

A Vacant Position.

Numbers of our stockmen and leading agriculturists have persuaded R. Gibson, Delaware, Ont., to become a candidate for member of the Board of Agriculture, division No. 11, left vacant by the death of the late Lionel E. Shipley.

PRIZE ESSAY.**The Management of Agricultural Exhibitions.**

BY S. A. LAIDMAN, BINBROOK, ONT.

During the past two or three months we have heard much about exhibitions. We have visited many of them, and have read accounts of many others, but perhaps few of us have seriously considered the utility of these fairs or have stopped to ask if they are really accomplishing the object for which they were intended.

The object of holding exhibitions is to advance the cause of agriculture in all its branches; not only in one branch or in one department, but in every department should new discoveries be made. This is a progressive age, and unless the agricultural communities keep abreast of the times there will soon be national calamities. Agriculture has made wonderful progress in the past and exhibitions have contributed not a little to aid in this advancement.

If, however, we take a look at the different fairs held during the present year we cannot fail to notice that the interest of the public centres not in the stock, the produce, or in the manufactured articles, but in the "attractions" offered by the different societies. Things have come to such a pass that the society offering the greatest display of fireworks, or the greatest balloon ascent, or the most interesting foot ball game, or the hardest tug-of-war, or the best firemen's tournament, will be sure of the largest crowd and consequently be thought to have the best fair. This is all decidedly wrong, and some greater efforts should be made to stop the admission of such things into the fair grounds. The fakirs and the side-shows should be excluded along with all such appliances and schemes for gulling the public.

The fault belongs to no one in particular, and yet to all in general, for unless these things are encouraged by the public they will soon become conspicuous by their absence. Each society can do a great deal towards the abolition of all such things in connection with the fairs. But some one asks, "How can we make our shows a success financially if we do not offer such attractions?" The question is a difficult one to answer, and yet we believe it can be answered successfully. We do not think the public mind has become so utterly depraved as to demand theatrical performances at agricultural fairs. A distinction must be made between institutions for advancing the interest of the husbandman and those displays intended only to satisfy the greedy desires of depraved pleasure-seeker and speculator. We want practical, progressive men to conduct our fairs, and if once they establish a fair that can be looked upon as advancing the cause of agriculture and at the same time prohibiting these hinderances, other societies will not be long in following the example.

Three ways of making the finances a success present themselves: (1) To raise the price of the entry fee. Many would object to this as they think the fee is already high enough, but we think it might be raised to double the

amount without decreasing the number of exhibitors, and, in fact, the high fee would have a tendency to increase the number of exhibits, as each member would wish to regain at least his membership fee, and hence would exhibit a larger number of articles. (2) The expenditure might be greatly reduced by the abolition of horse racing. When we see four or five hundred or even a thousand dollars given in prizes for racing at some of the smaller fairs we can only wonder how the society can afford to give any prizes at all for other things. (3) A subscription might be taken from among the men who are really interested in the advancement of agriculture, and thus a great deal of good may be done along some particular line. There are many men who contribute to the smaller fairs even now who would contribute still more if they knew an effort were being made to advance the utility of the institution.

Although the stock department is one of the most important at every fair, yet the observer will have noticed how little attention is paid to the cattle, sheep and pigs. While thousands of people are surrounding the horse ring or wandering listlessly up and down the grounds, we find about a dozen old farmers away off at one side among the cattle and sheep. The racing and "attractions" are the cause of all this. Then would it not be infinitely better to abolish the "attractions" and have more attention paid to the stock? Besides, most farmers say that the money is nearly all given to the fast horses and very little left the other stock, so that it does not pay them to exhibit.

An important place should be given to the department of "stock breeding." Instead of giving the prizes to the fattest and best groomed animals some attention should be paid to the adaptability of the breed for the purpose intended. If intended for milk production the animal will differ materially from one intended for the production of beef, and the prize lists should be so arranged as to notice all these points. Breeding should be done more scientifically than it is done at present among the majority of farmers, and the township fairs might be made to exert a powerful influence in this direction.

With every animal exhibited there should be a written description of the breed, age, care and feed of the animal. This would add greatly to the interest. It is well also to offer prizes for the best herds of stock, and if prizes were offered for the best collection of farm stock, including all kinds, the exhibit would be very large and the visitor would have a better idea of the exhibitor's stock, and in this way better stock would be raised and more attention be paid to it.

Grain raising receives but little attention at our shows, whereas it ought to be of the utmost importance. With each exhibit there should be a written statement of the kind of soil grown on, of the culture received, of the manures used and of the yield per acre. The general rule is for the farmer to sow his grain, harvest and thresh it, and then if it happens to be pretty good he shows it. Nothing can be learned from this. It often happens, too, that the grain is brightened by some artificial means and hand-picked.

An effort should be made at these fairs to ascertain the uses of the different artificial fertilizers offered for sale, how and when to apply them, the kind of crop each is adapted for and the profit arising from the use of them.

A plowing match might well be held somewhere in close proximity to the exhibition grounds. Since the introduction of the jointer and sulky plows we find a growing carelessness as regards plowing. Any boy can plow now. He flops the ground over in any kind of shape and the "boss" wonders why his crops are not as good as they used to be. Good plowing is the foundation of successful farming, but the rising generation are forgetting the art.

Again, there are a great many pests against which the farmer has to contend. Would it not be a good idea if something could be done at our shows to find out the most successful means of fighting them, and to learn what preventatives may be used. The exhibition should touch every branch of farming, and unless it does, it fails in its object. If township fairs and county fairs would offer medals for the best conducted farms in the county or township a great stimulus would be given that would assuredly bear good fruit. Prizes might also be given for the best plans of farm buildings and fences. In this way all could see the models and take pattern from them.

Few farmers keep any accounts of any kind chiefly from the fact that farm accounts are among the most difficult to keep properly. If, then, the different societies would offer prizes for the best system, and then get it printed and send copies of it to the farmers, a complete revolution might be brought about, and many farmers would be surprised to find where the profit and loss comes in.

Machinery for use on the farm should occupy a prominent place at the fair so that the intending purchaser may select the article best adapted for the work. Here he may see them all and compare their good and bad qualities and choose for himself.

Ladies' work justly occupies a prominent place at all our fairs. The farmer's wife, while she may not see so much of gayety and fashion as her city consins, is skillful with her needle and has need of adorning her home as nicely as possible. Her home-made garments, her delicious bread and butter are luxuries enjoyed more than the softest fabrics and the most delicate confectioneries.

Judges should always be practical and conscientious men, men who know their work and who have the courage to give the prizes where they are deserved. They should always be disinterested parties.

A frequent cause of trouble and annoyance at fairs has been found in the liquor sometimes admitted to the fair ground for sale. Happily the day has come when directors have refused to allow the sale of it upon the grounds. The chief object then of exhibitions is to train and educate the people, and particularly the farming community, and one of the most successful ways of doing this is to keep the matter before the people. Much can be done by holding public meetings from time to time during the year for the purpose of discussing agricultural affairs. Then, too, circulars and pamphlets are often of great use if they are made interesting and instructive. The only way to accomplish any object or to bring about any reform is by agitating, *agitating*, *agitating*. May the time soon come when the agricultural exhibition shall be striped of its formality and uselessness and put on the robe of instructiveness.

The man that has the poorest stallion generally does the most blowing about him.

Keep clear of any man who offers you fifty cents worth of anything for twenty-five cents.

An Ohio man suggests that a day like Arbor Day be set apart for the killing of European sparrows.