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EDITORIAL.

Mixed Farming Specialized.

For the past year or two, the Secretary of the Brant Township Farmers' Club, which holds forth in the Western Ontario County of Bruce, has been communicating to "The Farmer's Advocate" very readable reports of the points brought out in its regular monthly meetings. The feature of the February meeting was a debate on "Specialty versus Mixed Farming." The judges decided the debate a tie, which the editor of "The Farmer's Advocate" is asked to break. He prefers deputing the delicate task to disinterested readers, who are hereby asked not only for opinions as to who won the debate, but also for comment on the points brought out, which will be found very concisely summarized in a communication from the secretary, A. E. Wahn.

Now, there are specialties and specialties, which is to say, specialties good and bad. Exclusive grain-raising for sale is not to be compared to specialized dairying or stock husbandry of any kind. The former exhausts the soil, impoverishing its owner's intellect and capital. Dairying or stock husbandry builds up the soil, and may or may not enrich his mind and purse, depending largely upon the diligence with which he pursues it. To some men dairying is a great education; other dairymen are mere plodders. Dairying, or any other kind of stock-raising, is, however, quite likely to develop more mental capacity than exclusive grain-growing, and in this way justifies the urgent pleading we used to hear for farmers to supplement the cultivation of grain by keeping stock. The addition was a decided improvement from every point of view.

Time passed, grain markets became glutted, or closed to Canadian farmers by foreign tariffs, agriculture took on more and more the form of stock husbandry, with dairying a prominent feature. Then it commenced to dawn on thinking men that a further change was called for. The tail had begun to wag the dog; much of our farming was "hopelessly mixed." There was no system, no head or tail. The need for some attempt at specialization was felt, in order that greater individual proficiency might be attained, and system and business principles introduced into farm work. So we heard the advice to specialize, and some did so. The new specialties were better than the old ones, but still results frequently failed to measure up to expectant calculations. For example, we have in mind a certain farm in Central Ontario, run as a special dairy farm to produce cream for a fancy city trade. Between thirty and forty good cows were kept. Excellent prices were obtained for cream, economical methods of cultivation and feeding adopted, exceptional yields of grain and fodder were secured, strict accounts were kept, the business management was closely watched, and yet dividends were scant. The chores were burdensome and demanded close attention seven days of the week, so that the work became onerous. The men felt that they were tied to the cows' tails. By products, notably the skim milk, were not utilized to the best advantage; it was difficult to eliminate waste, to sustain keen-edged zeal for economy, and to secure maximum yields from the cows. In short, the returns were not proportionate to the capital invested and managerial ability exercised. And this has been the experience, we think, on nearly every large, specialized establishment.

Granted that any one line of farming offers scope for a lifetime of experience and study, the fact is that, in the majority of cases this study

seems more likely to be bestowed by one who follows a well-ordered system of specialized mixed farming than by one who follows a single line till he wears the track into a rut. Reasonable diversity of interests is a good thing for any man or any farm.

Thus, the pendulum swings backwards as we realize that neither mixed farming nor exclusive specialization is the ideal practice. It is well to have a specialty on which first attention should be concentrated, but around it group as many subsidiary lines as can be added to advantage. The specialty will then give head to the business and system to the plans, the calculations and the work, while the various side-lines will utilize by-products, stop leaks, eliminate small wastes, relieve the monotony and strenuousness of the labor, make for increased production per acre, and, above all, add variety and interest to the work, broadening the farmer's outlook and developing additional faculties and additional phases of character. Exclusive devotion to one line of production has had a brief day of advocacy; it is being wisely superseded in popular favor by the idea of mixed farming, with a specialty, said specialty depending upon conditions, aptitude and preference.

The same principle applies to communities. The advice for every community to concentrate upon some one line of production is good up to a certain point, but in most cases a community, while paying particular attention to some one feature, will do well not to neglect any others to which it may be adapted.

District Keeping Qualities of Apples.

A correspondent writes: "The keeping qualities of apples from the different districts has not yet been touched upon. In my opinion, the sooner this question is discussed, the better for the apple industry."

All will admit that reliable information as to the keeping quality of King apples, or any other variety grown in the southern part of Ontario, compared with those grown in a more northerly district, would be most valuable. From time to time the question has been dealt with in reports of conventions appearing in "The Farmer's Advocate," and in our issue of December 27th, 1906, an address, given by A. McNeill, discussed the matter fully, dividing Ontario into four districts, chiefly according to the effect of climate on keeping quality.

Carefully-conducted tests of the various standard varieties, covering the entire season, no doubt would provide a most desirable guide for the purchaser of orchard trees. It is generally claimed that the farther north an apple can be grown to maturity, the longer it will keep. Until, however, definite and reliable data are furnished with regard to apples of the variety or varieties under consideration, grown on similar soils, with similar culture, picked at the same stage of maturity, and cooled and packed at similar temperatures, it would be unfair to dilate on the superiority of northern-grown apples at the expense of those grown farther south. General observations may be misleading. Latitude is not the only factor in the case. It is just possible that the lack of keeping quality of the fruit grown in the warmer localities is due to over-maturity, or to the fact that it was put in storage without being cooled.

Perhaps our readers can discuss this question in such way that those who contemplate setting out an orchard may make a proper selection. Hardiness of tree, and desirable form, as well as prolific bearing of a variety that is in demand,

are prime requisites, but, if early or late varieties possess longer-keeping qualities when grown in one locality than when grown in another, the sooner orchardists know it, the better for the industry.

Special Features at Fairs.

Human nature seems to comprise in its make-up a craving for something new, or at least something special. Particularly do managers of fall fairs consider this the case when making arrangements for the annual exhibition. In the selection of these features, a great responsibility rests upon the president, secretary and directors of the society under whose auspices the show is held. In some cases there exists a false impression of what really constitutes a special feature, as far as attracting the agricultural class is concerned. This can be explained in a few instances by the fact that the secretary is not a farmer, and is not really capable of passing judgment on what will attract farmers and benefit them. Too often is such a man left to do the planning, and, naturally, some attraction entailing the minimum of labor on his part is secured. Sometimes the attraction proves to be a drawing-card, but no benefit is derived. Perhaps the local papers are able to pronounce the fair a success, and to congratulate the management, but not infrequently the cash obtained from the increased attendance will not pay for the outside "talent."

Why not work along practical lines, and have special features that are of value to the agriculturist, and particularly to the boys and girls? Nothing stimulates to best effort more than friendly rivalry; nothing is of greater or more lasting value than a practical demonstration. There is not a fair in Canada at which both of these features cannot be introduced to advantage. In some societies, already, one or both are in evidence. The main essential is a hearty co-operation on the part of the members of the organization, and the carrying out of the most worthy suggestions by a board of directors who know what is best adapted as an educational and an attractive feature in that particular district.

Delegates in attendance at the convention of the Ontario Association of Fairs and Exhibitions, held in Toronto, recently, could not but be enthused. As the sessions passed, it became more and more evident that practically every district and every society had peculiarities, and that, while there could be a similarity of operation and a common purpose, it was absolutely necessary to adapt the annual exhibition to meet the requirements of the society and the district. Features of other societies may be adapted, but in many cases they must be remodelled to suit local conditions.

Everyone will admit that an agricultural society should hold a strictly agricultural show. Perhaps the customs of a generation, as regards the selection of attractions, make it a difficult problem, and good management may dictate a continuance of one or more of the regular drawing-cards. But shrewd management, with the best interests of farmers at heart, will gradually eliminate the non-agricultural, non-instructive features, and introduce what every right-thinking man will appreciate, and thus fulfil the objects of the yearly show.

Delegates at the convention were loud in their praises of the merits of competitions among the boys and girls for collections of weeds, weed seeds, and wild flowers. This easily can be extended to classes for garden products, sown, cared for and exhibited by boys and girls under a certain age.