

A Wise Measure.

Our Fair system has done a great work in stimulating the live stock interests of this Province; our flock, herds and studs are superior to those found in any other part of America. From here the stock animals are obtained that give character and vigor to the herds belonging to Uncle Sam. Our soil and climate is the best suited on the continent for the production of beasts, dairy products, and fruit of the highest quality. The agricultural societies, notably the "Provincial," has so fostered and encouraged these interests that to-day there is not one county in this province where fine herds, flocks and studs do not exist and continue to improve. Too much credit cannot be given to our breeders and importers, who have done a noble work, which has greatly benefitted the entire country. Yet while great attention has been given to our live stock; the cultivation of the land, and the improvement in the condition of the farmers has not received an equal amount of attention. A few years ago the Provincial Agricultural and Arts Association divided the Electoral Districts of this province into groups; in some one of these they offer prizes for the best managed farm each year. This was a wise step, calculated to do much good in the vicinity where a prize was awarded; for every well-conducted farm has a great influence over the surrounding farmers; it also stirs up a healthy spirit of rivalry among them. We have contended for some time that in order to benefit the country to the greatest extent, we must in some way reach the rank and file of our yeomanry; to do this a prize should be given in each township for the best conducted farm. The prize-winning township farms should compete for the Electoral District Silver Medal. The Electoral Districts should be grouped as now and a gold medal given at stated periods to the best conducted farm in each group; only farms which had won a silver medal being allowed to compete. The township and county prizes should be awarded each year in each county subject to certain conditions. A farm which wins a silver medal should not be allowed to compete again until the time arrives for awarding the gold medal, after which it should be allowed to compete as before. This system would reach all classes of farmers, and bring the benefits of the competition to the door of every landowner. It would also stimulate the farmers to constant improvement, which is not the case where a farm can only compete once in four or five years. It would also bring more farms into the field as competitors for the gold medal. In all probability the groups would have to be made smaller than at present, and more than one group judged in each year. In case such a system as the above were arranged, the Electoral District and township prizes should be awarded by the Electoral District Association, the group prizes only being controlled by the "Provincial Association" or the Agricultural Department. The present need is to stimulate a better and more profitable system of farming. This year the Agricultural and Arts Association have wisely concluded to offer prizes for the best managed farms in Group No. 3, comprising the Electoral Districts in the following counties:—Bruce, Dufferin, Grey, Huron, Perth and Wellington, and in each township of the above Electoral Districts.

Any farmer who desires to compete should make his application in writing to the Secretary of his Township Agricultural Society, on or before May first, upon which said Society shall

call a meeting for the purpose of deciding which of the applicants shall be returned as competitors to the Agricultural and Arts Association. No township is allowed to return more than three competitors, and their names and addresses must be sent to the Secretary of the Agricultural and Arts Association, on or before the 15th of May. Full particulars may be had by writing to Mr. H. Wade, Toronto. We hope every township included will be fully represented, and that before another year that this system will be simplified and enlarged so as to include at least all the older counties.

The Desirability of Discontinuing Township Shows.

BY JOHN DRYDEN, M. P. P.

I suppose it will be an acknowledged principle, that if the public funds are applied to any object the people have a right to enquire whether such object is in their interest, and whether a corresponding benefit is being received. On this plea it may be admissible to ask what is at present being accomplished by the township shows. Most of us are conservative in dealing with matters of this kind. We are so accustomed to the annual gathering, so accustomed to the regular awarding of prizes, that we expect as a matter of course it will still go on, and do not trouble to enquire whether any special good is the result.

Without at present attempting to decide whether these shows should continue to receive the fostering care and encouragement of government or not, I will say that in the Province of Ontario we have at present far too many competing exhibitions. For the masses of the people these smaller shows have degenerated into merely holiday seasons, affording the young people a means of recreation without the slightest evidence that they have any educative influence whatever. Indeed I shall not be speaking aside from truth when I say that all our exhibitions of these days partake largely of this nature. I do not know that we ought altogether to object to this feature provided it be not carried to excess, and that too much time be consumed which should be directed to other more important matters. These shows are held at the season of year when in our climate time is precious; when the wasting or frittering away of two or three weeks means an actual loss in the next season's crop.

Doubtless these exhibitions are important, but not of sufficient importance to warrant any unnecessary waste of time. Some of us go to one place, and some to another, and still others try to go to all held within reasonable distance.

Would not better results be reached by all agreeing to attend the same place; by concentrating our efforts, and massing our forces more than at present. One or two days only would be consumed in this work instead of several as at present. Better prizes could be given, attracting larger exhibits, affording more minute, and thorough comparison of products, and in every sense producing, so far as the general public is concerned, a better result. The larger town and city exhibitions, while catering to this demand for a place of recreation, do also furnish an opportunity for those who may wish to investigate certain lines of exhibits with the special view of acquiring information. At the smaller shows this opportunity cannot be afforded because of the meagre display to be found there.

One difficulty experienced in dealing with this subject is found in the fact that the conditions in the different sections are so unlike.

Time was when absence of railways or graveled roads made it very difficult in all sections to reach places very far distant, so that call your show township or county it was after all merely local in character, and represented the production only of the locality where it was held. In some sections this is all changed. Twenty miles is now much more easily travelled than were five in that day. In other places nearly the same conditions described above now exist. If the country could be separated into two classes, and so grouped together as to be at all similar, then I should say in those sections where good roads and railways have brought the more remote portions together, the township show has served its purpose, and its usefulness is gone, but in the other sections to discontinue it, would leave large areas of country without any means of comparing their products whatever.

Again we find in some counties, owing perhaps to the peculiar location of the county town, where the county exhibition is held, or it may be to the exertion and enterprise shown in the management of the township show, that the latter exceeds in variety and extent of exhibits, and in educative influence, the show for the whole county. In fact it becomes in that case the show of the county, while the county show itself degenerates into a merely local exhibition. These are anomalies which cannot be prevented, but which make it difficult to say—that which is larger and better shall be dispensed with, and the lesser still continued. After all, the real point to be discussed and decided is, whether the public money shall be divided into small sums to be competed for in the small groups convened in the townships, or whether it may not be given in larger sums to be competed for by those representing larger areas, thus bringing together a greater and more comprehensive exhibit, and manifestly affording a better educative and stimulating influence to all concerned. There are those who argue for the continuance of the township show, because, as they allege, they cannot successfully compete at the larger exhibitions. Take away the annual township exhibit, and you deprive them of the hope of obtaining a prize at all. Many of these persons have never discovered that any other object is sought than the awarding of prizes to a few competitors in the locality. They overlook altogether that the object in granting the public money in the form of premiums is so to educate and stimulate that the general production of the whole shall be improved, and increased in value. If the granting by government of a small sum of money which may be expended so as in time to double the value of the annual product of a township or county, or increase the quantity and quality of the grain production, then the whole population must be interested in this expenditure, for it is adding material wealth in which all will ultimately share. Now let us ask ourselves, does the present system accomplish this end. Is it not true that in many parts of the country very little interest is taken in the township show. You may secure comparatively a good exhibit, but if because a larger is to be seen in an adjacent village, town or city, people refuse to attend, of what avail is your labor and expense. It may be that the bringing together even in the small township groups the different classes of animals is a factor in stimulating towards the production of better stock, but in most cases the prizes are so meagre that none are seen except those that happen to be found in the immediate neighborhood, and as is too often the case the same animals and articles presented by the same owners are seen year after year until the very sameness destroys all interest.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]