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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

JESUS QUESTIONED ABOUT THE GREAT COMMANDMENT (Temperance)
(Lesson for February 15)
Mark 12:28-34
GOLDEN TEXT—And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.
—Mark 12:35.

THE LESSON AS A WHOLE
Approach to the Lesson
"Which is the first commandment of all?"
This is the third in a series of questions addressed to our Lord. The first was political—Mark 12:13-17; the second was doctrinal—verses 18-27; this is in the sphere of morals—verses 28-34. While the first two questions were obviously cunning, this question seems sincere. The scribe was indeed "tempting" Christ (Matt. 22:35), but in the sense of "proving" His ability to answer wisely. Else the Saviour never would have told him that he was "not far from the kingdom of God" (Mark 12:34).

Note the patience with which the Lord Jesus replied to all three questions. He could read the hearts of His enemies like a book. Yet He was willing to listen to their queries, whether they were sincere or not, and answer them with dignity and calm composure. In each case His reply is a masterpiece of insight and logic. No wonder His opponents desisted from this form of attack (see Mark 12:34).

The dual command—to love God and one's neighbor—is absolute and totalitarian. It involves heart, mind, strength, and will. Nothing must be withheld. No half measures will do. God demands all our devotion and enjoins us to complete sacrificial love for our neighbors. Such love is indeed more important than "whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices." It should, of course, result in worship which glorifies God. But it is "more than" the mere external

rites of worship for a very good reason. A person may engage in the outward forms and ceremonies of religion while his heart is far from God. He may make a show of his "burnt-offerings" although inwardly he is loveless toward God. He may be doing without loving. On the other hand, if he truly loves the Lord and as a consequence his neighbor, he will rejoice in the observance of outward ordinances which magnify his God. He will be both loving and doing.

Verse by Verse
Mark 12:28—"And one of the scribes came . . . and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?" Matthew states that the scribe was a "lawyer", doubtless especially versed in the Mosaic Law. By "first" he meant "pre-eminent", or "primary" (see "great" in Matt. 22:36.) The Jews divided the Pentateuch into 613 prohibitions and precepts.

Verse 29—" . . . Jesus answered him. The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one." This oft-quoted Hebrew formula, quoted from Deuteronomy 6:4, affirms the strong monotheism of Israel. Some Jews looked upon the recitation of its words as a guarantee of entrance into Paradise! Christ gladly affirms a magnificent truth, even though it was often misapplied in His day.

Verse 30—" . . . thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart . . . all thy soul . . . all thy mind . . . all thy strength: this is the first commandment." The quotation is from Deuteronomy 6:5. It is not enough to believe abstractly in the unity of God. The believer must be knit to God in the bonds of total love (note the repetition of "all"). His affections, emotions, mind, and will must all be lovingly focused upon the Lord.

Verse 31—"The second is like . . . Thou shalt love thy neigh-

bour as thyself . . . none other commandment greater than these." Literally, "the second is this." Christ quotes Leviticus 19:18. The Pharisees gladly assented to the first of the two commandments; theoretically they acknowledged the necessity of loving God. But this second commandment, so pointedly emphasized by the Saviour, must have stung their consciences. Christ does not advocate self-love as such. He insists that one show toward his neighbor as much care, concern and interest as he shows toward himself. No combination of commandments can possibly transcend these two.

Verse 32—"The scribe said . . . Master, thou hast said the truth . . . there is one God . . . there is none other but he." The scribe was both respectful and sincere. Literally his reply begins, "Of a truth, Master, thou hast well said." One may know that God is and who He is before he can truly love Him. This necessity was clearly reflected in Christ's words. The scribe sensed its importance.

Verse 33—"To love him with all the heart . . . understanding . . . soul . . . strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices." The scribe understood correctly the need of total love for God and genuine love for one's neighbor. His omission, in the Greek, of "with all the soul" was not disagreement, but a mere abbreviation. His reference to burnt offerings and sacrifices shows that our Lord's words had found their mark. The lawyer agreed that no ritual of any kind is a substitute for love of God and man (See 1 Sam. 15:22; Mic. 6:6-8).

Verse 34—"When Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said . . . Thou art not far from the kingdom of God . . . no man after that durst ask him any question." "Discreetly" is intelligently. The scribe had taken the initial steps toward the kingdom. He understood the totalitarian nature of God's basic commands. Sincere as he was, he would quickly discover his inability perfectly to obey these commands; and thus he would be compelled to realize

his need of a Saviour (Gal. 3:24). The questioning ceased because our Lord had demonstrated His divine ability to answer not only clearly but also with convicting power.

The Heart of the Lesson
Try to understand the actual content of our Lord's twofold emphasis on love, the relationship between the two areas of love, the reason for summarizing the commandments in this way, and the challenge of the teaching to the human heart.

Total love toward God and man is two-edged: positive and negative, inclusive and exclusive. The entire person must love God and neighbor. This is positive and clear-cut. It includes the whole being. One must not love half-heartedly, nor with only partial reservations. All must be laid on the altar of loving devotion. But this positive ideal has its negative aspect. If all of a person loves God and neighbor, unloving thoughts and desires are thereby excluded. There is no room for unwarranted impatience, anger, and hatred. If my entire space is left by my heart, mind, will for that which is base, unloving, or godless.

Love for God and man are closely related. Notice three important truths: First, love for God is primary. It comes first. One cannot truly love his neighbor in disinterested fashion unless he loves God with all his heart. Second, love for God produces love for man. The logic is: true love for God involves confidence in His Word and leads to saving faith in His Son; the Holy Spirit then takes up His residence in the heart; He produces His fruit, part of which is "love". Third, love for God is proven by love for one's neighbor. (study 1 John 4:20, 21).

Our Lord summarized the commandment of God by emphasizing love because love is in truth "the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:10). If a person is truly governed by love, he will not lightly dishonor his God or cause his neighbor distress. (Romans 13:8-10 deals with this theme.) The absoluteness, totality, and finality of the command to love is a stirring challenge to faith. Neither the scribe nor any other human being (apart from Christ) has ever perfectly measured up to the command. Who among us has loved God and his neighbor completely? Our Saviour's words are a magnificent ideal; but apart from the Gospel they would cause us to despair. They summon us to perfect love but reveal our imperfection! They make us realize our sin and desperate need of a Saviour. They point us thus to Calvary where our sin problem was settled and where new life and victory in the Holy Spirit were made possible.

News from Box Grove

(Feb. 5)
There were about sixty folks from the village at the community skating party held last Thursday evening by the Community Club at Cedarena. The weather was just cold enough so that the threatened drizzle drifted down as a sprinkle of powdered snow to make for one of the best skating nights of this cold winter. Even the few parents who were out agreed that it was a most enjoyable evening.

Farm Forum this week was at Coakwell's, the next meeting is scheduled for the Halnes' residence.

The February meeting of the Box Grove W.A. will be held Thursday evening, Feb. 5, at the home of Mrs. Coakwell. Project for the month is bags; bags for pyjamas, laundry, clothes pins or what you will. A reminder that the Women's World Day of Prayer Service will be held at 7.30 in the Box Grove United Church on Friday, Feb. 13. The service is interdenominational and everyone is welcome including the younger folk. Part of the service is to be taken by the girls of the Explorers Group who will also be singing under the direction of Miss Robin Armstrong.

cold and had the day postponed. Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Don Taylor (nee Marie Leeman) on the birth of their daughter, 6 lbs., 10 oz. Deborah Marie, born last Wednesday morning at Scarborough Hospital. Birthday greetings this week to Mary Sissons who will be 9 years old on Friday.



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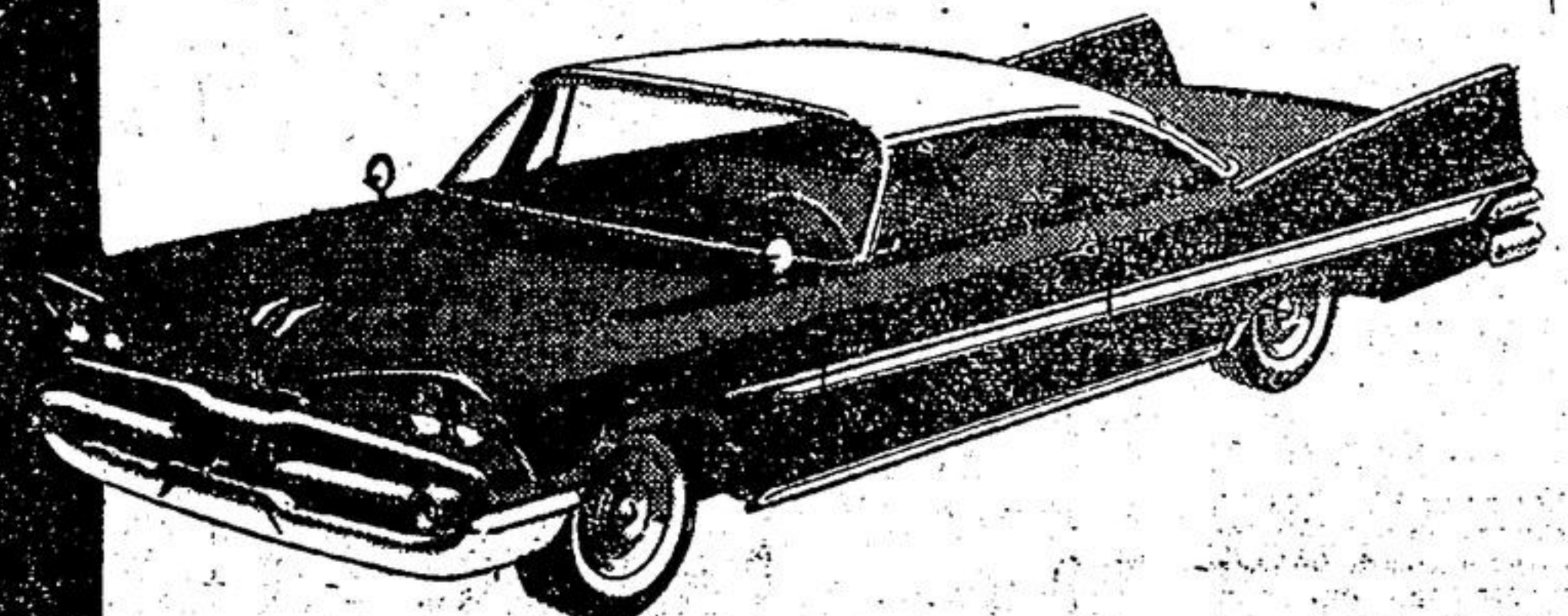
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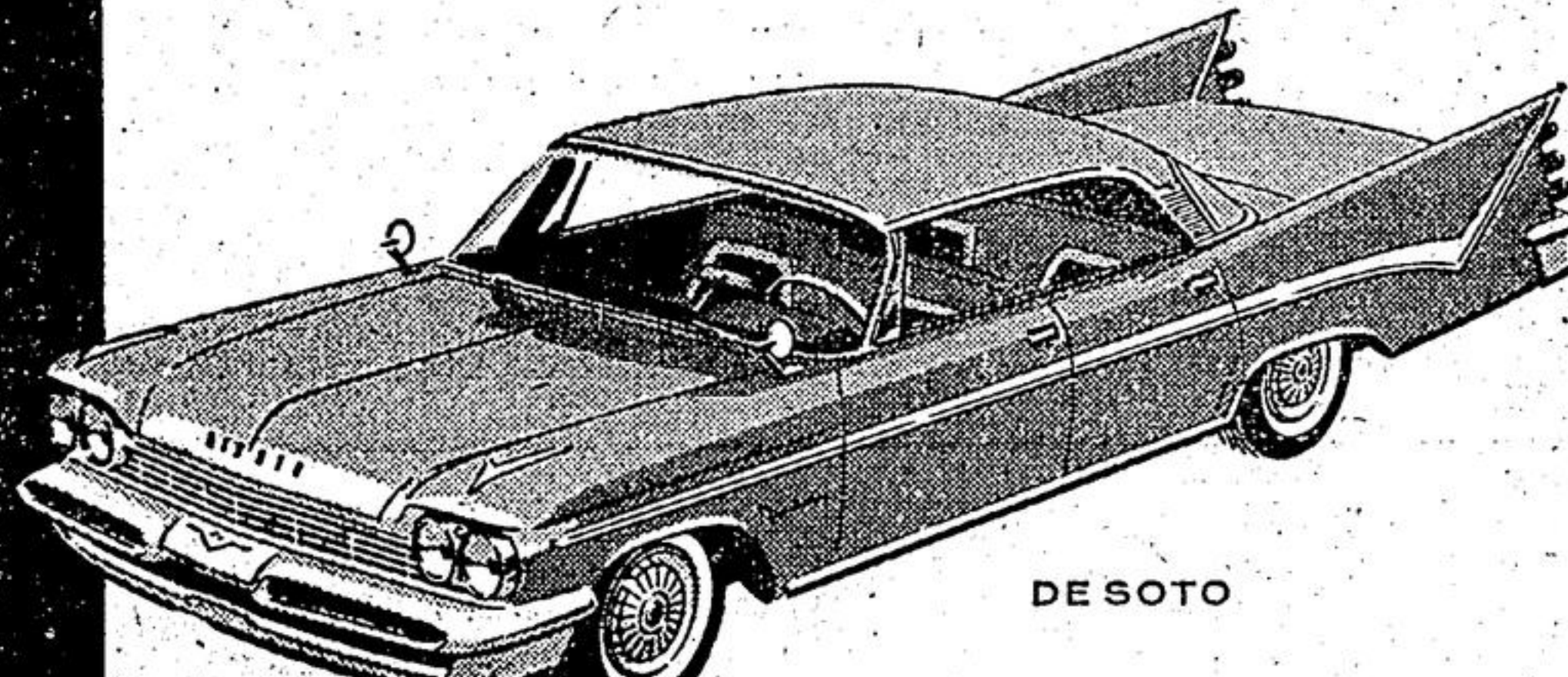
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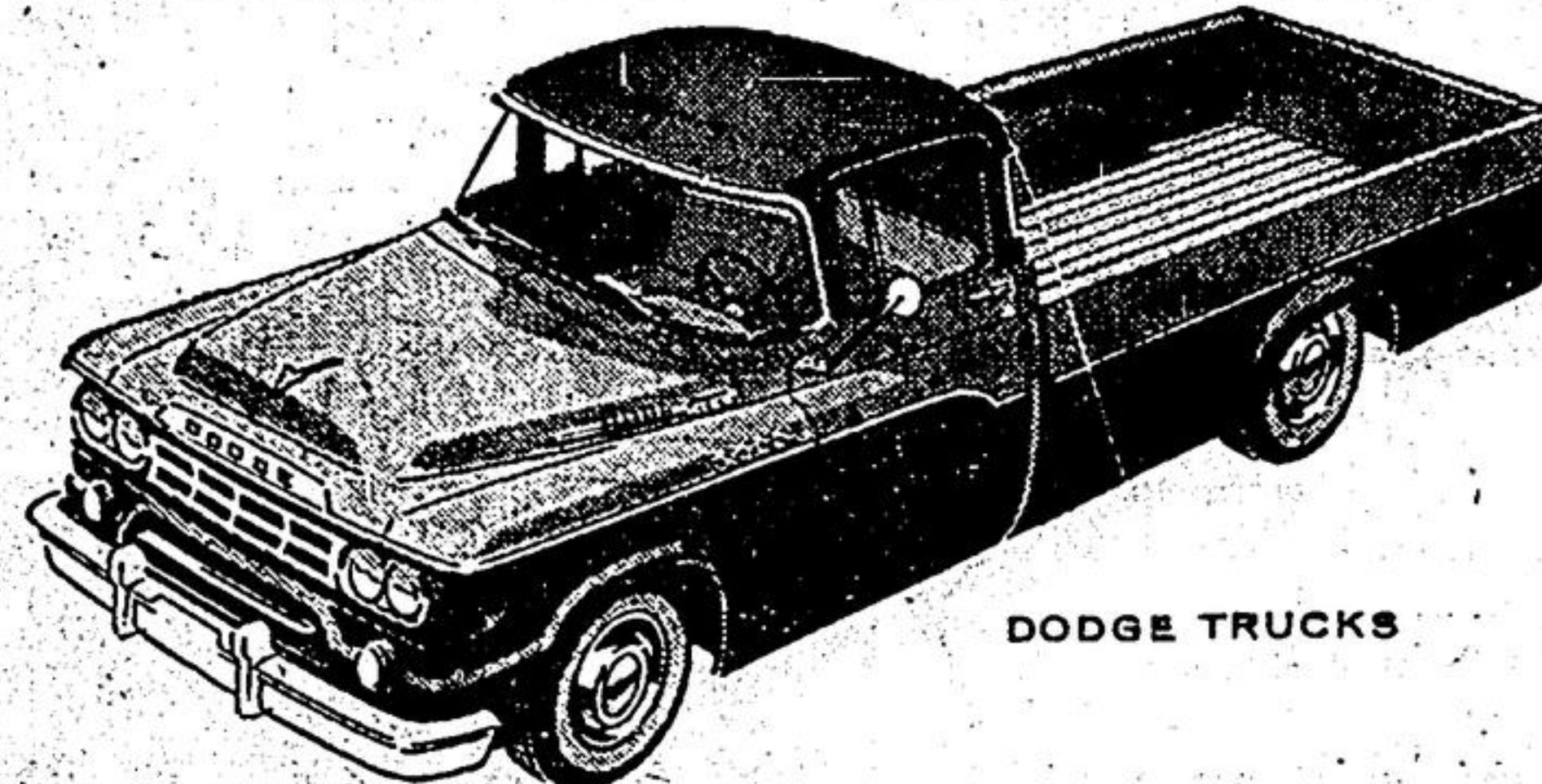
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The Selection of Farm Equipment

What should a farmer keep in mind in selecting equipment for his farming operation?

The first thing he should consider is the type of tractor he is using on his farm, states Prof. G. Downing, Department of Engineering Science, Ontario Agricultural College. Any equipment which depends on the tractor for its use should be purchased with a view to its being suitably mounted on, pulled, or driven by it. If more than one tractor is used, both should be kept in mind for different types of equipment that may be necessary to completely mechanize the farm.

If equipment is too large for the tractor, it will create an overload condition for the tractor engine, resulting in premature wear and breakdown, high maintenance costs, and a poor job of work. If equipment is too small for the tractor, the result is waste of fuel and high-speed operation with its effect on safety, as well as replacement costs.

If a farmer has a relatively small acreage, it may be more economical to have it farmed by custom arrangements rather than by buying an expensive piece of equipment for the small acreage.

A piece of equipment should be used as much as possible during any particular season of use. Thus it is better to use a machine for 100 hours during a year than for 10 hours a year for 10 years. Machines deteriorate to some extent when not being used, through exposure to weather and corrosion, and they may become obsolete over a period of a few years, with a new machine becoming available which will do the same job more efficiently.

There are thus many factors to keep in mind when buying farm equipment, and all of them should be considered before any purchase is made.

CEDAR GROVE

Someone in Cedar Grove has a strange sense of humour. Have you noticed at the unbelievable spot where Mrs. Keller expertly drove her car off the road and into the river last year, someone has posted a sign. It reads Not A Through Road.

Skating has been perfect at Cedarena and the cold weather prognosis should mean that it will continue.

Sorry to hear Eleanor Milroy had a fall last week. There have been several tumbles on the ice but Eleanor took hers indoors.

Tobias Rittenhouse is presently repeating his holiday in Florida. He will be there for his 90th birthday celebration, Feb. 5th.

Note to euchre players: As of the next euchre the "cost of living" has forced Cedar Grove to raise its prices. The new price per evening will be 50c.

Winners this week were Mrs. Ed. Wilton, Mrs. Jack Walton, Myrtle Hamill, Charlie Booth, George Carr and Scottie Black.