

SHOWS AT THE ROYAL AGRICULTURAL
HALL.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Your interesting article on the Shire Horse Show and on the others that will shortly succeed it at the Royal Agricultural Hall affords abundant evidence of the serious interest felt in horsebreeding. I would add that no less than 3,300 thoroughbred horses are foaled annually and that the contingent of purely-bred cattle, let alone other kinds of pedigree stock, is as important as the horses. The systematic collection of new material for the advancement of the art of breeding must therefore be recognized as of unquestionable value. That which I have in view is of little immediate importance but will grow in value as the generations pass on. It will then be retrospective information such as is urgently needed, but is now unattainable. A "personal" knowledge of the two parents is no more than one half of the required knowledge; the addition of the four grandparents leaves one quarter still undetermined, that of the eight great-grandparents leaves one-eighth, and so on. (See Proc. R. Soc., 1898, and Report Brit. Assoc., 1898, p. 597.) The names of the ancestry of any pedigree animal, up to the above degrees and much further back, are easily traced in the stud books, but nothing exists to afford that presentment of each individual ancestor which is required for a thorough investigation of the art of breeding. Enough might be recorded and preserved that would be of high future value, which soon becomes forgotten and utterly lost. The waste of opportunities seems to me a deplorable and even wicked negligence. It would be so easy to make and record certain simple measurements and to preserve a side-view photograph. The measurements would be of direct value in themselves, and indirectly as giving a scale to the photograph. There is no room here for details. I have gone pretty thoroughly into the subject in the second of the above memoirs.

My present object is to urge numerous distinct authorities, and those whom they represent, to obtain means at the Royal Agricultural Hall for the convenient measurement and photography of prize pedigree stock of every kind that may be exhibited there. There is no really suitable and quiet place for this. I write feelingly, because the Royal Commission for Horsebreeding have at my instance sanctioned some attempts in that direction during their forthcoming show, and I feel that with the best good will of all parties those attempts will perforce be carried on under considerable difficulties. I maintain that the Royal Agricultural Hall ought to be provided with a suitable hippometric laboratory with attached photographic studio, and that the societies who hold shows in the hall ought to avail themselves of it.

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