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EDITORIAL.

Slaughter of the Innocents.

The article on "Beneficial Birds," by Mr. Jarvis, B. S. A., of the Ontario Agricultural College, which we publish elsewhere in this issue, calls attention indirectly to a subject which hitherto has not received the consideration which its seriousness deserves. This has been forcibly brought to our attention in many localities on the recent Thanksgiving Day. On this and other holidays young men and boys, armed with guns, swarm out in every direction from the cities, towns and villages, and their pastime is chiefly the wanton and wholesale destruction of innocent birds. We regret to notice that farmers' sons, who, from selfish motives, if nothing else, ought to know better, join in this so-called sport. Every year the ravages of insect pests on the orchards and fields of the farmer appear to grow worse, and against these our native birds are the natural and cheapest defence. Without them the agriculturist would in a short time probably be driven to the wall. It is positively deplorable to notice how our groves and shade trees have during the recent years been decimated of the beautiful songsters that once frequented them. Mr. Jarvis very interestingly describes the more notable beneficial birds, and we hope every father and every father's son will read and heed what he has to say. But he might have put it stronger. Those of our readers who live in Ontario, at least, should remember that the "Insectivorous Birds" statute of 1887 prohibits the killing of all our native birds except hawks, crows, blackbirds and English sparrows, and what are called game fowl (in their season), under a penalty of a fine of from \$1 to \$20, or imprisonment in default. The sole exceptions made are in the case of ornithologists and biologists who wish to secure birds for scientific examination, and they must obtain a permit from the local government Chief Game Warden; and in case of persons protecting their fruit from robins. It is also illegal to destroy the eggs and nests of native birds other than those excepted. The law is shamefully violated. In the interests of humanity and agriculture it ought to be rigidly enforced in every district. A few severe examples made before Justices of the Peace in a neighborhood would have a wholesome effect, and it cannot be done any too soon. No doubt a great many youths are ignorantly violating the law to which we now call their attention. Indeed, it is a very grave question with some of our best ornithologists if the list of exempted birds mentioned above might not almost be narrowed down to the English sparrow, which undoubtedly has proved itself a pest that does more harm than good. In the minds of some it is doubtful if that can truly be said of the despised crow, blackbird and hawk. The killing of birds of gay plumage for millinery purposes is an evil more largely confined to farther south, but is also one that ought in every possible way to be discouraged.

House Plan Competition.

Owing to the large number of plans, descriptions, photos, etc., received in our farm residence competition, involving the careful consideration of many points, we shall not be able to make an announcement of the awards until our next issue, November 15th. For that number of the ADVOCATE we hope also to have prepared engravings of the first of the awards; others to follow in subsequent issues.

The Fairs of the Future.

An anonymous correspondent who has fallen into the not uncommon error of assuming that the fairs of the present century are over and that the beginning of the next year will be that of a new century, writes:—

Let us review the system and general management of the Fair of to-day, and with the dawn of a new century inaugurate, if possible, something better.

We purchase our tickets, and walk into the grounds; the bell is ringing; speeding in the ring is called. Not until the horses have started fairly are they allowed to go. An interesting and anxious crowd watches their progress. The judge names the winners according to their performance and position. The time is given and the crowd is satisfied. A director farther down calls, "Single drivers, carriage." We go to the ring; we admire the high-stepping chestnut with its proud and handsome carriage, and mentally pronounce it the winner. The bright bay horse, somewhat smaller, but with free and easy gait, we pronounce second. The black jugs around slowly. Its wind is bad. They all draw up in a line. The crowd is interested. The judges examine the animals. They walk around them and secretly examine the drivers. They hold a silent meeting for five minutes, during which time the crowd, wearied with waiting, wanders away.

Then with a dozen or so around the ring the prizes are given. Black, *First* (her owner gave \$10 to the Association); Chestnut, *Second*; Bay horse, *Third*. Influence won; merit lost.

We leave the ring and go to the Hall exhibit. We admire the crayon work, and wonder why "The Flower Girl" got first and "The Homestead" second. We pass down the long aisle, with here a red, and there a blue. Hundreds pass by in the same perplexity.

Now, we ask the question, Is this system of awarding prizes or premiums progressive, equitable or educating? In other words, is it in touch with the times of to-day? Is there no way of adjusting matters so that the same interest and fairness be maintained in all classes as that openly displayed in the speeding?

The answer is plain and simple: By adopting the same plan. Let the judges be supplied with stands from which they may fearlessly and faithfully proclaim the winners. In doing so let them briefly give their points of excellence. A judge not competent to carry this into effect is not qualified for his position. It would raise the standard of judges, whose decision would be closely watched and criticised by the spectators. Thus, interest would be secured, and not only so, but justice would be rendered.

A similar system could be adopted in other departments. The judges could be supplied with blanks, briefly stating the winning points. These placed alongside of the prize of the article exhibited told the people which was the best, and why.

This is not an uncommon complaint, but we hope and believe it is less common in these days than in the former times, and from a long experience and close observation we are convinced that as a rule it is a mistaken idea and has little foundation in fact. There may be, and doubtless are, exceptions, but we are persuaded that as a rule fair boards are careful in the selection of their judges and that the men who accept the thankless task act upon their best judgment without fear or favor. Our correspondent makes no allowance for difference of opinion or difference in judgment, or for the reasonable presumption that the judges in the ring who are personally responsible for the awards and have made a close and critical examination of the exhibits are in a much better position to give a correct decision than are the people outside the ring who do not feel the weight of the responsibility which attaches to the giving of a decision in the sight of a critical public. The complaint may be more applicable to the smaller or local fairs, but we believe that in so far as the principal shows in the country are concerned it is generally conceded that commendable care is observed in the selection of competent and fair men, and that better work is done as a rule by judges than in former times; but it is more difficult than many suppose to fix upon men who are at once competent, available and disinterested. That considerable allowance should be made for difference of opinion and of judgment is obvious from the fact that at the leading shows, with judges conceded to be competent and whose honor is unimpeached, an animal which has been placed first at one show is the next week, in the same competition, relegated to third place. We are free to confess that we wish it were otherwise, and that a more general concurrence of judgment on the part of men admitted to be competent were possible, so that the educational influence of their work might be more definite, but we have to take into account the fact that even a week may make considerable difference in the appearance of an animal that is away from home and subject to the disabilities of the showyard and of railway travel, and may look less attractive on his second than on

his first appearance in public. But after all, when we remember that not infrequently the learned judges of the Supreme Court differ and disagree in their judgment of the quality and value of evidence, it is not strange that men honestly differ in their estimate of the value of points in animals or articles in competition in a showyard.

The innocence of our correspondent exhibited in his expressions of confidence in and admiration for the unfailing justice and invariable fairness of the judges in the speeding contests is refreshing and in striking contrast with the estimate formed by a large proportion of fair visitors and of not a few of the owners and drivers, judging from the vigorous language often indulged in around the winning post. If the remedy suggested were practicable, we doubt whether it would prove all-satisfying to exhibitors or even to onlookers, as the effort to convince a man against his will would probably leave him of the same opinion still, and the difficulty of securing efficient judges would be infinitely increased, as many a worthy man competent to judge would shrink from the ordeal of a public address from a raised platform, and the men who talk most are not as a rule those whose judgment commands the greatest respect. Moreover, the remedy suggested is not an untried one, as it has been found that even a college professor has failed to hold an audience of farmers on a fair ground, though descending never so eloquently on the mysterious influence on the performance of a dairy cow of a Flandrina, a Curvaline or a Limousine escutcheon, of wedge-shaped conformation, abnormal navel development, the convex pelvic arch and a distinctly corrugated vertebrae. The proposition to judge by performance sounds well, but it is difficult to conceive how its adoption can be extended to any considerable extent except in milking tests for cows where the scales are supposed to symbolize justice and equity, but even that has not proved a popular tribunal, and few there be that enter there. Judging by a scale of points and furnishing a score card duly filled up, giving the judge's estimate of the comparative value of points in the various exhibits, which is practically stating the reason why, has had a fair trial, has failed to give satisfaction to exhibitors or the public, and has been abandoned in making awards of prizes even in poultry shows, where, if anywhere, it might be expected to prove a success. Men differ as widely in their opinions of the comparative value of points as they do on the individual merits of animals or articles, judging from the general appearance. We do not contend that the prevailing system of fair management is perfect, and we are open to receive light on the subject and will be pleased to receive suggestions that will lead to a more excellent way.

A Growing Time in Poultry Raising.

For some years past we have been devoting more space to the subject of poultry-rearing and urging the use of improved birds, housing and methods of feeding. It has been evident that poultry-keeping on the farm might with profit be vastly increased, and we believe farmers and their families are becoming convinced of this fact. The supply of poultry and eggs for home consumption and export has fallen much below the demand, consequently we find fresh eggs selling lately as high as 20 cents per dozen and plump Thanksgiving Day birds bringing fancy figures. From the central provinces of Canada there has grown up an immense demand both for Britain and for the Northwest and British Columbia. A short time ago one Toronto firm received an English order for 100,000 chickens and another for 50,000 turkeys, which are but samples of how trade is developing. There is no question but that the consumption of poultry both at home and abroad among the more well-to-do classes is wonderfully increasing, and the farmer who has been preparing to meet it by extending and improving his poultry-rearing facilities will undoubtedly reap the reward.