Stock.

A Chatty Letter from the States.

[From our Chicago Correspondent.]

Some 18 months old 408-lb. hogs and some 9 months old 260-lb. hogs sold at the same price per hundred. There is a growing demand for light and medium weights, though the hogs out of which French fat-backs are made will probably always be wanted more or less.

During February cattle and sheep have sold the same, and hogs have sold $1.40 higher than one year ago. The year's supply of hogs at Chicago at the present rate of decrease will be 2,000,000 less than last year. Some of the deficiency is liable to be made up late in the year, especially if we have a good corn crop.

For the first time in the history of the range cattle business, Chicago received several trains of purely grass-fed cattle from Southern Texas during the coldest part of February. It seems that Texas has fared remarkably well this winter, while Montana and the Northwest generally has suffered almost unprecedented losses. The latest advices from Montana indicate a 50 percent loss in many parts of that State.

We have heard a good deal about the ranges of the West being seriously over-stocked. It is grimly intimated that some of the Montana ranges, after this winter's "freeze-out," will not be too heavily stocked. It is well that Southern rangemen are favored this year, as they were terribly punished last.

Mr. A. M. Pool, of Marcus Pool & Sons, London, was here a few weeks since, and gave not a very encouraging report of the outlook for cattle raisers. He says the British markets are heavily stocked with home-bred beef, and fairly flooded with Colonial mutton. Great Britain never before had so many cattle and never before had such large quantities of cheap feed. He also says that Canada will have a large surplus of cattle this year, and sees no reason for expecting better prices to producers in the next 12 months.

Unless we have a repetition of last year's strikes, which is not very likely, the outlook for better prices for cattle on this side of the Atlantic at least is fairly good.

Meal-fed cattle from Nebraska are coming to market regularly now. The Union and Standard Cattle Companies of Wyoming are preparing all of their range cattle for market in that way. Lately a good many meal-fed Wyoming-Texas steers averaging 950 @ 1000 lbs. have been marketed by the Standard Co'y at $4.12½ @ $4.25.

Sheep have been selling well at $3.50 @ $5, with lambs at $4.50 @ $6, and feeders of good mutton sheep have made very nice profits the past season.

Cattle have not sold very well thus far this year, at least not as well as had been hoped, simply for the reason that the supplies have been larger than during the corresponding time in 1886, and there has been not enough old world outlet to warrant any advance in prices. A few very fine 1,500 @ 1,900-lb. beeves have sold lately as high as $5.50, but the great bulk of the beef bullocks sold at $4 @ $4.50. Unusually large numbers of "native" cows, heifers and bulls have been marketed at $1.50 @ $4.25, mainly at $2.50 @ $3.25.

The loss of young hogs by cholera during the past two years has been very great; the stocks of hogs last summer and fall were allowed to run low owing to the discouragingly bad state of the markets, coupled with the heavy mortality from disease. The results are now being seen in the remarkable advance in prices, which are about $2 per cwt. higher than they were last fall. Farmers who were then discouraged have since taken heart, and are now saving and caring for all of the pigs as they should have done a year ago. Isn't it strange that when prices for anything are low people are careless and wasteful.

Moist Food for Stock.

A correspondent writes to us as follows:—

"I use a horse-power cutting box to cut up all fodder for my stock. I first run a quantity of corn stalks through; next I run out a quantity of straw—oat, barley or wheat—then a quantity of hay; sometimes I omit the hay. Then I throw on a sprinkle of salt; my cattle eat this stuff, thus mixed up, with a good appetite. A farmer told me the other day that it was a good plan to sprinkle some water over the mass before mixing the layers together. He says the feed ferments some, and is softened for the stock. I should like to hear through the ADVOCATE the experience of others on this point."

This is an important question, especially at this season of the year, when succulent foods are beginning to get scarce, and are most beneficial to the stock. Succulent food being the natural diet for stock, the nearer this condition is approached the better. Take two rations, both having the same nutritive value and the same nutritive ratio, the one, however, being succulent and the other dry, and it will be found that the succulent ration produces the best feeding results. Let any farmer try the following experiment:—Take two bunches of grass of equal weight; feed one fresh from the scythe, and allow the other to dry in the sun. The latter will lose little or no nutriment, the shrinkage being due to the escape of water, and yet it will be found that the succulent bunch will produce more milk or beef than the dry bunch. Now if the dry bunch be soaked in water, it will recover its succulence, but will not produce such good results in feeding as it would in its original succulent condition, although better than in its dry state.

The same principle applies to the grains, or other feeding stuffs. The soaking of foods is correct in science and in practice, and it is quite probable that the advantages claimed for cooking are attributable merely to the greater succulence of the food, although we know of no experiments being made in this direction. Cooking experiments can never be settled until this point is investigated. The only objection is the extra labor of soaking the foods, and to obtain the best results, the feeding stuffs should be soaked in hot water, and fed before the ration becomes cold. The correct principle is to allow the food to soak up all the moisture which it is capable of doing, leaving no waste water, and if the food is so dry that the water will get cold before the former is thoroughly saturated, it is advisable to soak first for several hours in warm or cold water, adding some hot water just before feeding, and bringing every part of the mess as near as possible to the same temperature. It would pay well to adopt this practice for cows before and after calving, and under all circumstances it would pay to soak the food in cold water before being fed, if there are no convenient appliances for heating the water. The food may soak over night, providing it does not sour; under no circumstances should sour foods be fed. There is a great expenditure of animal force in making the food succulent in the stomach before it can be assimilated, and it requires extra food to supply this force; hence the saving in soaking the rations. When no roots are fed, this practice is especially beneficial.

Fat and Fever.

The exhibition and fat stock show men are having a hard time, and we wonder if the intelligent agricultural writers of the day can make any impression on their minds. Some of them are beginning to acknowledge that they are yielding a little, but don't want to be hurt too much all at once. Following up the sweeping attacks of English authorities, American writers are beginning to hurl their darts, a specimen of which we take from Mr. F. D. Curtis in the N. Y. Tribune, as follows:

"Early maturity" has driven pork from thousands of tables, because the stomachs would not stand so much fat. Nor can people tolerate excessive fat in beef, for the sufficient reason that they don't like it, and it costs too much to buy two pounds of so-called beef, of which only one furnishes food. The number of persons who will eat fat is growing less every day. One third of the average ham is thrown away because no one except an old-timer will eat the fat, and probably one-fourth of the costly roasts and steaks are cut off and wasted, so far as food is concerned. The butcher is obliged to trim off a great deal and sell it for tallow, and of the remainder which reaches the table a considerable part goes back again to the kitchen and thence to the garbage-box. Why not furnish a class of meats more lean, which do not weigh so much nor cost so much? The end, profit, would be reached just as well and more meat would be demanded as more could be purchased and eaten.

A long-continued over-fatness will reduce the vigor of an animal, and if it ever has posterity they will be less strong than the offspring of the more muscular and more active. Such a race of any kind of animals are always sick or suffering from some form of injury. There is too much attempt to get big weight in a short time. My pigs often disappoint buyers because they are not fatter. One thing I am sure of—that with the average buyer they will not run down on their hands, which is always the case when stock are purchased from those breeders who "shove them" or cram them from birth. We must breed the body first, and then add the fat when the time comes to have it, and then only put on enough to fill out the animal and not make it unfit for food on account of excess of fat and fever. There is more science in this kind of feeding and breeding than in the cramming system, where fat makes beauty and symmetry. My standard of handsome relates to ultimate value.

In an address recently at the Edinburgh University, Professor Wallace referred to the advantages gained by keeping different kinds of stock, and said: Variety of live stock on a farm, quite as much as variety of cropping, is a source of wealth accumulation in the holding. With variety greater numbers can be kept, and the best use can be made of all food by giving the quality suitable to each description of animal. Further, different varieties of stock appropriate different proportions of ingredients from the soil, and in this way several varieties do not exhaust it of any one ingredient in particular. For example, the loss to the land sustained by selling milk from a large dairy is greater than that which would result from keeping a smaller number of cows, rearing their calves, and feeding them to maturity. It is taken for granted that the same quantity and quality of food is given in each case. There are great advantages in a farm being self-supporting, or, in other words, breeding its own stock, as in the latter example. There is then no risk of importing disease with purchased animals. A good farmer can always breed a better quality of beast than he can buy, as it is natural for farmers who sell a number, but not all, to keep the best for their own purposes; animals, from a variety of causes, thrive best, as a rule, on the ground on which they have been born and reared; and last (though I might further add to the list of advantages), the stock of a farm is not so much subjected to the effects of sudden market fluctuations, which, when the whole stock is changed every season, as in some grazing districts, may cause the loss of capital in place of the expected profit return.