CORN JUDGING AND THE PRODUCTIVENESS OF CORN

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It must be confessed that there may be little relation between genetics and corn judging. However, the Secretary has stated that genetics is a broad subject and that a discussion of corn judging and productiveness in corn will come within the scope of this meeting.

Without attempting details, it is safe to say that the competitive exhibition of plants and animals in connection with agricultural organizations of one kind or another goes well back into agricultural history. It also seems reasonable to assume that the earlier exhibitions of corn were of much importance in extending information as to the superior varieties and in arousing interest in better agricultural practice. It should be noted at the outset, therefore, that the possible educational value of the corn show is not being considered here.

It is obvious that a good exhibit of corn by a farmer is evidence of the use of a good variety as well as of the use of good methods of production. Fine samples can not be selected from a mediocre corn crop. The possible value of the prize-winning exhibit itself for breeding stock, however, seems to have been an unimportant consideration in the earlier corn shows. Later on, the characteristics that made a sample of corn a prize winner came to be considered as evidence of the productiveness of the ears possessing them.

"Score-card" selection was advocated as a method of breeding corn for increased yield, and ridiculously fancy prices were paid for the winning exhibits from the more important shows for use as breeding stocks.

A better idea of the concepts underlying the placement of exhibits some twenty years ago may be had from the following abstract from a Manual of Corn Judging, by Shamel, published in 1903: "The object of corn judging is to compare samples of corn by a uniform standard in order to determine the best sample for seed, and by best seed corn is meant that which will yield the most corn of the highest quality either for feeding or for market, and is consequently the most profitable to grow. The method consists in comparing the samples of corn with the standard scale of points which is supposed to contain all of the qualifications of the best seed corn, viz:

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