

Our conceit wasn't exactly dead. That was 1915; the wet year. By the time the judge visited us, they were so flat that we had given up all hopes of a prize, but for good sportsmanship we stayed in the race. We got a little higher score, owing to cleaner seed and better tillage. During these two years an experiment with 5 pounds of O. A. C. No. 72 oats, brought home from the stock and seed judging course, was having a very precarious existence. The first year they were sowed late in a corner of a field, as father "wouldn't be bothered with my nonsense" earlier in the season. They had to fight against a plague of sow thistle blown in from other farms, of course! By the time I got through hoeing these out, there were precious few oats left. Had about half a bag, which were cleaned and sowed the next year on a half acre of potato ground. They grew about five feet high, and then "the rains descended and the floods came," till my treasures somewhat resembled a carpet. However, I managed to reap a few sheaves and got five or six bags from the run. Another lesson—stick to it in spite of difficulties.

This year I had sufficient of these to sow six acres of corn ground in good heart and clean. Although they were not sown until May 28, we took another chance on it and again entered the competition. We cut out the few Canadian thistles apparent, and this time the fates were kinder, as we broke into the money with fourth prize. Our concession received the five prizes won in the township, which made up for the other year.

Of course, it is a long way to the top yet, but we intend to keep trying. Here is another lesson. When we win it is no time to be vain glorious, or to drop out and rest on our honors. Give the others another chance to beat you, and don't crow if they don't. Besides, there is always the fellow who says "he has a better crop in his back field." Probably threshing proves him right, but why doesn't he show them? Honest competition is the life of these contests. Anyway this year I have my \$10.

Field crop competitions, in my opinion, are beneficial because they emphasize, in a practical way, the importance of clean land, clean seed, and thorough cultivation. I believe they could be improved by more variation of the crops and including corn more often. Probably an acre of mangels or turnips would be an agreeable change. If they increase the yield and quality of oats and other grain, why not these also? However, while the practical lessons in better farming, derived from field crop competitions, are of great value, not the least benefit are the moral lessons learned. Here they are: humility, good sportsmanship, fairmindedness, perseverance, thoroughness and modesty.

Huron Co., Ont.

M. J. SLEMMON.

Constant Attention Should be Given the Crop.

EDITOR "THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE":

The field crop competitions are undoubtedly of inestimable value to the sections of Ontario which are energetic, enthusiastic and progressive enough to engage in them. The beneficial effect is felt, not only by the competitors, but by their neighbors throughout the entire district, which usually has a radius of about fifteen miles. The farmers, as a rule take particular pains with the crop entered in the competition. The land is thoroughly prepared and the furrows completely levelled so that the crop when mature has an even appearance. The grain is generally thoroughly cleaned and treated for smut. The start in the race is an important part and these points should always be considered by a competitor. The grain should be carefully sown and never doubled at the ends where the drill is thrown in or out of action. Some even go to the trouble of "checking" the grain in, which is sowing one-half the seed in one direction and the other half in the opposite direction.

The crop grows rapidly, and with the rush of work many pay no further attention to the field till judging time. These farmers frequently boast to the judge that they have never entered the field since they sowed it. This, however, is never to their credit, and the judge seldom sees sufficient merit in the field to award it the "Laurel wreath."

The best fields I have ever judged were usually on farms that showed a general air of prosperity and keen supervision. The buildings were neat, the yards tidy, the fence-corners mown, the stock choice, and the fields naturally showed the same care and attention. What weeds there may have been were hand pulled and thrown in the fence-corners or along the lane. The farmers or their sons had walked systematically through the field with peering eyes while the crop was developing.

Some of the better cared for fields were mown around to give a good impression of the height and stand of the grain, others were staked. Many, however, showed little or no signs of care or attention, and in a few cases the farmer wished the judge to pick out his best field or portion of it and then proceed with the judging. These few however, are always persuaded to point out the field entered.

The judge must have a mind of his own and proceed in a systematic manner to judge the crop. If it be grain, walk up and down the field at intervals of a few rods and then diagonally, being sure to cover the field thoroughly. I fully believe that the set of rules are as complete as they can well be made. Some farmers think the judges score too heavily for certain weeds, but this is the amount decided upon at the convention of the judges, and since all the fields are judged upon the same set of rules the competitors certainly get used squarely and alike.

I firmly believe that the field crop competitions

are exerting an influence that will be felt and noted in the future. The grain will be more thoroughly cleaned, the ground better prepared, the crops more thoroughly looked after and the general yield improved. Middlesex Co., Ont. FARMER'S SON.

Competition Leads to Better Farming.

EDITOR "THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE":

Farmers who have not received permanent benefit from field crop competitions are those who have not entered these competitions, and those who did not make any special effort to secure good seed or prepare their own, and failed to cultivate their land. All a judge can do is to score them low. Where a whole competition is that way, very little good is done except to those who get the prize money. Such a competition is of no special benefit to any district. Field crop competitions have made rapid strides since their inception, and should lead to better farming throughout the province.

When these competitions were started in our district competition was small, but to-day it is one of the largest in Ontario and there is keener rivalry every year. Even though you are not a prize winner, if you have entered with any interest at all, you can readily see some improvement in the quality and yield of grain, as selected seed will yield better than that which is carelessly cleaned.

Those who win prizes can fight it out again at Toronto, Ottawa and Guelph shows with their grain and sheaves.

If you are not successful you can easily see where you can make improvements by comparing your own crop grain and sheaves with those of others.

A very encouraging feature of the competition is the controlling of noxious weeds. A miller in our district who buys the largest percentage of spring wheat entered in the competition, states "that the yield and quality is superior to what it was before the competition started and it is much easier to obtain uniform samples."

Here are a few improvements I would suggest: For best results buy seed from prize-winning fields. Sow your crops as near as possible at the same time, thereby ensuring an evenness in ripening. This would give the judge a chance to do his work more satisfactorily as he is liable to score the ripest grain higher. It would be to the advantage of the competitors if the judge would invite the farmers' sons to go into the field with him, explaining his reasons for scoring high or low as the case may be. Further, the crop selected should not be changed from one year to another, as that prevents it from coming up to any standard.

York Co., Ont.

A. A. FRISBY.

Judges Should Give Reasons.

EDITOR "THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE":

The field crop competition was inaugurated for the betterment of field crops and for the purpose of educating the farmer to grow better crops, through the use of purer seed and up-to-date methods of cultivation. In the use of better seed, the competitions have done a great deal of good, but as to the educational influence I believe that they have very nearly failed. The farmer has obtained pure seed of a good variety and has grown a good crop, better than he had grown previously, yet very often he does not obtain a prize, at least not one of the larger ones. There would be no discouragement in that if he knew and was satisfied with the reasons for his defeat, but, unfortunately, he is not informed of those reasons. Most farmers are matter-of-fact persons. We must know definitely why such and such is the case before we can accept it as the truth. Consequently we have to know the reasons for the judge's decision before we can agree with him. I was interested in a field of oats in the competition this year, which was not awarded a prize, and I do not know why unless it was that the other fields had more thistles. The score gives us some little information, but not nearly enough. We want to know the reason why our neighbor's field is given more for general appearance, why we do not get more on our field for yield, etc.

The majority of farmers, I believe, do not understand the methods used to judge the fields. I know of one instance where a winner said that he did not know why he got the prize unless it was that the judge thought he needed the money.

I do not see why the judge could not be allowed to explain his reasons for giving the different score-points while at the field. Of course it is sometimes necessary for him to change them afterwards, and that might cause some dissatisfaction, but there could be no reason against his giving the information after he has finished. As he is always a stranger in the district, the farmer has no chance to talk with him after he leaves the field. It would help out greatly if it were compulsory for him to send in his reasons along with the score cards, or he might leave them with the secretary of the agricultural society. They could then be made known, or the farmers could call on the secretary and read them over. In any case they should be given very fully so that every contestant would know why he did or did not win a prize.

The standing crop competitions have done inestimable good, but I believe that they could be made much more educational, and I hope that we will see a change for the better in our contests in the succeeding years. Lambton Co., Ont. KEITH S. OKE.

Crop Competitions Encourage Seed Selection and Weed Eradication.

EDITOR "THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE":

In many districts the field crop competitions have been introduced, and I firmly believe they are of great benefit to any neighborhood. The field of oats must consist of not less than five acres, and, of course, must belong to the man who is showing it. The crop must be judged before it is cut. The judge goes over the field, and I might mention the scoring points: 1st, general appearance, 20 points; 2nd, freedom from weeds, 25 points; 3rd, freedom from smut, rust, blight and insects, 10 points; 4th, freedom from other varieties, 20 points; 5th, yield and quality of grain, 25 points. Now, in regard to general appearance, I might state a few things that help to improve the appearance. In the first place, do not be afraid to pull the plough back if knocked out of the ground by a stone or any other means, because wherever there is an unfertilized place the crop will be short, which may take away the appearance. Always work the furrows or crowns until they are level. If the crop is a manured crop then be careful how the manure is spread. The secret of this commences at the manure pile. Each day as we take the manure from the stable we mix the different kinds together; it only takes a short while and has a lot to do with the appearance and even ripening of the grain. You know that where the pig and sheep manure goes the crop will be strong and ripen quicker. Let me say again, mix your manure as it comes from the stable and use each part of the field alike.

The second point of great value is freedom from weeds. We always have the field we enter in the competition sowed on last year's root ground. We make sure the root field is perfectly clean, and this assures us of a clean crop the next year. Another way by which we keep down weeds is while cutting our hay we have a box attached to the mower and we carry a shovel. When a bad weed is noticed we dig it out and put it in the box. One weed will mean a lot more the next year.

In the third place the score is for smut, rust, blight and insects. The smut is very easy to remedy, and no one should neglect it. Just get a bottle of formaldehyde and treat according to directions. Rust and blight are both a pest to late-sown crops. Try and have your field in early.

The fourth is the freedom from other kinds of grain. I think about all I can say for this is use a good fanning mill, and by hand picking one bushel each year you will soon have several bushels of clean grain. In the fifth and last place comes the yield and quality of grain. The yield is due in particular to the way a field is fertilized, as usually the richer the soil the better the crop. Also, early sowing plays a particular part to the yield. Have the field all ready in the fall and work it the first in the spring, as late oats never are a heavy yielder. Now, as to quality. We have always used the Banner oats, and clean thoroughly so as to get nothing but the heavy, plump oats. Dry well while in the stook, because oats that heat in the granary are never good.

The field crop competition induces everyone to take an interest in keeping their farm clean, in growing the best of seed, and is splendid for abolishing noxious weeds.

Grey Co., Ont.

JAMES PARK, JR.

Competitions Encourage Young Men to do Their Best.

EDITOR "THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE":

These competitions in field crops are a branch of the work started by the Department of Agriculture, with the general purpose of keeping the young men interested in farming. The Department is certainly succeeding in its purpose as the young men who have taken part are more intense and thorough in their work than they would otherwise have been.

The rules, though not very strict, are as follows: Each competitor must be a former Short-Course student of twenty-five years or under, he must keep an accurate account of all expenses and receipts. Forms are supplied, which are to be filled out and returned to the Department as soon as possible in the fall. The judge is supplied by the Department. If the crop be potatoes, it is judged according to vigor of growth, indications of blight, general appearance of crop, etc. A small piece, 12 feet square, is dug to get an estimate of the yield and to see if there is scab.

It would be much better if the judge could visit the crops throughout the summer, as some years the frost appears very early in the fall before the judging is done. Thus we see that a crop which looked excellent in the summer would be poor looking when judged. The results of these competitions are very encouraging as the older men want to keep ahead of the boys. The competitor also sees where improvement might be made, the value of sowing good seed, and of good cultivation. As I was a Short Course student during the winter of 1915, I took part the following summer in growing an acre of potatoes. The previous year the ground was pastured, then plowed late in the fall. The following spring it was disked, and manure applied at the rate of twenty loads per acre. The potatoes were cut in sets with one or two eyes in each set, and planted on June 4. As the beetles were very bad, Paris green was applied three times and Bordeaux mixture once. On the 25th of August the tops were completely frozen so that they grew very little, if any, more.

The crop was dug about the middle of October, and when weighed there were 310 bushels. There were 28 bushels of small potatoes and culls, this being due to the early frost.

Grenville Co., Ont.

H. M. L.