

PRIZE ESSAY.

What are we to Learn from Agricultural Exhibitions of 1880 and Previous Years.

In discussing a subject of so much importance to the agricultural community in general, care must be exercised to lay before the reader an impartial account of Agricultural Exhibitions with their "uses" and "abuses." All should understand for what purpose Agricultural Exhibitions were first established. Some think it is a place to make money, others say that they are to show the great resources of the country, while very few act up to, or endeavor to develop the great object which all such gatherings should have in view.

Agricultural Exhibitions were first established to encourage agriculture, to make those engaged in it to think more of their profession, to encourage farmers to raise better articles, and, if possible, to open a market for articles so produced. But how often has this "use" been abused? How often have worthy farmers been compelled to give way before speculators, "men about town," who think of nothing but the prize, how they can impose on the judges; having clearly before their view, money—money which should have gone to encourage others more useful to the country. Agricultural Exhibitions, at which this is practiced, have degenerated from their true use. They seek to aid the country, but their proceedings have quite the opposite effect.

Exhibitions of this class may pay, they may be made to draw a crowd, by the "sights" which are advertised, but the Exhibition does not pay in the true sense of the word. We call the attention of directors to this fact, that they are working to a disadvantage, they are exerting themselves on a large scale to benefit agriculture, but the benefit thus done to farmers is entirely eaten up by men who make Exhibitions their business, and we must ask, have the great Agricultural Exhibitions of 1880 and past years been any better than this description? Will farmers begin the ensuing year with better farm-knowledge and better prospects of making farming a success? If not, our great Exhibitions have failed in their primary object. We do not say that they have failed, but we must say that all have not come up to the standard which is to be expected of Exhibitions at so much time and expense. Any person who has attended past Exhibitions, may have noticed a decided improvement in the articles on exhibition at those of the past season. Provincial Exhibitions, with only one exception, have done well. They have made a great show, and have all been a financial success.

In agricultural exhibits we notice a slow but steady rise, and although what is on exhibition is no sample of what is in the country, we are glad that such can be produced. In agricultural implements all the Exhibitions have shown a rapid improvement. New articles have been exhibited, and some of the old ones greatly improved. From this we have to learn that the intelligent farmer, with a little capital, can make farming a pleasure; can do three times the work with half the labor.

Again, another subject worthy of attention is the tendency of the larger Exhibitions to become more numerous, and less attention to be paid to the smaller Agricultural Fairs which farmers endeavor to establish among themselves, without any outside aid. Those of the latter class have already been the means of much good in the neighborhood in which they are held. Farmers, at these, feel more on an equality, and discuss each other's products and stock with advantage to one another, thus enabling themselves to acquire a large amount

of useful information. One of the finest Exhibitions of this kind was held for the county of Pictou, in Pictou, on the 6th and 7th of October. It did not make a great deal of money, as some men think exhibitions should do, but it created quite a spirit among the farmers in the vicinity. It only lasted for two days, quite long enough, but not too long for a county Exhibition.

At these Agricultural Shows we have been taught that a great variety of prizes, even though they be small, is better than few prizes although they may be larger. Exhibitors, thus, are not so apt to withdraw disappointed, and as the great object of everything is to please, it is a great end in view to have everyone leave the Exhibition Grounds well pleased with the time and money spent. One way of accomplishing this is that all should have an opportunity of seeing the prize articles. All who have attended the closing days of the Dominion Exhibition may have seen the advantage of this. Visitors there might be heard enquiring which of these articles has taken the first prize, but could receive no definite answer, consequently many were forced to leave disappointed. Judges at all exhibitions should begin their work immediately, so as to have it finished and the prizes all awarded, at county or township exhibitions, at least two days before the exhibition closes. Directors should always keep this in view, and to accomplish it they will have to appoint a sufficient number of intelligent, energetic men to act as awarders of prizes.

Why have several of the Agricultural Exhibitions of 1880 been a failure, especially the Provincial Exhibition of Ontario, and the Exhibition held at Halifax, N. S.? In the former case the evil lies in the board of management having lost the confidence of the country; in the latter, want of a proper agricultural locality has contributed greatly to the result. Unless the people are enthusiastic about such exhibitions, they must ultimately fail. Another thing we notice from past exhibitions throughout the world, is the advantage of an International Exhibition being held for the whole Dominion and such countries as choose to compete. It should be held at a central place, and Government should infuse vigor to its proceedings. It cannot be doubted but an exhibition such as this would give a great impetus to the country, especially the agricultural interests. From the results of previous exhibitions of this kind, we know that such a one in Canada would be productive of much good.

To summarize, we hope that the number of those large exhibitions, which draw such a crowd to the city and give the hotels such a harvest, may be diminished, and that the local Agricultural Fairs, conducted on a small scale, with multiplicity of prizes, giving all farmers competing a chance of success and time to attend, may become more popular.

M. S. MACKAY, Cariboo River,
Pictou Co., Nova Scotia.

Exporting Store Cattle.

An exchange in an article on this subject, says:—

As long as our farmers go on exporting store cattle, they are simply transporting the fertility of Ontario farms across the sea and conferring it upon the farms of England. English and Scotch farmers know vastly better than to grow store cattle where they can buy them. They prefer to buy Canadian, Irish, Danish and Spanish cattle, and feed them with American corn. The extent to which this is becoming a business may be realized when it is learned that the exports of American corn have grown in a few years from almost nothing to 98,000,000 bushels, and most of the corn goes to Britain. Canada should export fat cattle. She ought to feed her own cattle, and then every animal exported would represent an addition to the fertility of the country. As it is, every lean animal sent abroad hastens the impoverishment of the soil.

Covering the Soil.

A CHEAP AND EFFECTIVE WAY TO IMPROVE THE SOIL.

BY H. L. BATAVIA, N. Y.

Many times in the course of the year I think that single numbers of your valuable journal are well worth the year's subscription; and particularly so of the last number and of a single article in it, which, I think, would prove of great benefit to farmers if they would practice from its teachings. I have been feeling my way by experimenting from year to year to attain the results stated so fully by C. Harlan, M. D., on "Covering the Soil." Now, the great economy and advantage derived from the agricultural press of the country, is that by it we are enabled at once to take advantage of the experience of others, which, though it may have cost them years of work and close observation, and would be of great value to their brother farmers, they are quite willing they should profit as well as themselves by such experience. Without the agricultural press, each man left to learn by his own experience, agriculture never could make the progress for which it is so noted in this nineteenth century. And just here let me urge each farmer to do his part in adding to the general interchange of farm experience, by sending to agricultural editors statements showing the advantages or disadvantages derived from such or such practice, especially the practice of new ways and experiments. We would all be benefited by it and the editors would be thankful, I have no doubt, to receive such contributions. This would add greatly to what I consider the most interesting part of the farm journal; and it seems to me that it is a part that the working farmers must supply themselves, for though the editor may have been the most thorough and practical farmer of any of us, he could not now, while carrying on his editorial work, have the advantage we possess in working out these problems in the field.

As to the article referred to above on "Covering the Soil," I have practiced that plan more and more of late years, and am so well pleased with its results that now on any part of the farm, or even any part of the garden, as soon as the ground is at liberty after removing any crop that has occupied it, I till the ground with wheel drag, cultivator or harrow, and sow it immediately again, usually to buckwheat, oats or rye—to the latter if it can be left to grow up in the spring before having to plow it, for rye will grow two or three feet high in the spring in time to be plowed under for corn or potatoes, and proves to be a good green manuring for that purpose. But if designed to plow in the fall, I used buckwheat for first plowing and oats for the latest; they thrive better in the moist, cool weather of the fall, than when growing for a summer crop, making a denser covering over the ground than other grains, keeping green if left standing until near the middle of winter, and covering it as with a blanket until spring.

This last plan I am following with the oat-sowed, wheat stubble field, on the strength of your correspondent's assertions in favor of keeping the soil covered, and because that in my experience so far I had about come to the same conclusion. And now, Mr. Editor, you cannot too strongly recommend to farmers this practice of covering the soil, whenever they have the opportunity, with such clean healthy growth for renovating the soil.

[We would refer you to page 279, in the 14th. volume of the FARMER'S ADVOCATE. You will be well repaid by reading it. Some of you will profit by it and set a pattern for others to follow.]