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EDITORIAL.

Lessons from the Fairs.

The annual autumn fairs are over once more, and the question, "Are they worth what they cost?" may naturally arise in the minds of many. The expenditure of money, or its equivalent in time and labor, in this connection is greater in the aggregate than people are apt to think. It includes not only the amount of Government and municipal grants, which are considerable, but also the membership and admission fees, and the personal expenses of those who attend, but, in addition, the value of the time and labor consumed in the preparation of exhibits and the expenses of their transportation and presentation. The combined outlay, private and public, for the carrying out of these enterprises bulks large, but when we consider the pre-eminent importance of the agricultural, live-stock and manufacturing industries of the country, and the prominent part played by the fairs, past and present, in stimulating competition and enterprise in the improvement of our live stock and other agricultural products and in labor-saving implements and machinery, it is difficult to conceive a more profitable expenditure from the view-point of the general good of the country in increasing the value of its farm products and manufactures, and in advertising the resources and capabilities of the country and its attractions as a home for emigrants from the overcrowded lands and cities of Europe. In the improvement of our live stock, which is by far our most important industry, as evidenced by the value of our exports of its products as compared with others, the fairs have been more influential than any other factor in stirring up the spirit of emulation and competition, which has led men to risk their money in the importation of high-class pure-bred stock, the influence of which has spread like leaven, with the result that Canadian breeders can now creditably hold their own in competition with much older countries, as has been amply proved in international contests in recent years.

The smaller or local fairs have served as primary schools for the fitting of exhibitors for the stronger competition of the district and provincial exhibitions and those of greater pretensions, and it is only by actual participation in the larger shows that the amateur exhibitor can realize his strength or weakness, and gain the knowledge he needs in order to select or breed and fit his stock for successful competition. This lesson is sometimes a trying and somewhat discouraging one to the new beginner, but by perseverance and determination, and a study of the approved types, the goal of his ambition may be reached, as has been proven in the experience and record of not a few. Fortunately, exhibitors in this country have less cause than those of any other for complaint as to the class of judges selected for our shows. It is true that the exhibitor and many of the onlookers sometimes fail to see the fitness of some awards, but exhibitors are not the most disinterested parties to the proceeding, and outsiders have not equal advantage in making comparisons with the judges who are responsible for the placing of awards. Judges in this country are generally selected from the ranks of practical breeders, who are or have been recently engaged in the business, and are known to be up-to-date in their ideas of modern types, and their judgment is

worthy of respectful consideration. Mistakes are sometimes made by the best of judges, but it is questionable whether their severest critics might not make more if placed in a similar position. Reversals at one show of the decisions given at a former are often perplexing, and raise the question which is right and which is wrong, but it should be conceded that where competition is close the circumstances of shipping and feeding may account for an animal going off a bit in bloom and condition, even in a week, and may easily make difference enough to turn the scale in favor of an animal that was placed lower at the former meeting. And some allowance, too, must be made for difference of opinion and tastes in a case where there is no standard like that of weights and measures to go by, and where one man may honestly attach more importance to some special point than another would, his judgment being in that way justified in his opinion. It is satisfactory to exhibitors to feel persuaded in their own mind, however they may fare in the awards, that the judge or judges have acted impartially and solely on their own judgment, and for this reason it is to be hoped that fair boards will continue to be cautious in making appointments of judges, in order to maintain the confidence of exhibitors that justice will prevail.

The Dishonest Agent.

Believing every man a rogue until he has been proved honest, is not the happiest mood to get into, but instances are constantly cropping up to emphasize the importance of being on the lookout for frauds and fakes. An Ontario County reader gives us the following illustration of the ease with which agents can secure a signature to an order for almost anything:

"Some time in August last an agent called on us taking orders for strawberry plants of some extra good variety, and offered as a further inducement to give free so many berry bushes, one of each kind named, taking the names on the order, promising to deliver goods the latter part of August or fore part of September, not later than the fifth of September. He then wrote on the order, 'August or fall.' Several farmers in this district ordered for delivery in the spring, but the agent wrote the order same as others (fall). On September 16th all were notified to take their goods from the station, and what a lot of plants! Strawberries, nearly all old plants instead of new, and berry bushes of just two kinds of red, not one black one in the lot. There was not one thing labelled to tell what it was. I do not think one person read over the contents of order before signing it, as everyone trusted they were dealing with honorable men."

The copy of the order sent us is truly curiously and wonderfully made. To commence with, the price of the strawberry plants is two dollars per hundred, fully twice their value. A clause provides for the substitution of any variety, and another for a further charge of three dollars for delivering the plants. These are all so plainly stated that it is surprising how easily they were overlooked. As for the reliability of the seller, we have never before heard of his name in this connection. Why will people not deal with reliable firms, whose stock can be depended upon and whose announcements are continually before the public in the form of advertisements? We have come to an age when "new good things" are to be regarded with a certain degree of suspicion. The papers are quick to notice improved devices, the best tested varieties of fruits, grains, etc., and to give them publicity so that when anything "new" is sprung upon the public by agents it should be received like other things that have not yet proved their claim to serious considera-

tion. People who earn money should make up their minds how they will use it. They should know what they want, and the market price of it, before they invest, and then they will not be so liable to imposition. As for signing names under a whole sheet of printed matter that has not been read—well, there is only one word necessary—don't.

Mr. Chamberlain More Definite.

In his recent speech at Luton, a provincial town in England, Mr. Chamberlain was more definite than formerly in his attitude upon the question of taxing incoming food products. On that occasion he told his hearers distinctly that his proposals would include a tax of two shillings a quarter upon corn (grain), and five per cent. upon other imported products of the farm. This statement by Mr. Chamberlain brings the scope of his proposed fiscal scheme within the comprehension of the masses of the people, and enables them to think of the question more intelligently than if the great statesman had simply spoken in the abstract. The audience at Luton was composed of farmers, tradespeople and the working classes, and Mr. Chamberlain used a very novel illustration to show how the foreigner would have to pay the import duty on all commodities that were sold in Britain in competition with home-grown or home-manufactured goods. It was this: In Luton, the municipality had gone to considerable expense in building a commodious marketplace, for the use of which those in the district having goods to sell paid a special toll, but if the authorities were to exempt from toll those living outside the district, the market would soon be overstocked by the favored vendors, who would crowd the home producers out of business, and, at the same time, the people of Luton would be prevented selling in the other towns on account of their high tolls. This, Mr. Chamberlain claims, is the condition in England to-day. Britain, he says, has not free trade, because she must pay import duty to every other country. The decline of industries in Luton was cited to illustrate how an open market at home and a protected one abroad works ruin to the unprotected industry. In five years, 1898 to 1902, the value of exports of straw hats from Luton had decreased thirty per cent., while in the same time imports of straw hats from foreign countries increased by three hundred per cent., and Britain's trade in that time had only been saved from a worse state by the increased trade with the colonies. With regard to agriculture, Mr. Chamberlain said the capital of the farmers had decreased in the last fifty years by 200,000,000 pounds sterling, and the number of farm laborers from two to one million. With the crop of hops alone, the area in use had shrunk by twenty-five thousand acres since 1878, meaning a loss to laborers of five hundred thousand pounds sterling per annum. To the unprotected condition of British agriculture and manufacturing, Mr. Chamberlain attributes the fact of there being thirteen million people on the verge of hunger. Contrary to the generally accepted doctrine, Mr. Chamberlain argued that it was in the interests of the working people to put an import tax upon such articles as wheat, meat, cheese, butter, etc., in the production of which there is home competition, rather than to put an import duty upon such commodities as sugar, tea, tobacco, etc., that do not compete with home-produced commodities.