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EDITORIAL

Make the Seed Fair a Success

The season for preparing for the seed fairs is again at hand. With characteristic enterprise the Seed Branch in Saskatchewan has issued a little booklet dealing with the organization of these fairs, explaining the manner of conducting them and the purposes to be served in holding them. The booklet is being sent out to agricultural society officials and all farmers in the province who are interested enough in pure seed grain to write the seed commissioner at Regina for it. It is worth asking for and reading.

The seed fair has become a fixture among Canadian agricultural institutions. It is about the latest innovation in the line of agricultural educational work and in this country it is proving one of the best. It is popular because its work is three fold. It is a combination grain show, farmers institute meeting and seed grain exchange. The grain grower is afforded an opportunity of inspecting the best there is in his district, of purchasing seed grain if he wants it, and of listening to farmers or seed experts discuss grain growing questions. Where grain growing is the first industry, no combination of functions in one organization could be better carried out. Field grain competitions are better adapted perhaps to teach, by demonstration, the advantages of seed selection and careful cultivation, but field grain competitions are held at a season when the farmer has not as much leisure to attend such things as he has in winter. At most fairs nowadays classes are put on for grain from fields that have won prizes in field competitions, so the seed fair combines with its other functions something of the purposes of a field competition as well. A farmer has the chance of seeing and purchasing, if he wants it, seed from fields that have been good enough when growing to win out for growth, freedom from weeds and the other factors considered when judging standing grain.

Advertising is the great factor in making a seed fair a success. Prizes count for a good deal, but the attendance, number of exhibits and success of the show generally depend upon the publicity given locally. The work of organization and management being left usually to one or two members of the agricultural society executive, success depends a good deal on how well they do their work. Everything else being equal, the society that does most to bring its fair to the attention of the farming community, that circulates its members and provides the best place available for holding the exhibition, will have the largest success and accomplish the most good. The seed branches in the various provinces, and the provincial department of agriculture in Manitoba, have always co-operated heartily with the local societies in providing speakers, and judges to make the fairs interesting and instructive.

The Pulse of Trade

Definite knowledge of the actual yield of each man's crop is now pretty well known to him. Threshing is practically all completed, and considerable grain sold or stored in the elevators. In the aggregate the crop of 1908 is the largest on record for the Canadian West, but there are many districts where hail, frost and drought have reduced the yields so low that the returns will barely cover the cost of handling. To those who are so unfortunately situated as to have suffered loss, or to have not reaped the full harvest that was expected, the sympathy of the more fortunate is always extended, and when the contact is close, not only sympathy, but more substantial encouragement is forthcoming.

With the movement of the crop well under way the effect of new money is being felt from coast to coast. The lethargy that has hung upon all lines of business has begun to disappear, confidence is being renewed, obligations are being met and there is an air of assurance that the worst is over for the present at least. But there is no evidence of extravagant expenditures, either in land or merchandise. The lesson of too extensive buying is not forgotten. People realize that to be free from obligations when crops are short is a great convenience, consequently, for the present at least, only necessities will be bought, and before other obligations are assumed there will be due preparations for meeting them, and a clear way visible to see them through. Such an attitude toward commercial ventures augurs well for steady growth and solid progress. Wealth produced from the soil is sure and slow, but after all it is better to avoid worry and risk, and make progress slowly than to plunge wildly in uncertain ventures.

Our Representatives

Which party the average man is to support is decided for him generally before he is born. Unconsciously he develops a habit of mind that prevents him from seeing anything but what is evil or disastrous to the well-being of his country in the principles or platform of the party opposed to his, but he will condone the most glaring failure in his own. From voting age to death he is supposed to support blindly whatever comes along that his party deems it expedient to champion. If he doesn't, he is branded at once as a "traitor" a "turncoat" or an "apostate." If he votes the other way occasionally, conscience is supposed to prick him for his waywardness. He is a sort of outcast.

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Back in the past, there may have been some great fundamental differences in the principles for which the two parties occupying the political stage in this country at the present time stood, but in the campaign now being waged, there is not sufficient difference in the principles or platform of either, for the non-partizan elector to decide which he will support. Both parties have put forward what are purported to be platforms, but there is no plank in the platform of either which the other is not prepared to adopt, if any considerable number of electors seem disposed to favor it. In the platforms of neither is there any plank so firmly secured that that party is not prepared to rip it out, if, perchance a sufficient number of the people seem to disapprove of it. As near as the unprejudiced onlooker can judge, this is not a contest where one issue is opposed to another, but simply a struggle between a few men at the head of one party with about the same number at the head of another, to see which group is going to control affairs for the next five years. This is simply a case where two rival groups of politicians are competing for the honors and emoluments of office. It is unlikely that it will make much difference which wins. Twelve years ago we were asked to believe by the conservative chieftain that to conservatism was due the greatness of this country, now we are being told that our material prosperity for the last decade or so is due to the wise policies of the Liberals. The fact of the matter is that the country owes a whole lot more of its greatness and prosperity to the industry and enterprise of its citizens in exploiting the accumulated resources of the ages, than it owes to the policies of its statesmen. Most of our so-called statesmen are, or have been, merely politicians fighting to prevent the defeat of their party. Statesmen fight to prevent the defeat of policies. This is a good time to support enterprising, honorable men, irrespective of party, bearing in mind that party affiliation has little effect upon a man's capacity for service.

Exaggerated Emphasis on Type

It will bear repetition that the contrast between beef and dairy type, as commonly exemplified in the show-ring and in photo-engravings, is, to quite a large extent, a matter of condition. Every stockman has noticed what a great difference in type there is between a cow in lean condition and the same animal with her ribs padded out, the concavities of her outline filled up with flesh and fat, and the angularities, accordingly, smoothed into more symmetrical contour. We have seen cows which, in milking condition, would answer very well to illustrate a lecture on dairy type, while, eight or ten months later, when fattened for the block, they would illustrate almost equally well the butcher's ideal. Of course, it is not pretended that all cows are built according to the same line of structural anatomy. There is a difference in skeletons, and also in the inherited disposition to lay flesh and fat in certain parts of the carcass. An approved beef animal lays it along the back and over the crops, while the dairy breeds store a larger proportion of it inside the abdomen in the form of tallow.

But these differences are magnified out of all proportion by those interested in representing diversity of type, and in the show-ring they are enormously exaggerated by the practice of showing the dairy breeds in thin condition, while the beef cattle are padded out with nutriment to make them show as compact, plump and thick-fleshed as possible. Were the practice reversed, and Ayrshires and Holsteins exhibited with slack udders and in beefy condition, while Short-horns, Angus and Galloways were shown in their customary breeding condition and in full flow of milk, the untutored visitor would suppose the former were the beef and the latter the dairy breeds. Even between Jerseys and Aberdeen-Angus there is no such radical difference of type (conditions being in each case equal) as photo-engravings or show-ring exhibits would lead one to believe. Moreover, it is safe to say the difference between the conformation of beef and dairy types would be less than it is but the fact that educators have in the past led dairy breeders to select and endeavor to perpetuate such characteristics as the wedge-shape, the corrugated spine, extreme spareness of flesh, and a general looseness and ranginess of type. There is no doubt that undue emphasis has been placed upon such points, and the best dairy breeders of the present day no longer seek them to the same extent as formerly. They realize that a dairy cow requires not merely "belly and bag," but heart and lungs as well, and that extreme spareness of flesh, so far from being a guarantee of milking quality, may be only due to lack of thrift. In fact, it is now pretty generally conceded that type is an unreliable index of milking quality. Private and public records show that some of the best milk and butter records are made by the substantial types of cows, or what the Holstein breeders have termed the milk-and-beef type.

True, it would not be easy to develop the combination in high degree among a large number of individuals any more than it would to develop any other two excellencies in a strain. This does not argue that the two things are incompatible. It is merely according to the principle of restricted selection, as illustrated by the fact that it is harder to find one hundred men who are both tall and stout than to find one hundred who are merely tall. Nevertheless, with careful selections, and a few generations of time, the development of dairy quality in cows substantially of the beef type, and with the inclination to lay fat on their backs, instead of about the paunch, would be but little more difficult than in those conforming to the old-fashioned, attenuated dairy type, or to any other single type that might be designated. And they would have the advantage of being more rugged and wearing better, while a superannuated matron or sire