

The Farmer's Advocate AND HOME MAGAZINE.

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DOMINION.

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throughout than it is. This statement is not made in ignorance of what the maintenance of several breeds entails. It is an easy matter to operate along one line only compared with the housing, breeding and rearing of all classes of live stock and many breeds of the same. This difficulty, no doubt, has handicapped the live-stock departments of our colleges and experimental farms. The chiefs have had an uphill road with insufficient help and inadequate funds. Breeders generally do not take these circumstances into consideration, but are prone to criticize the public-owned individuals of the breed they favor, and, moreover, they feel that an injustice is being done them and their interests. In many cases a reasonable appreciation of the obstacles and difficulties to be met with would engender far more leniency.

It does not seem too much to expect of educational institutions that they should carry on constructive breeding with one breed at least, of horses, cattle, sheep and swine, and have representatives of the other leading breeds good enough to convey the proper conception to students, visitors and breeders generally. More than that, it would not be bad practice to exhibit at the larger exhibitions in some manner decided upon with the breed associations, exhibitors and fair boards. It would be good policy to have this understanding in order to forestall any unpleasant attitude the private exhibitors might adopt when asked to compete against public-owned animals. It seems desirable that the colleges and experimental farms should lead out their best so the public may know what to follow in regard to live-stock ideals.

Fall Fair Philosophy.

BY ALLAN MCDIARMID.

I was talking to a neighbor a short time ago about how hard it was to keep any institution or organization alive in the country. "Anything that brings in the money," I said, "in a way not too round-about for the comprehension of the average farmer will have his support. He'll put his whole heart into it. Something such as his cheese-factory or creamery, for instance. As long as they bring in profitable returns they're sure of a healthy existence. But when it comes to supporting some 'uplift' scheme, as they call them in the cities, such as 'farmers institutes', clubs, 'co-operative societies' and so on, the interest soon slackens, if it is ever really aroused, and the organization, whatever it was, dies in the usual manner. Do you remember when the 'Patrons of Industry' were making a stir around here

about twenty years ago? The organizers who made the biggest success in starting 'lodges' in the different communities were the ones who emphasized the manner in which money could be saved by buying from a 'Patron' store, which had to sell to them at a certain fixed advance over cost at wholesale. While this little sort of a side-line, as it might be called, was fulfilling its purpose, the 'Patrons' prospered and began to make even the professional politicians sit up and take notice. They began to wonder if it was possible that farmers were going to join their forces and make themselves felt in the world at last. But a change came to the country. Financial conditions improved and from that standpoint the 'Patrons' lost their usefulness. And when they could no longer help him to make money the farmer lost sight of anything they proposed doing for him in the way of social improvement or political influence or in a general elevation of his standing among the business men of the country. This was the original and main purpose of this, as well as of many other farm organizations of the past. But the most of those on whom these societies had to depend for support couldn't see the importance of this object, or the variety of objects, and consequently lost interest and another chance was given the people of the towns to say that the farmers could never stick together."

"Well," said my friend, to whom I had been complaining, "there are some other things besides clubs and co-operative societies that lose their hold on a community, so you needn't be surprised at what you have mentioned. What about the County Fair? What we long ago used to call the 'Cattle Show'. A good many of them are finding it pretty up-hill work to maintain their existence these days. In spite of Government bonuses and that sort of thing they are gradually losing their hold, and unless some change comes it looks as though they were going to follow the example and meet the fate of the Township Fairs, that were common enough a number of years ago but which are few and far between to-day. If we want to get a parallel case from which to help us draw conclusions we might find it in the 'Country Church'. There is another institution that is losing its hold on the people and its influence in the community, for some reason or other. If we knew the cause in the case of the Church it would probably give us an idea as to the cause of the same symptoms showing themselves in our other organizations. And I think," he went on, "that I could put my finger on the spot where the whole trouble lies, although I suppose it won't do any good so far as improving conditions are concerned. It's easier to see what the matter is than to give the medicine. But, in so far as I can make out, this 'going back' that we have been talking about, that is showing itself in our societies, clubs, churches, and in our country fairs, is due to the fact that those responsible for the maintaining of these institutions, that is, the organizers and officers, are not putting an element of interest into them that will get the attention of men and women, and that will hold it after it has been secured."

"The Church to-day is suffering because her ministers have nothing new, or, of what they are convinced themselves is of vital importance, to offer to the people. This applies particularly to the church in the country. The church in the city that is in a position to secure the services of a preacher who can interest his hearers and impress them with the importance of his message has no fear of having to close its doors because of lack of patronage. And human nature is just the same when we come to deal with it in connection with other things, such as Fall Fairs, for instance. We've got to interest them there if we expect them to keep on attending year after year. If we don't they'll give their time and money to the bigger organizations that do interest them and who make it their chief aim to accomplish just that."

"The most of people, when they take a day off from their work, want to be amused, which is practically the same thing as being interested, and if we don't satisfy them we had better close our doors. It's all right to educate them up to higher standards in the breeding of live stock of all kinds, but very few people will willingly spend the best part of a day looking at a number of rows of cows, horses, sheep and pigs, no matter how good they may be, when they have seen practically the same thing every day for the last twenty years or more. What they want is something else, something different. And we've got to give it to them. As an educator our Fall Fairs won't amount to much unless we can induce the public to come and be educated. To expect them to come for just this purpose is asking too much of human nature. Very few of us went to school for the fun of it. We went because we were compelled to. But we can't compel people to come to our Fall Fair school. We've got to coax them."

"There are thousands of varieties of entertainments and amusements that are to be had, at a certain expense, of course, but they can be had, and if we're willing to undertake the small trouble and make the necessary outlay there's no reason why our country exhibitions should not improve from year to year, instead of always being on the verge of bankruptcy, as it were. To send a crowd home satisfied with the day's outing is a guarantee of success for the future and ample compensation for all the effort we have been called upon to make. It takes a good deal of the missionary, or philanthropic, spirit to lead one into taking the office of president or director in one of our Agricultural Societies, but I guess it's the doing of something worth while that counts, maybe, and not in how much we're paid for it."

"Yes," I said, when my friend had finished talking, apparently, "but it's about as hard to get people to believe that, as it is to get them to come to our 'purely educational' Fall Fairs where we may have the opportunity to impress them with the possibilities of farming when it is properly connected up with hard work."

"And some head," finished my friend.

Nature's Diary.

A. B. KLUGH, M. A.



The Little Red School.

The little red school at the cross-roads or at the edge of the woods will soon open its door once again, and "teacher" will soon be engaged in the laudable and arduous task of turning the tots of to-day into the good Canadian citizens of to-morrow. The teacher in the little country school plays a larger and more important part in our national life than she or he, (and at the present time it is more likely to be *she* than *he*), may realize. In the city schools and in those of the larger villages the child changes teachers as he progresses from grade to grade, or even in the same day as he passes from one subject to another. But in the little country school he has the same teacher as long as she remains at that school, and thus her influence is the only scholastic influence which will play a part in moulding his character. Thus great is your responsibility, ye rulers of the little red school!

The teacher in the small school is perhaps sometimes inclined to think that she is hampered in her work by the conditions of her environment, and to feel that with more elaborate equipment she might accomplish more. This may be true in certain subjects, and again it may not, but it is certainly true that there is one phase of education for which she is far more advantageously placed than her fellows in the town—the teaching of nature-study. That the teacher in the rural school should realize the great and far-reaching value of nature study is of the utmost importance. To state a basic principle—the main aim of education is to fit one to one's sphere. Now the sphere of the great majority of the pupils of the little red school will be in the midst of nature, and a true understanding of, and a true sympathy with, all the varied aspects of nature will be of incalculable value to them. If the teacher succeeds in awakening a love for nature she is leading the pupil along such a path that it may be said of him:

"And he wandered away and away, with Nature the dear old nurse,
Who sang to him night and day, the rhymes of the universe.
And when the way seemed long, and his heart began to fail,
She sang a more wonderful song, or told a more wonderful tale."

The pupil who grows up with a love of nature in his heart will have a tie which will bind him very closely to agricultural pursuits and he will not readily desert the country for the artificiality of the city. Thus nature-study will tend to make farmers, but it will do more than this, it will make better farmers. For nature-study has a practical as well as an aesthetic side—it imparts much information on the growth of plants, the life-processes of animals, the activities of insects, and the names and economic relationships of many forms of life, all of which is of very direct application on the farm.

There is another aspect of nature-study, an aspect which is often entirely overlooked and yet one of such vital importance as to render the subject of great value for its sake alone—it teaches the pupil to observe for himself and to reason. It is unfortunately true that most of the subjects taught in our system of education afford no scope for the training of the powers of observation. Yet the faculty of accurate observation is of the utmost value in any walk of life. We have only to look about us to see how rarely this faculty is developed, how common it is to meet people whose eyes see not and whose ears hear not. There is such a general dependence upon books in our educational system that the tendency is for the pupil to come to rely entirely upon the written word, rather than to learn to see and reason for himself. It is therefore one of the great benefits of nature-study that it leads the pupil to acquire at least some of his knowledge at first hand and to learn to weigh and balance every statement, either written or spoken, which he comes across. This faculty of independent thought is at once an antidote for the propagation of loose and careless statements and leads to the abolition of silly, superstitions and groundless prejudices.

So far I have dealt entirely with the effect of the teaching of nature-study on the pupil—now a word in regard to its effect on the teacher. Nature-study when taught in the proper way makes the teacher the companion of her pupils—they are fellow-seekers after the great truths of nature. Some teachers I know are afraid of the subject, they realize how little they know about it and consequently fear that when the pupils come to find this out they will lose their respect for the infallibility of her erudition. The teacher is so used to "knowing it all" in the ordinary subjects, that she becomes unused to, and indeed afraid of, saying "I don't know". Now this is an entirely wrong attitude in nature-study, and we find that the greater the learning of a scientific man the more simply and readily he says: "I don't know" when asked a question beyond his knowledge. He knows how vast is the region beyond man's present knowledge, and he openly acknowledges this fact, yet he never loses the respect of his students.

Another effect upon the teacher in the little red school is that her interest in nature will enable her to find relaxation and enjoyment in her spare time, that she will come to love her locality, and that she will not yearn for the tinsel of society and the "movies" when nature provides for her the glorious moving picture of the seasons.