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EDITORIAL

THE COSTLY THREE-YEAR-OLD STEER.

A most important phase of economical beef production is emphasized in a contribution to "The Farmer's Advocate" from Thos. B. Scott & Son, Middlesex Co., Ont., who outline their method of rearing calves, to be turned off as finished heaves around ten months of age, at weights of 850 to 900 pounds. Only well-bred calves of Shorthorn blood are raised, liberal use being made of skim milk, on which the calves are pushed rapidly forward, without losing their calf flesh. This system results in the production of plump baby heaves, which outclass all other material for building up a butchers' trade. That there is profit in raising them, no one who has tried it properly will doubt, providing, always, that the calf is out of a cow capable of squaring her own maintenance account at the pail, so that the youngster is not handicapped at the start by a heavy bill charged up against him for his mother's board. It is in the production of these milk-fed heaves that the dual-purpose cow makes her best showing in profit. For their production, perfection of beef type is not of so much importance as in the case of animals intended for marketing at a maturer age. In fact, butchers will often take well-fed Holsteins at this age at the same price offered for Shorthorns, although, as a general thing, the latter breed will give best satisfaction for the purpose. Jersey and Guernsey steers should be avoided.

The writer has raised many veal-heaves, of various strains of breeding, and has found that, with a fair start on whole milk, tapered to skim milk at two or three weeks old, the calf being then fed about a gallon or more (warmed), three times a day, until four or five months old, and then a smaller quantity until ready for the block, weights of 800 to 900 pounds could be easily attained by eleven or twelve months with the use of a very little bran and oil-cake meal, combined with good clover hay, ensilage, roots and miscellaneous roughage. The calves were invariably kept in a comfortable basement stable for the first six months, at least, and usually the whole twelve-month, being tied or stanchioned only at feeding time. The stable was always kept clean and reasonably dry. This is important. Fall calves are preferable to those dropped in spring, and the favorite time for marketing is May or June, when beef almost invariably commands the best price of the year. Sometimes the calves have been sold at considerably less and sometimes considerably over a year, according as might be necessary to strike the best market, for they were fit to kill at any age.

Of course, many may try this plan and fail through lack of pains and kindly interest in their charges. The greatest secret lies not in the feed, but in the feeding and general care, although the feed is certainly important, especially the skim-milk part. By allowing a proportion of whole milk sucked from the cow, and by using skim milk more liberally than the writer of this article has been accustomed to do, Messrs. Scott have secured exceptionally rapid gains. The prevalent practice described by them, of rearing pot-bellied, bloated, scouring, stunted spring calves on a grass lot, with separator milk or whey to drink almost from the first, with flies to pester, and not always shade to protect, is an ideal way to dissipate all hope of ever making them good doers and a source of profit to the community. Some feeder, buying them at two and a half or three years for three and a half or four cents a pound, may scrape a small profit out of his speculation

through the increased value per pound given to the original carcasses, but his profit will not compensate for the loss incurred by the farmer who raised the feeders. If cost were closely calculated, it would be found that the ultimate returns of such a beast ordinarily amount to a sorry price for the total feed, pasturage and care bestowed upon him from birth. The only hope of coming out even is dirt-cheap pasture, and there is very little such that could not be turned to far better account. The three-year-old feeder or stocker has no place in a well-ordered system of agriculture. Eighteen or twenty months should be the limit of age for marketing cattle for the domestic trade, while ample weights for exporters should be attained at twenty-four to thirty. It is a matter of more intelligent business perception, more liberal feeding, and better herdsmen.

CO-OPERATION IN THE MEAT INDUSTRY.

In their search for a remedy to combat the undesirable effect on the meat industry of having the trade confined exclusively to one or two firms, Alberta farmers are giving some consideration to a scheme which proposes the establishment of co-operative packing plants owned and controlled by farmers, and supervised by the Government. Also, we believe, some scheme for marketing live stock.

One particular plan that has been quite extensively advocated aims at the adoption of a system modelled somewhat on Danish co-operative lines—a system that could involve both Governmental and individual contribution to the original investment, subsequently to be managed by the individual stockholder and supervised by the Government experts when required.

Alberta has already a number of organizations modelled on Danish lines. She has Government creameries, and Government stations for fattening, killing and marketing poultry. The creameries have placed dairying as an industry in a position better than that in which it exists in any other Western Province. The fattening stations have given an impetus to the poultry business that promises to develop it into one of the most profitable agricultural industries of the Province. Why then, since Government assistance in supervision and management has done so much for these smaller industries, has been so uniformly successful, has operated so markedly to the advantage of the producer, and has demonstrated so clearly that the principle is neither a theory nor a myth; why, in one of our larger industries, should not a system based on similar lines be proportionately successful? And, further, if, in the fattening and marketing of poultry, and in the making and selling of butter, a Government can manage affairs to the profit of its farmer customers, especially since there is no incentive for the customers using the facilities provided, other than the profit that may accrue to them from so doing; why would not a manufacturing and marketing organization in the meat trade, in which farmers were interested as stock-holders, thus being more vitally concerned in its welfare than they would be if merely patrons; why should not such an institution be even more largely successful and advantageous?

This is a favorite argument of those who are advocating Government and co-operative management of the meat business of Alberta. It is an argument, too, which, on the face of things, seems sound. Alberta has built up agricultural trade and manufacturing business on Danish models, which are a credit to the Government that instituted them and a blessing to the in-

terests which they serve. Denmark has demonstrated what co-operation can do in agriculture, and Alberta has shown what Government management can do in the manufacturing and marketing of certain farm products; but from the results of neither is there reason for assuming that a combination of the two would be successful. In fact, we rather suspect it would not. Farmers in Alberta can co-operate for the purpose of managing the marketing of their live stock and meat products, and, given a fair chance, there is some prospect that, at the present time, their venture would be successful. Co-operation among those engaged in any industry can be successfully carried on only when there is economic necessity for concurrent effort. Co-operation among farmers in Denmark, co-operative societies in England, and the trusts, combines and corporations in America, was induced, primarily, by economic causes. Co-operation among the farmers of this country will come when conditions in the agricultural industry, or any department of it, are such that there is a necessity for farmers, as producers or consumers, banding together for the sale of their products or the purchase of their supplies. The indications are that present conditions in the live-stock business are going to induce such a movement in Alberta. Those conversant with the manner in which live-stock and meat products are marketed, have reason to suspect that too small a return is made to the producer and too large a proportion of the total returns of the industry passes to the middleman, the manufacturer, or somebody else, who added little or nothing to the value of the article he extorted toll from. Co-operation, then, in these circumstances, in the live-stock industry, stands a chance of attaining to more success than co-operative movements among Canadian farmers have attained in the past.

But there is a difference between the co-operative management of an industry by those engaged in it, and the joint administration of that industry by the Government and the producer. It would be difficult to keep politics and patronage from any undertaking in which a Government was concerned; and it is to be feared that politics and patronage would not be long getting in their destructive work in such a movement as this. We have seen farmers' organizations ruined before by these same things; and so long as human nature is constituted as it is, we have no reason to believe we will not see it again, especially if the conditions likely to induce disaster are incorporated at the start.

A co-operative organization requires more than the enthusiasm of its members to carry it to success. It must bind in some manner those who enter into it to support its undertakings, and under penalty compel them to be loyal to the organization. It involves some self-sacrifice and self-denial on the part of the individuals or communities entering the movement. They must bind themselves to support and patronize their organization through good report and ill. The members must not be seduced by tempting prices offered temporarily in competition by capitalists interested in breaking up the enterprise, as happened in the case of the Ontario co-operative packing factories. The spirit of individual independence must, to some extent, be sacrificed for the advancement of the communal interest. The community must agree to abide loyally by the decisions of the majority. Even when all these essential principles are observed, there is much chance that the movement may come to naught, especially in this country, where the incentive for union is less strong than in the older lands.