



THE Board of Agriculture at their last meeting were principally occupied with the question of the Provincial Exhibition, which is to be held at Sherbrooke in September next, and our readers will be able to judge of the activity displayed by them, by the publication in the present number of the list of prizes offered for competition.

The prize committee certainly deserves great praise for having banished all prejudice, and opened the show grounds to all breeds without exception, classifying them according to their special aptitude to produce either, meat, milk work, or wool. Long since sheep and swine have been divided in long and short wool, large and small breeds, and the same principle of classification is now extended to horses and cattle. The committee have thus taken the responsibility of most important changes, through which the crossed cattle, hitherto excluded from our provincial shows, will be allowed to partake of the prizes offered for stock, in due proportion to their numerical importance.

In reviewing our past exhibitions, what seems to have been, in the prizes offered, the starting point for the improvement in our stock? In horned cattle, the only suggestion for improvement seems to have been the substitution to our native breeds of the best English stock, without distinction of blood. But were we sure that the contemplated object could be accomplished? Would it not have required at least a century to make this substitution even perceptible? And then what would have become, during this long period, of our native breeds, excluded as they were from our provincial shows by the prohibition of the bulls, the best of which were not considered worthy of a prize? Could any practical farmer approve of this course, and sanction this exclusion of our stock? Still this has been our starting point in improvement of our native cattle for the last ten years.

No one is more convinced than ourselves of the necessity of improving our native breed, by a cross with a better class of animals. In our review of the exhibition in 1858, we expressed our opinion fully on the subject. But at the same time we showed that the Ayrshire, Durham, Hereford, Devon, and Galloway, are not equally commendable for importation, and that if some of them do give most striking results, others are comparatively very inferior.

First should stand the Ayrshire, which in our provincial exhibitions have constantly been the admiration of all, by their superiority in shape or numbers. Then if it be true that the Ayrshire are best suited to our climate, our soil, our markets and our means, and the large number of Ayrshire in the province seems to have decided this question, why should we encourage, by prizes offered to the same extent, the importation of other breeds, not calculated

to meet, to equal advantage, the requirements of the country?

We shall not notice the amount of money which has been thus expended in prizes; they may have been a compensation to the losses which must have resulted, for the farmers, from the importation of undesirable stock; but what we consider more important is the sanction given by the board to private speculations, which could only result in disappointment for the agricultural community. As a consequence the farmers lost all confidence in the managing of our provincial shows, and the prizes awarded were looked at, no more as a guide to judge of the comparative superiority of the breeds exhibited, but as a trap laid to the ignorant, who would be thus led to believe, that all the breeds imported were equally commandable for the improvement of their stock. This gross error has been one of the great causes of the unsuccessful results of our provincial exhibitions. Farmers were disgusted with the improved breeds and looked upon them as fancy animals, useless to them, and for which alone the exhibitions were established. Would it not have been advisable to have determined first which breeds of cattle were best adapted to the requirements of the country, either for the production of meat, milk, work or wool, and then to have offered prizes for the importation of these breeds exclusively, so as to guide the farmer in the improvement of his stock?

This is what has been now done by the Board of Agriculture, and we shall soon see its success at our Provincial shows. They should be made for the benefit of all, but up to the present time they have only been for the benefit of a few, and certainly it was not the way to encourage the dissemination of agricultural improvement.

We desire to see prizes offered for Canadian breeds, of sufficient importance to ensure a large attendance from all parts of the province.

In the prizes offered at the forthcoming exhibition, the principle laid down is to give to each breed prizes commensurate with its importance. In making this a starting point we are sure to render justice to all. We pretend that if a breed is bad and widely spread, we ought to give for its improvement a sufficient amount in prize money to induce the proprietor to make a better choice of animals, give more and better care to his stock, and thus endeavour to improve such a breed, which in the present conditions, could only give a dead loss.

Up to the present time the principle adopted was that if a breed was inferior, it should not be allowed to compete at all; it was left to itself, and the consequence was that it degenerated daily. The nine tenths of our horned cattle being of this description, any commentary is useless.

The Board of Agriculture has also taken in consideration the importation of stock from the World's Fair. The President, the Hon. L. V. Sicotte, was authorized by the Board to endeavour to obtain from the Minister of Agriculture, an advance of money in favour of the county societies desirous of obtaining animals from abroad. We had supposed that the Gov-