

Judging at our Exhibitions.

No subject has received greater attention from the agricultural press during the last two or three years than the appointment of judges for our annual exhibitions. The matter is of such importance, both for the success of the exhibition itself and in the interests of the exhibitor, who frequently has so much involved in the result, that it deserves the closest attention by all concerned.

All phases of it have been presented, whether the judges shall number one, two or three; and how they shall best be selected, have been topics discussed and rediscussed for some time. I think no fair-minded man will object to the principle now being generally carried out, of requesting the different associations of breeders to name competent men, from whom the association boards may select those whom they deem suitable. No body of men can better decide as to this point than those who are personally interested in the rearing of the animals to be judged. It is quite possible, however, that improper judges may be named by these associations.

The boards themselves should therefore have the right to choose from among those submitted persons whom they deem most suitable for the work.

The general opinion which appears to be gaining ground, especially in the United States, is, that the one-judge system is the best. My experience and the observation of the working of these associations in our own country and in England as well, have forced me to the definite conclusion that two judges are better than either one or three. They should not be novices, but experts, both of them. Two heads are better than one when a critical examination is to be made, and four eyes will probably see defects, or excellencies, as the case may be, which might be missed were only two used.

The objection which is very properly urged against three-judges, is, that in that case the judgment of none of the three can be distinguished. If a complaint is made each judge can hide behind the other two; and it sometimes happens, when a wrong is done, that every judge admits the wrong, with the added declaration: "I could not help it as the others were against me."

When one judge alone is called upon to undertake the task his judgment cannot be hid. His reputation is clearly at stake, and under such circumstances most men would desire to do what would be considered by the majority to be right. But it is not enough that he be a competent judge; he must know that he is competent. He ought not to be a man to whom responsibility brings an agitated mind; coolness and deliberation are essential characteristics. There are those who are competent, but, when placed alone, feel the responsibility so great that they become nervous, agitated and confused. Besides, in a close contest, any man's judgment is strengthened and more liable to be correct when friendly consultation is allowed by another equally competent. When the one judge possesses all these characteristics the work will be well done. But suppose the one man chosen proves to be one with a prejudiced mind, and perhaps not abreast with the times as to the particular class he is judging, he will only have half the chance for evil if he is checked by a second judge. Again, when two judges agree,

their judgment will be more likely to command respect than that of one alone. The reputation of each is equally at stake, and the judgment of neither can be hid, but it is seen at once.

I will be told, "then you must, as a matter of course, have an umpire to whom dispute may be referred." I say, no. Let the two men know that they are expected to agree on their decision if at all possible, and in nineteen out of twenty cases they will come to the same judgment. In an extreme and unavoidable case let another be temporarily appointed to decide between them. This course works well in England, where, throughout an entire class, where there was the strongest competition, I have seen only one case where the judges could not agree. When an umpire stands waiting to be called it seems to be an invitation to the judges to disagree, and accordingly they do so. I have known judges purposely disagree in order to throw the onus of the decision on the umpire.

You have every advantage of the one-judge system, only these are doubled when two experts are employed instead of one. The judgment of each will be more likely to be sound, and the possibility of wrong doing will be much less than under the one-man system.

After all, experience is the best teacher, and I hope to see our associations try the two-judge system that we may have an opportunity of judging by comparison of the result.

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The Provincial Agricultural Exhibition.

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Since it has been decreed by the powers that be, that the annual Government grant to the Provincial Agricultural Exhibition is to be discontinued, are we to understand that "Ichabod is to be written over its portals, and its glories have departed?" In taking a cursory view of the subject, it is frequently said, "It has certainly done a good work in the past, but it has seen its day, and must now give way to the different industrial exhibitions that have sprung up in the various sections of the province."

But will it not be well to look a little deeper into the subject; is it advisable to conduct a Provincial Agricultural Exhibition as a competitor for public patronage with these exhibitions, and should public money be devoted to providing amusements to draw the crowd? In catering for the public taste for amusement are we not deviating from the true objects of an agricultural exhibition; cannot we have a purely agricultural exhibition, devoted exclusively to the benefits of agriculture? If it has done good in the past, and it most certainly has, why should it not do even greater good in the future. In agriculture and its kindred services, as in most other branches of knowledge, the more we learn the more we see our own deficiencies, and the more we have yet to discover. If we do not advance we recede; if we do not keep pace with the advancing knowledge of the day we assuredly fall behind. Would it not be well to profit by past experience, and endeavour to see where improvements may be made. Perhaps better arrangements might be introduced, or knowledge obtained from the working of the British exhibitions might be utilized that would be beneficial both to the exhibitor and to the public at large, and for every effort to be put forth in the endeavour to have a purely agricultural exhibition that shall be interesting, beneficial and instructive to the scientific agriculturist.

The tendency of the age is to specialities in everything. Do one thing, and do that one

thing well. The blending of amusement and instruction has a very "fetching" sound. But at the different exhibitions as now conducted, is not the instruction often altogether lost sight of—the amusement draws the crowd.

The question should not be, Will it be an immediate financial success? but rather, Will it be beneficial to the agricultural community, and through that to the country at large? A reasonable government grant would be money well laid out, and would, I believe, be returned tenfold in substantial advantages to the country, by keeping the one object in view.

The Toronto exhibit, and others of the same nature, are grand and successful exhibitions, no doubt satisfactory, both to the management and to the public at large who attend, and no one can deny the right of either the management to provide, or the public who attend to enjoy the amusements provided. In agricultural districts more particularly, I believe there are far too few opportunities for amusement, too few opportunities for social enjoyment and recreation, and that thousands throughout the province look forward with pleasurable anticipations to the annual excursions to the exhibitions, and the amusements there provided.

It is interesting to remark the enthusiastic love for the horse that appears to prevail at all our exhibitions, for no matter what may be the other amusements, the horse ring may be safely predicted to have its full quota of ardent spectators. Probably scores crowd round the ring who would profess to have scruples against attending a race meeting; but here congregate the merchant, the professional man, the mechanic, and the agriculturist; gay colors amongst the crowd denote the presence of the "fairer portion of creation," the minister and the "sport" elbow each other for a view, and even the good old church deacon, with his crown of white hairs venerable as a mitre, cheers the racing as vivaciously as the street arab, and they have a perfect right to their enjoyment. I can heartily sympathize with those who admire a good horse, or enjoy a closely contested race. Then there are balloon ascensions, acrobatic performances, and attractions innumerable, and the different managements year after year taxing their energies to provide still more drawing attractions. I make no protest against the amusements, but in this rush for amusement is not there a danger of the agricultural and instructive part of the show being to a great extent lost sight of. Are we to suppose that the number of spectators, and the amount of gate money received, is to be taken as the sole criterion of the success of an agricultural exhibition? Is it not more reasonable to be guided by the improvement year by year of the different exhibits, and by the increase of the number of exhibitors? Do not the exhibitors themselves benefit by meeting others in competition? The snail, which sees nothing but its own shell, thinks it is the grandest house in the universe.

We have in the Province of Ontario the soil and climate, the live stock, the agricultural production, agricultural implements and machinery, also public spirited exhibitors, second to none; are not these the requisites to make a successful show? Thereupon, will it not be well to eliminate the amusement element from the Provincial Exhibition entirely, and to keep steadfastly the one object in view? In remodelling it there are many subjects that require careful thought and discussion. Amongst these would not the advantages or disadvantages of a permanent location for the exhibition be one of the most important matters for consideration?