

The Progressive Farmer.

CLARENCE H. POE, - - - Editor.
J. W. DENMARK, - - - Proprietor and Publisher.

A THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK.

Use and assert your own reason. Reflect, examine, and analyze everything, in order to form a sound and mature judgment. Let not the dictum of any man impose upon your understanding, mislead your actions, or dictate your conversation. Of all the troubles, do not decline, as many people do, that of thinking. The herd of mankind can hardly be said to think; their notions are almost all adopted.—From Lord Chesterfield's Letters to His Son.

FARMER CHILDREN NEED FARMER STUDIES.*

Our educational system has been made by city people for city people, and the country school finds it second-hand, ill-fitting and unattractive. To this fact more than to any other, perhaps, is due the backwardness of education in agricultural States. The school has not taken hold on farm life. Plants, soils, animals, insects, flowers, the weather, the forests and the sky—from all these things it has stood apart, while it has babbled of subjects unfamiliar and uninteresting to the country-bred child. All rural education has been hacked and hewed to fit the Procrustean bed of the city model.

A striking protest against the present irrational policy is found in a private letter now before me, written by one of the most efficient American professors of agriculture:

"Statistics show that in this State each year sixty young men take up the ministry sixty-six law and seventy-two medicine, while 13,000 annually take up agriculture as a gainful pursuit. But our school-books are written for the few, not the many. * * * Put such words as phosphate, protein and nitrogen prominently in our spelling-books, and they will not be as meaningless as Greek to adult farmers. Let nature-love give freshness to our reading-books and the mass of country boys will not be so blind to the everyday life about them. Let our arithmetics apply addition, subtraction, percentage and common fractions to agricultural problems, and the farm boy will see the need of education as preparation for his own life work. At present, however, the entire curriculum leads away from the farm."

Nor is it in the West and South alone that this evil exists. Doctor John Graham Brooks, of Cambridge, Mass., has said:

"Look with me into an average Massachusetts schoolhouse. Its arithmetic, its geography, its penmanship, its bookkeeping, and its reading-book appeals to the imagination of the farmer's child, are still dominated by clerk and trading point of view. As one listens to the teaching, it is as if the one object were to create discontent with the country life, to make every bright child hate his surroundings. The instruction seems to assume the failure of the farm life. The inexhaustible charm and resource of the country have no part in this teaching."

This is a severe indictment of our present methods, but it is not a whit too severe. To find proof you have only to examine the text-books in use in our rural schools. Apparently they have been written solely for city children, sons and daughters of clerks, merchants, bankers and traders. They do not even suggest to the farmer's child the possibilities of science and training in agricultural work. On the contrary, the natural and logical inference from our general scheme of rural instruction is that education is

*This article by the Editor of THE PROGRESSIVE FARMER was begun with the intention of using it as an editorial in this paper, but later it was sent to the World's Work, and published in the August, 1903, number of that magazine. It is printed here by permission of Doubleday, Page & Co., publishers of the World's Work.

not indispensable to the farmer, but is intended chiefly for the commercial and professional classes.

Take, for example, the first study mentioned by Doctor Brooks—arithmetic. Pick up any high-grade arithmetic in use in the rural schools and you will find no lack of attention to banking and commissions and foreign exchange and commercial affairs generally. But agriculture rises to no such dignity—not even in schools that will furnish five times as many recruits for the farm as for the city. Moreover, you will find special departments for common mechanical trades—plastering, stone-work, carpentering, and even gauging and lumber-measuring—subjects quite as difficult to teach or to understand as the rules for compounding feeding rations or mixing fertilizers. But in no school arithmetic have I ever found one reference to either of these important forms of agricultural mathematics. You would never learn from these text-books that farming calls for anything more than the dull drudgery that blighted and brutalized Millet's "Man With the Hoe." Shall we marvel, then, that the boy who expects to farm finds little to encourage regular attendance on such schools, and his tax-paying father little to encourage more liberal support?

True, the arithmetics give some examples based on farming, but there are comparatively few of these, and there are practically none that illustrate the possibilities of applied science as a profit-making factor in agricultural work. Your class of bright farmer boys, for example, may have learned all the mathematical formulas relating to stocks, insurance and banking, but it is not at all improbable that nine-tenths of them have never seen arithmetic applied to agriculture in such practical problems as the following:

Calculate the value of a ton of fertilizer containing 2 per cent nitrogen, 8 per cent phosphoric acid, and 2 per cent potash; nitrogen being worth 14 cents a pound, phosphoric acid 4 cents, and potash 5 cents.

Two dairy cows produce each 5,000 pounds of milk a year. The butter-fat tests of No. 1 is 4.6 per cent, and of No. 2, 6.3 per cent. Butter selling for 25 cents a pound, how much greater is the yearly income from No. 2 than from No. 1? (Note.—One pound of butter-fat is equivalent to 1 1-16 pounds butter.)

Calculate the nutritive ratio in a feeding ration supplying 3 pounds protein, 1 pound fat and 14 pounds carbohydrates.

The analyses of cottonseed meal, muriate of potash and phosphoric acid being given, in what proportion shall we mix, using the necessary filler, to get a fertilizer with 9 per cent phosphoric acid, 3 per cent nitrogen and 3 per cent potash?

There is nothing impractical or extreme in such problems as these; they might well be given in any arithmetic in use in rural schools. To the larger number of pupils they would be of immensely greater practical value than examples based on commercial affairs, while as intellectual gymnastics the agricultural problems would be as good. Of course, the farm boy's arithmetic should not be devoted exclusively to such matter. But from the very first a large proportion of his sums—in addition and subtraction as well as in the more advanced branches—should deal, not with work foreign alike to his knowledge and his interest, but with familiar and practical subjects.

While I have given so much attention to arithmetic, the reader will bear in mind that I have used it, not for its own sake, but only as an illustration of the general misfit in rural school studies. Reading books, spelling books, geographies, histories—all, as Dr. Brooks says, are "dominated by clerk and trading point of view."

But the work of improvement should not stop here. A right point of view should be required in the branches already taught, but we should go further. Text-books combining the elements of

agriculture and the brighter forms of nature-study should be adopted for use in all rural schools. In these books the practical and the esthetic should go hand in hand. The pleasures of country living should be set forth, and a constant effort made to interest the child in the common things about him—the mysteries of plant and animal life, the beauties of nature, the everyday wonders of the fields and woods. With equal earnestness the profit of intelligent farming should be emphasized; the elements of agricultural science should be given.

Recent educational progress makes it unnecessary to defend this idea. No one now regards it as a visionary suggestion; in view of the vast interests affected, it is not an unreasonable one; in view of the great good that would result, it is not an unimportant one. Millions, for example, are lost every year by unscientific stock-feeding, that could be saved to the farmer if he would practice the simple rules for compounding feeding rations. Millions more are lost annually by irrational fertilizing because the farmer is not taught the properties of the common fertilizing elements, the needs of different crop rotations, and proper combinations of farming specialties—the knowledge of a few fundamental principles being sufficient to enable the farmer to plan them. To learn of these subjects would require no special ability. Children of ordinary capacity in ordinary public schools could practically master them.

Far-reaching effects would follow in due season. Practical education is the philosopher's stone that has revolutionized every commercial and professional calling of civilized man; and, with a properly modernized school curriculum, its golden touch would reach agriculture also, transforming and uplifting this most ancient of occupations. Every class would share in the benefits, and the nation itself would be immeasurably strengthened; for with the rural half of our population intelligent and independent, we shall always have a protecting balance of power in our political life. Anarchy and socialism among the city poor, greed and snobbery among the very rich, will each find an antidote in the content and conservatism of a great farming class. Moreover, our commercial supremacy is largely dependent on the well-being of the rural districts—men as well as crops being considered in this statement.

To stop our teachers and text-books from fostering the idea that education is needed in the city but not in the country, needed in managing a store but not in managing a farm; to stay the over-crowding of the professions and city trades and to develop the latent possibilities in scientific agriculture; and—last, but not least—to instill a love of nature and joy in country living; this task is not hopeless that we should shrink from it, nor small that we should neglect it, but it is in truth a worthy and reasonable one for America to try its strength on.

BOOK NOTICE.

THE ONE WOMAN. By Thomas Dixon, Jr. 350 pages. Illustrated. \$1.50. Doubleday, Page & Co., Publishers, New York.

This Mr. Dixon, it is unnecessary to say, is the brilliant young North Carolinian, formerly a Baptist minister, whose previous story, "The Leopard's Spots," was one of the best selling novels of last year. His new book is avowedly a novel with a purpose. Against Socialism and the divorce evil it thunders a mighty and passionate protest.

The hero, Rev. Frank Gordon, is a young preacher of great eloquence and magnetism who goes to New York and becomes the pastor of a leading church. But he breaks away from the old faith, makes a new creed, and founds a new organization. He preaches Socialism and free love. A rich and beautiful young woman of his congre-