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Our School Department.

Some School Fair Features

BY ALPHA.

After weeks of preparation and a strenuous evening putting on the last-minute touches to garden products and samples of work the youngsters were all agog bright and early for a cross-country drive to the township school fair. In Dorchester, Middlesex County, as elsewhere it is pre-eminently "Scholar's Day" and if silo gangs were not too busy emptying corn fields, they felt in honor bound to take time to help along the school show. Something must be radically wrong with farm sentiment and conditions if at least one day of the year cannot be spared to specially observe some notable results of the term which these fairs reveal. Evidently, women are taking a very keen interest and pride in the achievements of the pupils and schools. For example Salem Woman's Institute offered a special prize for a collection of 25 weeds mounted and correctly named. The award went to Nilestown. Not many were heard to approve the suggestions to make the school fair an adjunct of the regular Agricultural Society event. To the latter it would be an attraction, but would lose its distinctiveness and educational usefulness in competition with the "hoss trot" and some dubious features that slide in past directors who are not yet up to Lockie Wilson standards. It was commendable that the Public School Inspector, (P. J. Thompson), shared with the District Agricultural Representative, (R. A. Finn), in the program of the day, an address by the former emphasizing the need of people giving more serious thought and liberal support to rural school improvement. This fair was held in the Mossley Church sheds and the officials granted the free use of their basement for luncheon with hot tea and coffee by the ladies. Last year a large tent was used. If school fairs are further developed the housing of exhibits will call for better accommodations so that they can be viewed, judged and preserved more advantageously. Size is not the all important thing. Best results cannot be secured with crowding and thronging. Half a dozen good country schools seem to provide enough competition. By precept and example teachers do well to insist upon strict observance of regulations. The prize is not the all-important thing but the training acquired in honest striving. The youth who with good grace and no "kicking" could take the "blue" ticket instead of red on his favorite colt learned one of the best lessons of life.

In the "School Collections" class, the exhibit that appeared to attract most general praise for uniqueness, was a Products Map of Middlesex County, contributed by the Derwent School, under Miss Inez Jeffrey, drawn in pen and ink, and mounted on a heavy white card board about 2½ feet by 3½ feet. The county was shown in outline and the township boundaries with London city in the centre, and the Thames River crossing. In the upper left hand corner was a little picture of an old log cabin ("The Beginner") and opposite a 1919 farm residence and barns ("What it is Now.") Then, apparently from pages of "The Farmer's Advocate" and other publications were cut in close outline, about eighty excellent engravings varying in size according to the importance of the products, showing horses, cattle, sheep, swine, poultry, bees, sugar maples, grains, grazing land, vegetables, fruits, flowers and so on placed upon those sections where their production is specially noteworthy. Sufficient white background was left in each case to make them stand out in relief and underneath in red lettering appeared such inscriptions as, "Dairying" in Dorchester, "potatoes" in Caradoc; "beef cattle" in McGillivray; "flowers" in the city suburbs and "small fruits", etc., in Byron locality. At the bottom was a larger photogramme showing a fine general collection of county fruits and vegetables. Another exhibit in the "Nature Study" class that won red ticket distinction was a collection of leaves mounted on large white sheets arranged in book form with illustrated gilt front cover of forest and shade trees, correctly named. On its 42 pages

were over 100 specimens, neatly mutilated on with the names underneath of deciduous and evergreen varieties. Not only were local sources, urban and suburban diligently searched, but specimens had been secured by correspondence from as far away as the Pacific coast.

An instructive school collection was that of "Plant Diseases and Work of Insects" showing 36 examples, placed in transparent envelopes affixed mounted on cardboard 2 feet by 2½ feet. Underneath were the titles in plain lettering such as "Fall Canker Worm on apple leaf," "Late Blight on potato," "Basswood Wart Gall," "Dry Fruit Rot on apples". The samples had been gathered on the farms of the locality and brought to school where they were studied under the direction of the teacher and prepared for the fair. Such work could not but be helpful in cultivating habits of observation and the acquisition of knowledge of these pests of the farm and garden. There were remarkable collections of weed seeds, and insects and some admirable specimens of penmanship and map drawing and mechanical devices made by boys. Considering the dry summer, visitors were astonished at the superior display of vegetables grown in the home school plots. After the awards were made the judge of vegetables gave reasons for some of his decisions showing for instance in table carrots (Chantenay) that some had made the error of selecting for size such as horses would appreciate, rather than for quality and evenness of shape, and others brought in samples with half an inch of inedible green ends. Sewing displays by the girls were highly commendable and the Five Minute Address on "Farm Organization" made a decided "hit" owing to the neat way in which the old-line politicians were touched up by the youthful orator and his references to Farmer's Clubs, local merchants and then the pending elections.

Since the fair numbers of the successful exhibits have been suspended on the school walls for future observations and the suggestion is here offered that teachers should write out plainly on foolscap sheets, complete lists of the winnings of their pupils in order to cultivate local school or community spirit. An annual list of Red Letter (1st prize) winnings should certainly adorn the school walls. The reports of judges on home plots for which seed is furnished the scholars by the Dept. of Agriculture, ought also to be posted up. Trustees could encourage this work with grants for prizes, etc. It is not encouraging to pupils if their plots are not judged and winners given some recognition. To illustrate the great amount of effort pupils and teachers may be aroused to perform one school (Derwent) at the fair in question made a record, winning more than sixty awards. The drill competition was a popular feature the red ribbon going to the Harrietsville School. An old-fashioned, decorated plow leading the Gladstone procession amused the onlookers.

More About Clean Milk.

Last week we discussed in a somewhat general way just what is meant by producing clean milk, and showed how bacteria and dust are the two worst enemies of the farmer who wants to sell milk that is clean, pure and healthful. Teachers and pupils in public schools could very easily arrange a few simple experiments to show how easily milk can become impure through these agencies and they would be very valuable because then it would be easy to actually see what happens.

The teacher could also ask several pupils to bring milk from home in clean bottles and describe the circumstances under which each was secured. No doubt some would have been secured in dusty stables or where the milkers hands were wet. Some might have been milked into small mouthed pails and other farmers might have brushed the cows off before milking. These different samples could be put into clean bottles and watched to see which would remain sweet the longest. In the next issue we shall outline more experiments.