate reason for modifying our school systems. We must do it in order to interest our children more speedily in the Eastern farm, and the more of them we can draw to it the better. Ontario, for instance, can easily support in comfort two or three times her present farming population, and as cities grow, affording larger home markets for the products of intensive farming, the more numerous will be the openings for properly-trained agriculturists to make a good living in the Province. This will benefit all classes, for agriculture, manufacturing, fishing, lumbering and mining are the foundation upon which our material prosperity must be built. Of these, agriculture and manufacturing offer by far the best opportunities for extension, always provided our people are fitted and inclined to embrace the opportunities in these lines. We need school-gardening, nature study, manual training and domestic science substituted for some of the history and other subjects.

Having adjusted our courses and improved the text-books, we must train the teachers as carefully as possible in agriculture, in order that they may give their instruction an appreciative savoring of nature and the farm. The Macdonald Institute at Guelph, Ont., and the Macdonald College at Ste. Anne de Bellevue, Que., were conceived with this purpose in view. The former is a place not only to educate farmers' daughters in housekeeping, but also to train rural public-school teachers in such special phases as nature study, manual training, domestic science and school-gardening. The Macdonald College, now be-

ing completed, is commonly thought of simply as an agricultural college for young men, but part of its function is to train rural teachers that, going out through Quebec, they may prove missionaries to enlist farm boys as students in the agricultural courses. We welcome the Institute and the College as well. Our only wish is that some means might be devised by which the teachers' courses of the Macdonald Institute might be more largely patronized. A regular Provincial Normal School should be established in connection with the Institute for the training of rural school-teachers in agriculture and allied sciences. Here, at the Institute, and alongside the Ontario Agricultural College, they might receive a training and an inspiration that would enable them to infuse their pupils with enthusiasm for the new agriculture, and thus might we hope to mitigate the unfortunate academic tendency of our whole school system, which has imbued so many with the deplorable idea that an educated man can find no scope for his intellect on the farm. Just the other day we heard of an excellent lady teacher, herself a farmer's daughter, who never was known to hold out any hope to her pupils of prospering or succeeding on the farm. To her it was a place for them to get away from, and High School and University were the avenue by which to leave.

The mental pabulum doled out in our classrooms, from public school to university, has been irrational and unbalanced. There has been too much classics, history, geometry and algebra, and far too little that bore on agriculture and applied science—too much delving into the past and not enough grappling with the living present. While the object of education should not be mere money-making, still that education is unfit for the masses which does not help to make them efficient workers, prepared to earn good livelihoods, by skilfully employing hands and brain in useful, productive labor. And in acquiring such proficiency, they may be more truly and nobly trained to live than by cramming them with abstract principles and ancient lore.

Back to our schools goes the farm-labor problem. Back to them goes the problem of keeping our children on the farm. Back there goes the problem of developing our country's resources. Back to the school may be clearly traced what has been, and may be some day again, a great national problem—emigration.

It may be asked why should education in Canada have such untoward effects? Have not the great nations of the past been those which prized their schools? Quite true, but in the past education was for the few, not for the many, and then it mattered less what its effect on the individual's capabilities and tastes might be. If it trained teachers and orators and statesmen and kings, it filled the bill for those days. In Canada we have striven to put every child through the schools—farmers' boys, artisans' and all. This is well, but let us not forget that, in proportion as we place school education within reach of the general public, the responsibility increases in compound ratio, to see that the courses of study through which our children are put do not alienate their interest more than we can help from the basic occupations of the country. In the past this great fundamental principle has been largely ignored. Our educationists have, for the most part, shut their eyes to this stern fact, hoping against all kinds of evidence that the ultimate effect of our school systems, adapted from earlier ages, would be good. How sadly they deceived themselves, the past century's history reveals.

As a nation, we have a right to in-