

The Farmer's Advocate AND HOME MAGAZINE.

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DOMINION.

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Should a Judge Give Reasons?

The prime consideration in connection with a fall exhibition, large or small, is or should be its real educative value to exhibitors and spectators. We grant that a fair is a good place to go to have a good time, to meet friends, and to improve social conditions, but the major part of the exhibits are always of an educative as well as of an attractive nature. The special displays put on by various firms taking space in the buildings are educative. Even the attractions in front of the grand-stand are enlightening, and all the classes and sections devoted to the products of the farm, if properly exhibited, should be of great value to the farmer anxious to improve and increase his output, and to the city dweller desirous of having as good a knowledge of agriculture as is available under the circumstances. "The Farmer's Advocate" has had occasion to criticize the manner in which some of the exhibits from the farms have been kept in the background at former large exhibitions, believing that if it is worth while to give prizes for exhibits and worth while for producers to take pains to perfect a product to the show-ring or prize-winning point, it is essential that the said product, whether it be apples, potatoes, pigs, sheep, horses, cattle or what not be displayed to best advantage. Of course, the only time to see the stock to good advantage is when it is being judged. With heat and flies and strange conditions, most of the stock must be kept blanketed and as quiet as possible in the stables. But in the ring it must strip for the judge, and the judging is where the greatest interest and value is for the person who would learn how to improve. Obviously a judge, if he knows his business, has a reason for his placing. If he hasn't a reason for awarding as he does he is either "up in the air" or is an incapable judge. The exhibitor and the spectator have a right to know the judge's reasons where close decisions are made, or, as a matter of education all the way around. If a man asks a judge why he makes a certain placing he usually gets a suitable and free explanation. The judge is generally only too ready to help all he can. If an exhibitor is desirous of kicking up a row or is endeavoring to use influence or argue with the judge he shouldn't be listened to, but if he is just after information and does not question the judgment he is entitled to it. The spectator is also entitled to an explanation. The Ontario Provincial Winter Fair Board thought so much of the "reasons" feature of their live-stock department, that in beef cattle, at least, the judge, after placing the entries, addressed his reasons to the galleries and ring-side, in a loud voice, going over the cattle one by one. And yet we find this clause in the prize list of one of Canada's largest exhibitions among the instructions to judges:

"Judges are particularly requested not to argue with exhibitors regarding the merits or demerits of any article examined by them, and on no account to give reasons upon which they have based their decisions."

We quite agree that arguments should not be allowed or indulged in. Good judges avoid such. But why should a judge not give reasons when asked in a gentlemanly manner? True, most judges at fairs are overworked in an endeavor to keep up with a fast schedule, and often a judge is called upon to place too many breeds in one day. Time for reasons is limited. More satisfactory work would doubtless be accomplished with a judge for each breed in horses, cattle, sheep and swine at the larger fairs so that judges would not be so hurried. But to be fair to the judge, to the exhibitors and to the spectators reasons should be given when asked for, and we feel sure that the paragraph here quoted was an oversight upon the part of the Fair Board responsible for it. The way it reads, a judge who lived up to the regulations could not say a word to justify his placing. If the show is to be educative then the whys and wherefores must be made easy for the public to grasp. Surely there are better arguments for making reasons on placings known than for "on no account" giving them. It is a pity some means of making these reasons known to all who see the exhibits could not be devised. Fortunately Canada has a large quota of competent judges. An incompetent would be in his glory under such a clause. He would not require a reason for anything. A good judge is desirous of helping exhibitors and spectators to get the desired type in whatever he may be judging. He cheerfully gives reasons where properly asked. We think he should not be prevented from doing so on any account.

The Need for Consolidation of Rural Schools.

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Rural schools have never received the attention they deserve, though rural education is a perplexing and important problem. City schools can take care of themselves; they obtain public and professional interest and support. They are well organized and supervised; they draw taxes from a highly assessed and valuable community, and are a comparatively small burden on the local people. Monster city schools look well in photographs and embellish the annual reports of our Ministers of Education in every province. Their large, airy, well-lighted class-rooms are a credit to the architect and to the public. The children who have the good fortune to attend them have all the educational aids that money can procure. They learn their lessons at comfortable desks, in pleasant surroundings and with uniform regularity. Classes are well graded, and pupils in each class are nearly the same in age and attainments, though perhaps not in ability. Their teachers are well paid, highly qualified, professional ladies and gentlemen, whose work is well done, well organized and closely supervised. In a city like Montreal where promotions are made twice a year, no child is needlessly retarded, and if promotion cannot be gained, the loss is for five short months till the work of the half year is covered satisfactorily and success obtained. With all these advantages the money cost is very low in proportion, and the education taxes fall lightly on the shoulders of the taxpayer in our cities and towns.

Why cannot the country child receive as good an education as the city child? What has a country boy done to be deprived of the right to have his mind trained and developed? Why should a country pupil be expected to sit in discomfort and endure teaching from inexperienced and less highly qualified teachers than he would have in the city? Of course, he does not desire and nobody else desires for the country boy, an education that will be exactly the same in every respect as the city boy's school course. But it should certainly be as good, and should be provided in as neat and pleasing surroundings. His curriculum should be different in its content, and in the emphasis laid on its different parts, but it should be as sound, and as effective in making a man of him

in adjusting him to his community, and in fitting him for his livelihood and for the battle of life.

The brightest part of this situation is that it can be remedied if our farmers care to exert themselves and get rid of their prejudices. The rural school and the rural community have been neglected, and the farmers are partly to blame for this gradual deterioration under modern circumstances. But the rural school difficulties can be remedied, or, at least, ameliorated. We must not make the mistake of supposing that the whole problem of rural depopulation will be solved by improved rural schools, for the rural school is only one small part of a larger problem. A change has occurred in the needs and conditions of all rural life, and the school problem is intimately connected with the other rural problems.

The first step, however, in the improvement of school conditions is consolidation of rural schools. This has been a difficult reform to introduce, and in Eastern Canada has seldom come spontaneously from the local communities themselves. It has had to be demonstrated by public-spirited benefactors like Rittenhouse and Sir William Macdonald. The farmers have not shown their usual enterprise and initiative in this matter. Even when stirred up by example they cling to the obsolete "old red school-house" near home. They have a mistaken idea that an inefficient school near the farm enhances the value of their property. Perhaps they do not realize that the local ungraded school is a failure, and fails because it has not made the same progress as its surroundings. What farmer would make a living to-day if he lived according to the usual farm practices of his grandfather? Would he be content to hoe his roots, plant his corn by hand, cut his grain with a scythe and thresh it with a flail? His work is still hard; it is constant and continual, but his bodily labor is lightened by machinery and new, up-to-date implements. He can cultivate more ground and raise more crops with less expenditure of bodily energy and with more success and profit. Yet the rural school has made no such corresponding advance. Few improvements have been made except in the curriculum and in the inspection every year. Even the inspector's visit is more concerned with the records, attendances and other statistics on which to base his recommendations for the government grant. Of course, there are large-hearted servants of the public whose ability is devoted to the uplifting of the schools, and whose services are unselfishly given to improvements in teaching, in school accommodation, and in the consolidation of school resources. But there are many who are mere hirelings, whose duties are done when their statistical returns are made.

Perhaps the best way in which to consider the value of consolidated schools is to compare them with modern cheese and butter factories to which farmers now pin their faith. To save themselves the embarrassment of collecting and separating their own milk, churning their own butter and making their own cheese, they unite in sending their supplies daily to the nearest cheese factory. At the factory the most improved and sanitary machinery and equipment are installed; dairy produce can be manufactured to better advantage with uniformity of product and regularity of success. What is more, the products can be marketed with greater ease in greater quantities and bring a higher price. The milk and cream are paid for, monthly, according to the quality as denoted by the tests, and these monthly cheques should be a constant reminder to the farmer of the value of co-operation and consolidation of interests. This organization of effort manifests itself in numerous other agricultural directions, and in Wool Growers' Associations, which this year in the Province of Quebec were able to grade their wool and sell the best grades for 42 and 43 cents a pound as compared with the prevailing jobbers' best price of 35 cents a pound. Co-operative seed purchasing is practiced likewise to advantage.

Now, why should the farmer fail to see the benefit of rural school co-operation on a larger scale? He sees clearly that he cannot afford to keep a well-equipped cheese factory on his own farm, and also that three or four families would likewise be unable to support a satisfactory plant. But by a larger combination the venture succeeds, and his returns are distributed with fairness for value received, with promptness and regularity. The milk or cream is collected by a common van every day, and the cans are returned in the same way.

The school case is an exact parallel. Small, inefficient rural schools are too numerous to be properly equipped, properly staffed, or well attended. They do not meet the needs of modern conditions and should be scrapped at once. Should a kindly providence secure their destruction by fire, lightning, or earthquake, it would not pay to rebuild them. But it would pay to unite the school districts and build one satisfactory school instead of a lot of small, scattered and unsatisfactory ones. Then a school of two, three or even four rooms could be built. Modern desks and blackboards could be introduced, and newer methods practiced in teaching. It is never profitable to keep up one school and pay for one teacher to teach four or nine or eighteen pupils. It stands to reason that three schools of that size could be combined and still be taught by one teacher. Nine of them could be united under three teachers, and each teacher would then only have thirty-one pupils in her class, and in these classes there would not be more than two or three grades to supervise. At the present time in an ungraded school there may be six or seven grades among the dozen pupils