

FIRST PRIZE ESSAY.

Whether is July or October the Better Month for Holding Agricultural Exhibitions in Manitoba and the Northwest Territories.

BY JAMES GLENNIE, PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE, MAN.

The question as to whether the fall is the best time to hold our exhibitions, is one well worthy of the consideration of all who are interested in their success. I think it can be shown that midsummer would be a more suitable time, particularly for those occupying more than one day, and having enclosed grounds and depending largely on gate receipts.

From the commencement of harvest until frost stops the plow, very few of the farmers of this country will leave their pressing work to attend exhibitions. They believe it to be more to their profit to stay at home and push their work, and all the arguments that may be brought forward as to the advantages and benefits to be derived will not convince them to the contrary.

It is argued by those who favor the fall shows that there could be no grain, roots or vegetables. There is no reason why even a better exhibition of grain could not be made of the previous year's growth. Of course, very few have their grain threshed, or the convenience, in the shape of buildings, to properly clean it in time for the fall shows. I cannot see what difference it can make if it is of the previous year's growth. I think, however, now that we have our experimental farms, where all the varieties of grain can be thoroughly tested and distributed pure and clean, the exhibition of grain might be dispensed with, and the country suffer no loss in consequence. As to roots and vegetables, I should say, let them go. If not as large specimens, certainly as profitable can be seen around the doors of our grocers. Those overgrown specimens that win prizes are not the best quality, nor are they generally the most profitable to the grower. This has been the experience of the writer with exhibition roots.

It is argued that foals, calves and lambs would be too young to be shown to any advantage. So they would. And they are too young in the fall. No justice can be done in judging foals or calves at five months old. Very few would care to select an animal for future use at so early an age. The proper time to bring them into competition is when they are near maturity.

Horses, in all classes, could be shown to as good advantage before, as after harvest—farm teams better, as the few weeks of light work would enable their owners to get them in good condition. There would be no necessity for holding spring stallion shows, when the farmers are busy and the roads generally bad. The special prizes offered might as well be awarded at the close, as at the beginning of the season, to the best horses that have stood in the respective districts. The summer show would be shortly after the close of the season. I believe, under this plan, a greater number of good horses would be travelled in the districts offering large prizes. Midsummer is, without doubt, the best time for the exhibition of all kinds of implements and farm machinery, and nothing adds more to the attractiveness of an agricultural exhibition. Contrast the Brandon Show, both this year and last,

with its fine display of threshing and harvesting machinery, traction and other engines in motion on the grounds, with the Portage la Prairie Show and its solitary wheelbarrow. I understand none of the implement men intended to exhibit had the weather been fine. But, perhaps, the greatest advantage of all would be the opportunity afforded the farmers, their wives and families, of attending and deriving both pleasure and profit without interfering, to any great extent, with their work at home. All the leading exhibitions in Great Britain are held in summer, and they do not need any special attractions to draw large crowds. I have no doubt, were an exhibition to be held at Winnipeg, say about the middle of July, to be followed the week after by Portage la Prairie and Brandon, not only would there be a large attendance of the people of the Province, but excursion trains would bring many visitors, both from Ontario and from amongst our neighbors to the south of us, to enjoy our long midsummer days, and delightful evening twilight.

Let the Board of Management of the proposed Provincial Show give the matter their consideration, and if they would like to have it self-sustaining, let them hold it before harvest, and it will be found that the attendance will increase from year to year, enabling larger prizes to be given, and thus encourage the importation and breeding of live stock of all kinds, and thus place Manitoba and the Northwest Territories in the position they are destined to occupy in the production of live stock.

The Score Card.

It is somewhat surprising to learn that the great New York Poultry Show will this year abandon the system of judging by scoring. The American people originated the score card, and have heretofore been very enthusiastic over that method of judging, not only on account of the greater accuracy in making awards, but from the manner in which it facilitates the buying and selling of pure-bred poultry. For instance, a bird scored by B. N. Pierce, J. K. Felch, or any one of the many known qualified judges in the country, has a standard value, and, as buying and selling this class of stock is usually done by correspondence only—the buyer seldom seeing his purchase until it arrives at his yards—a copy of the score given is much more direct information to him as to its merits, than any general description could be. It is not at all uncommon for a breeder to receive inquiries for birds scoring not less than ninety points or eighty-five points, as the case may be; neither is it uncommon for a poultry breeder to employ a judge to come to his yards and score the birds he has for sale, and then to advertise the birds and their score by this judge. But the score card is an advantage in judging, as it in no way complicates making the awards, and brings every part of the bird to the attention of the judge, while, in judging by comparison he may easily overlook some of the points, and it further compels the judge to give his reasons for the conclusions he arrives at. Just what the New York management have in view in dispensing with the score card for the coming show, is difficult to determine, but it is more than probable that the object is to have the show talked about, and thus advertised. That the score card will be permanently abandoned is not at all probable.

"How to Get There."

BY J. C. SNELL.

The uncertain and, in most cases, unsatisfactory returns received by the farmers of the older provinces of the Dominion from the growing of grain as the principal dependence, should, it seems to me, lead them to turn their attention more generally to the raising and feeding of good stock. It must be patent to all that we cannot reasonably expect to compete with the newer provinces and the Northwest in the production of wheat, which is a very uncertain crop in most sections of Ontario and the Eastern Provinces. In those sections where barley has been made the principal crop, a combination of unfavorable circumstances has made it more and more unsatisfactory. In the first place, a continual cropping for many years, mainly with the same crop, has had the effect of depleting the soil of the elements necessary to the production of that variety of grain, and the result is that on very many farms where, twenty years ago, 50 to 60 bushels per acre was an average crop, probably these same counties do not now give an average of more than twenty-five bushels. The small amount of straw produced leaves but little to be returned to the land in the shape of manure. The straw is not such as can be profitably utilized for feeding purposes. The grain is almost invariably sold off the farm, and in the great majority of cases but little grain is fed to the stock kept. Such a course readily accounts for the diminished yield; but in addition to this there is the fact of considerably lower prices than formerly received. With prices ranging in the neighborhood of seventy-five cents per bushel, and the yield well up to fifty bushels, there was money in the business; but those days have evidently gone, probably never to return, and now the McKinley tariff has so completely paralyzed this branch of farming, that for the present the outlook for those who have placed their dependence on barley is gloomy indeed.

To an observing mind one of the worst features noticeable in the general system of farming in Ontario, at this season, is the very large proportion of plowed land, the consequent small proportion of grass, and the small amount of stock kept. If, to any considerable extent, clover sod were being plowed down, the state of things would not be so bad; but in too many cases it is almost entirely stubble land, and land that has been cropped continuously for years, till the wonder is, not that slim crops are reaped, but that anything like a decent crop is obtained. But the question may be asked, Is the prospect for profitable returns from stock-raising and feeding much better or surer than from grain-growing? Well, it seems to me it cannot be worse, for it is certain that unless some system is adopted whereby the fertility of the land is increased, it is folly to go on cropping. It is true that prices for cattle are low at present, especially low for ill-bred cattle. Good ones, well bred and well fed, always bring the highest prices, and are always wanted. Scrubs seldom or ever raise a boom. One thing is certain, he who raises and feeds cattle is constantly receiving a valuable return in the way of manure to enrich his farm, so that he has less need to plow and crop an undue proportion of his land, as land in good condition as to fertility will produce larger returns, while less labor is required. To my mind, no system of farming is better calculated to keep and increase the fer-