

# A Revival of the Provincial Plowing Match.

A hard-fought battle was waged about one and one-half miles east of Yonge Street and on the very borders of the city of Toronto, Ontario's Metropolis, all day Tuesday, November the eleventh. This was a final contest—a battle of picked men, the flower of the Province, these having asserted their rights to participate in this final struggle for supremacy by having been, returned victors in smaller conflicts recently fought in various portions of this Province. The battle was not fought by men in entrenchments and regimental dress with missiles of war, but all the entrenchments were the straight, even and narrow furrows turned by the men behind the plow who put up as good a fight as any man behind the gun could ever hope to do. It was a battle royal—a Provincial Plowing Match—in a level valley on the beautiful "Sunnybrook Farm" home of Joseph Kilgour. Twenty seven teams participated. To the southeast three teams driven by boys under sixteen years of age tugged eagerly at the plows with which these boys hoped to land the best prizes in stubble. A little northwest of these were four boys under eighteen years of age side by side doing their best to win laurels in sod. Then came the veterans, two aged men, one 82 years old and the other one 60. They held their positions nobly and merited the admiration of the hundreds of spectators. Just west of these seven men with jointer plows contested for highest honors in their class, and farther west the men who had never won a first prize in their class competed. There were five teams in this class. Just north of these, where the largest crowd gathered, was the championship contest. Six were out in this class, and it was the contest of the day. This was the disposition of the various sections of this little army of plowmen. All did their work steadily, methodically and well, and it was no disgrace to be vanquished in a fight like this.

## A LITTLE PAST HISTORY.

A few decades ago plowing matches were considered by many the feature of the year's agricultural activities. Township and county matches were held yearly and large crowds took keen interest in the work done, the final reckoning coming at a Provincial or Dominion match. There have been many changes during recent years in farming conditions in Ontario. In the earlier days farm help was not so scarce as it is to-day. The boys on the farm plowed with the single, walking plow because there were plenty of them to get the work done and done right, and the acreage in the farms was often not so large as now. Grain growing gave way to stock farming; a diminishing labor supply and the inevitable rush of work consequent caused farmers to replace their single plows with two-furrowed, four-horse plows, and in some places even a gasoline tractor has superseded the two-furrowed plow and six or eight furrows are turned at once instead of one or two. In the rush, prize plowing almost became a lost art. The old guard of staunch believers in the best plowing, many of whom learned the art in the Old Land or were tutored by fathers or grandfathers who took more than usual pride in being able to plow well, dwindled until only a few were left. The younger generations, accustomed to doing all things with a rush in accord with the spirit of the time, were more concerned in "blackening it over" than in doing first-class work, and, consequently, they took the double plow, handled it carelessly in many instances, and the plowing got worse and worse. However, in many districts a few still took pride in their plowing, and some localities kept up the practice of holding local matches. But the interest waned. Young men did not get the encouragement out of the matches which they should have. This Provincial Match, the first of its kind in three decades, may be taken as an indication of a revival of the interest so general in the eighties of last century.

## THE MATCH.

The match was a good one. Sunnybrook Farm is conveniently situated, and the hospitality of Mr. Kilgour added to the success of the event. The sod field was scarcely "stiff" enough for the plowmen to do the best work, as the furrows broke over badly in places, and many of the contestants were obliged to cross old ridges and dead furrows, which made it difficult to do the highest class of work. The lands were short. However, on the whole it was a very good place for a match. The day was bright at times, but in the afternoon the sky became overcast, and a piercing wind chilled the thousand spectators to the marrow. But they huddled in groups around their favorites and stayed to the finish.

Special mention should be made of the boys' classes. In stubble Clifford Knupp, plowed a

good crown and a good finish, and at fifteen years of age won his first provincial championship in his class.

The class for boys under eighteen in sod was closely contested, but Eddie Timbers, of Malvern,

a high pitch all day at the ends of each man's land.

## A DISCUSSION OF METHODS.

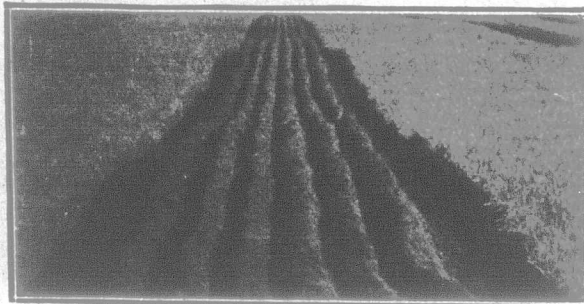
All plowing was done according to rules, but one could not help commenting upon the methods employed to even up, level down and straighten furrows. Plowing, as it is understood by the average agriculturist, should be done with the plow, but at this match, and we presume it is true of many matches, the men working in sod were allowed to go from end to end of their furrows fixing up the turned furrows with their hands. Turning with the foot occasionally does not look so bad, but hand work seems to unnecessarily prolong operations. Of course each man was working on a time limit, but even so it would seem to conform more closely to the requirements of farm practice to eliminate hand-turning and hand-levelling of furrows.

Again a good plowman should be a good teamster. In fact it is held by many that none but a man who handles horses well can be a first-class plowman. At this match a little more than the necessary amount of leading horses was participated in. We do not blame the men for doing it because the rules permit, but these things, it seems to us, would be better disallowed. One or two "coaching" would not look so bad, but six or eight at either end of the field shouting advice to the man with the plow does not add to appearances, and perhaps not to the chances of the plowman, although at times it appeared differently. Work must be done in this age as well as possible in very short spaces of time. The man plowing on his farm does not hand-turn furrows. He does the work with the plow and his team, occasionally using his foot to turn the sod. Should this not be enough for the man plowing for a prize? It would be as fair for one as another and would be plowing, not a combination of driving, horse leading, plowing, hand-turning and expert coaching.

These are only suggestions. The match was a success, and accomplished much in interesting the young men in better plowing, which we consider the basis of all good cultivation. After all was over the spectators and competitors were entertained to dinner by Mr. Kilgour, after which the handsome prizes donated by newspapers, companies and individuals were presented. Right here it might be suggested that the Government look more favorably upon this Provincial match in the future. This year they refused to make a grant towards it, but private concerns realizing the worth of such competitions rose to the occasion, and very suitable prizes were donated. It is a worthy cause and should be helped.

## JUDGES AND AWARDS.

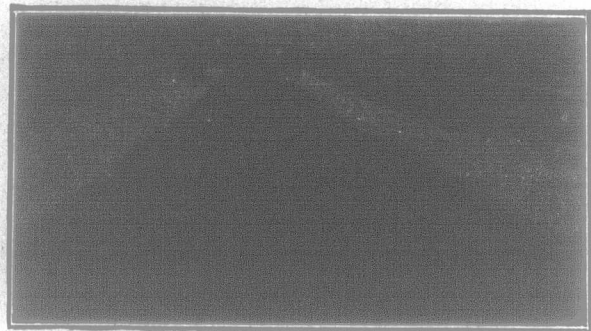
Judges on plowing: Andrew Pearson, Hamilton; John Fixter, Ottawa; John Morgan, Niagara-on-the Lake; Andrew Hood, Agincourt; Wm. Hawstrauser, Woodville; Mr. Murray, Milton. On horses: Wm. Graham, Clarendon; John Gardhouse, Highfield; W. G. Scott, Richmond Hill. Awards:—Championship Class: 1, Cameron Walkington, King; 2, Charles Clubine, Maple; 3, Stanley Tyndale, Richmond Hill. Second class, open to those who have never won a first in an open sod class: 1, Wm. Orr, Maple; 2, Stewart Baird, Woburn; 3, Walter Middleton, Edenvale. Jointer Class: 1, Clarke Young, Hagerman; 2, Wm. Clarke, Agincourt; 3, Wm. Gray, Rockwood. Boys under eighteen in sod: 1, Eddie Timbers, Malvern; 2, Chas. Hunt, Richmond Hill; 3, Stanley Watson, Agincourt. Boys under sixteen in stubble: Clifford Knupp, Minesing; 2, Russell Cowie, Markham; 3, Fred Watson, Agincourt. Men over 60 years old: 1, R. J. McLean, Eglinton; 2, Wm. Milliken, Toronto. Best outfit: 1, Fred Fisher, Malvern; 2, H. J. Piggott; 3, Clarke Young.



A Good Crown.

The first six furrows of one of the contestants in the championship class.

had the best crown of the lot and took the gold watch given by "The Farmer's Advocate" for first prize. He was closely followed by Charles Hunt, of Richmond Hill, and Stanley Watson, Agincourt.



A Good Land.

Cameron Walkington's winning work.

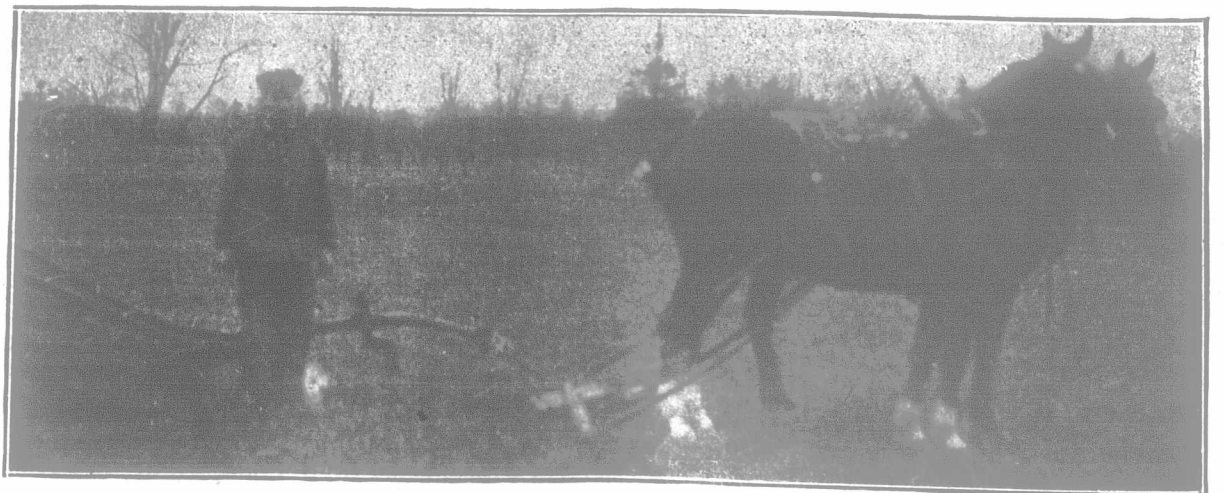
The feature of the day was the work of the eighty-two-year-old Wm. Milliken, of Toronto, who plowed his first match sixty years ago. He took second to Robt. J. McLean, aged 62 years. The work of these old men was admired by all.



A Straight Finish.

Work by one of the prizewinners in the first class.

The championship class was close, but as time wore on Cameron Walkington was adjudged by many the winner. He had an almost faultless crown, but not quite so good a finish. However, his land was good enough to win. Some crack plowmen entered this class, and interest was at



Eddie Timbers and His Outfit.

Winner of the gold watch donated by "The Farmer's Advocate" in the class for boys under eighteen years of age, in sod.