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EDITORIAL.

The Man for Ontario Minister of Agriculture.

The advent of a new Government in the Province of Ontario imposes many and important duties upon the incoming Premier. First among these is the selection of a Cabinet composed of men who are to be heads of the different departments of the Administration, and who form what is designated the Executive Council. As at present constituted, there is, first of all, the Premier, who is also Treasurer, the Attorney-General, the Commissioner of Crown Lands, the Secretary of State, the Minister of Education, the Minister of Agriculture, and Registrar, and two "without portfolios." Except the last named, which are honorary figureheads, these ministers or members of the Government, have all functions to discharge, requiring men of character, knowledge, judgment and executive skill, and the "Farmer's Advocate" has no hesitation in saying that in many respects the most difficult position of all to fill will be that of Minister of Agriculture. Ontario is essentially an agricultural Province, the older portion of it without a peer on the continent, and in New Ontario we have a virgin agricultural empire to be settled and developed. Nor will it do to assume that the advanced condition of agriculture in old Ontario will enable us to rest on our oars. The reverse is true. The older a soil becomes, the more difficult it is to maintain productivity. Market competition grows steadily more keen. Many branches of farming must now be taken up as specialties, requiring greater knowledge and skill. The capabilities of the Province are remarkably varied, ranging all the way from the finest of fruits to the hardest of live stock. Pure-bred live-stock breeding and live-stock husbandry, including dairying, must continue in the forefront of Ontario industries. Associations for the promotion of live-stock interests, fruit culture, dairying, poultry-rearing, agriculture, agricultural exhibitions, and so on, must all be looked after, the policy of Farmers' Institutes is to be guided, agricultural education in the rural and high schools needs more attention, while the Agricultural College with its army of students, the new Macdonald Institute for domestic science and nature study—all these and other agencies indicate in a general way the wide range of knowledge and capability which anyone assuming to fill the position of Minister of Agriculture must possess. He should be a practical farmer and stockman of thorough general and scientific knowledge, and with a wide range of general information. It is not enough that he be surrounded with capable lieutenants. He must know himself the why and wherefore of what is being proposed or being done, and be competent to initiate and control, and if need be, to check the possibilities of subordinates running into vagaries. There never was a time when the agricultural and educational affairs of the Province needed more careful direction than to-day. The Department of Agriculture has been wisely guided in the past. Men of all classes and associations recognize that, in the main, the retiring Minister, Hon. Mr. Dryden, has been an ideal administrator, combining in a singularly high degree all the essential and yet imperative qualifications we have briefly outlined for the occupant of that position. We trust that the new Premier, Mr. Whitney, will be enabled to lay his hand upon a man among his following duly qualified for this all-important trust, and who will command the practical confidence of the farmers and stockmen of the Province. Mr.

Whitney is cognizant of the fact that no ill-advised step in Cabinet-building could be more serious than at this very point, and the commanding following which the Province has placed at his back will enable him to find, either among the present members-elect, or, if need be, elsewhere, one who ranks up to the reasonable standard which we have laid down.

Stock Judging.

One of the hopeful signs of an increasing interest in improved live stock on the part of the young farmers of this country at the present time is the very large attendance at the short judging courses at the agricultural colleges, leading exhibitions, and elsewhere. One of the reasons why more farmers do not take a pride in their stock, and study to improve its character, is that they have not confidence in their judgment of type and quality, and of the distinguishing characteristics of breeds, and hence are timid about making a start in buying breeding stock of the pure breeds lest they make a mistake and experience a financial loss or the humiliation of exposing their ignorance of the class of stock they take up. One who is a tolerably close observer, who gives his attention to any class of stock for which he has a special fancy or liking, and associates with men who from experience have become good judges, will unconsciously become a fair judge of that particular class of stock, while having but hazy ideas of the points of excellence in other classes. There are, for instance, many who are fairly good judges of horses, having a fancy for and giving their attention to that line of live stock, who cannot trust their own judgment of cattle, sheep or swine; while, again, some have given special attention to beef or dairy cattle, and have paid little attention to horses, and would not undertake to judge that class of stock at a fair, because of lack of expert knowledge of the approved types and their points of comparative excellence. The judging course affords an excellent opportunity for young men and older men to gain information regarding all the classes of stock from men who have had the advantage of experience in their breeding and handling, and with representative animals of the different classes placed in order of merit before them as object lessons, with explanations and reasons given, the teaching is not merely theoretical and abstract, considered and thought of apart from the object, but practical and concrete, the animal, with all its peculiar attributes and characteristics being directly in sight. But while all this is distinctly helpful in fixing in the mind the various points in animal conformation and quality, it will, in most cases, fail to constitute a man a safe judge, unless he have, to a considerable extent, a natural love for animals, and the education that comes from successful practical experience in breeding and caring for them. Some men with long and varied experience in these lines fail to become good judges or successful breeders, though, by being good salesmen, they make the business fairly profitable; while others, with the natural intuitions of a judge, and an eye for symmetry of proportions, together with close observation and limited experience, become good judges, but, owing to lack of the gifts of a salesman, make but a partial success of their business from a financial standpoint. These considerations, however, need not discourage anyone who has a liking for good stock from striving to qualify himself to successfully breed and handle them. Persistence in the study of breed characteristics, close observation in making comparisons, watching the work of experienced judges, and enquiring of such men when in doubt, will, in most cases, constitute a rea-

sonably safe judge, while care in the selection of sires is the secret of success in breeding for improvement.

One thing that needs to be emphasized in connection with judging courses is that measures should be taken to secure for the purpose first-rate animals of the various classes, in order that the class may learn to recognize the best type and get it firmly fixed in their mind. To this end, the Agricultural College farms should be furnished with first-class stock of the principal breeds, or if this be found impracticable, the loan of specimens of the best types should, if possible, be secured from leading breeders, the funds necessary for the purpose being provided by the Government.

Learn When Young.

"Farmer's Advocate" representatives have attended all the leading winter fairs and conventions of associations allied to the farming industry, and have noted the very general absence of young men at these educative gatherings. Men we have seen there far past middle age, and men who were already past the age when the mind most easily grasps and retains fresh ideas, but of young men and grown-up boys of an age when, more than at any other time, increased knowledge means increased earning power and increased worth to the country, there has been a sad lack. This condition of affairs would be even more unfortunate were it not for the fact that we have been able to give to all who are at all anxious to acquire advanced thought on questions of direct bearing upon farming which was promulgated at these conventions through our concise and carefully prepared reports, a digest of the best and latest ideas on agricultural theory and practice. We commend these reports, commencing with that of the fruit-growers' convention, which appeared in our November 24th issue, to the perusal of everyone whose home is in the country, or who in any way has to do with the growing of fruit, the caring of stock, the growing of crops, the feeding and milking of cows, the making of cheese and butter, or who in any way is associated with any of these industries. It matters not whether one is engaged in these branches from necessity or choice, the acquiring of knowledge that will give him greater ability to perform work, and that will thus add to the productive power of the great army of workers in agricultural pursuits, is not only a privilege, but a duty, of those concerned. The older men who attend conventions, and other means of acquiring knowledge relating to their profession, are frequently heard to say that if they had only known years ago what they are learning now, how much better off they would have been, mentally, socially, financially and otherwise, and is it not a fact that the best time to acquire advanced ideas that will enable us to make the greatest success of life's work is when these ideas are fresh and when teachers are first imparting them and investigating their truth? We might illustrate this point. Prof. McKay laid before the dairymen's convention, recently held in Stratford, a method of making butter whereby a given percentage of moisture could be incorporated, and those who heard him or who read of his method in our published report, have knowledge that will enable them, if they are buttermakers, to give an increased value to every pound of butter-fat they receive at their creameries. Here is an idea that will not be utilized by all buttermakers immediately, but will be fresh news to some years from now. Then, how much will they have lost in the meantime through not knowing how to incorporate moisture in butter, and thus sell it for