

## Agricultural Intelligence.

### Farming Gossip in Great Britain.

[From our Special Correspondent in England.]

State of Agriculture in Great Britain—London Cattle Show—The Prize Animals—Prices of Meat—Cross-bred Cattle—Over-fattening, &c.

It was for a long time the universal habit, and is still to a large extent the habit, of many of those connected with commercial callings, trades and manufactures in this country, to look upon agriculture very much as if nearly out—if not, indeed, altogether out—of the pale of those arts and sciences which minister to the greatness of our country—to the wealth, the comfort, or the luxury of her people. Very much the fashion was it thus to treat farming as a thing of no account, and to characterize those practically engaged in its pursuits—if indeed they were deemed worthy of any notice at all—as men dead to every feeling of real progress, little influenced by what was called, and is still called, in the language of scientific cant, the enlightenment of the age; and as the “slowest of the slow,” to quote the one phrase in short which comprehends all the contempt a fast man of business, of trade or manufactures, can show towards agriculture. We are by no means exaggerating the matter as between men of business on the one hand and farmers on the other; we have, in truth, simply stated the fact as it for a long time existed. Evidence of it was to be met everywhere, from the pages of *Punch*, in the cartoons of its caricaturists, in the leading articles of our papers, in the stories of our magazines; the poor farmer was always made the butt of wit, and his very name used as the synonym of slowness. Nor was this much to be wondered at, after all, for while, on the one hand, every attention was paid by the Government to the demands, and every help given to the necessities, of trade, commerce and manufactures—while their interests were represented by a Special Board, the President of which had a seat in the Cabinet of Her Majesty—while “returns” and “reports” were regularly issued with all the prestige of official position—Agriculture, on the other hand, was doomed to languish in neglect, the very Cinderella of the nation. She had, and has still, no Board, no Minister; no returns have been issued, no statistics given, by which those interested in her progress could learn whether she was making that growth which was to be desired, or falling into that decay which was to be dreaded. Notwithstanding all this, there were those who knew that British agriculture was not standing still, but that she was making steady, if silent, progress; that her followers were not the slowest of the slow; but that contrariwise, they were taking note of the internal progress in other arts and sciences, striving how far they could draw towards themselves the aids which these could afford; in brief, that farmers were in reality bringing to the aid of agriculture those sciences which have now, at last, aided, and aided mightily, its practical progress, by new discoveries, new powers and new processes. Thus it is that time has gradually brought about a more just and generous appreciation of the position held by agriculture, and thus it is that the public mind generally of Great Britain is beginning to learn the great truth, that “agriculture is the mother of all the sciences, the nurse of all the arts;” that she claims, and is fully entitled to the claim of pre-eminence over manufactures, trade and commerce, from her superior usefulness, as well as from her earlier origin. For our part, we admit of no rival near her throne; we claim for her the highest position, and are quite ready to endorse the saying of one of the most brilliant expositors of her principles, who one day, while decanting upon the pleasures of farming, remarked to us, “Agriculture is a noble pursuit; the farmer.

Sir, is a creator.” Holding such opinions, then, your readers will perceive that in this, and in the succeeding papers which we hope to have the privilege to present to them in the pages of *THE CANADA FARMER*, the honour of the science or art will by no means suffer at our hands, nor will her dignity be lessened or compromised. We purpose, in these papers, to lay before your readers a fairly complete and exhaustive relation of all that happens throughout the year in connection with events and topics which are likely to be of practical interest, and which take place and arise in the various districts of Great Britain. While noticing all matters having relation to practice, we do not intend to overlook those which are connected with theory, bearing ever in mind the true connection which ought to subsist between them. Thus much by way of preface, for the length of which we pray your readers to pardon us—and this they will do, we feel assured, on looking at the title of our paper, which comprehends a pretty wide license in the way of talking. These papers are intended to be characterized by all the peculiarities of gossip; we shall thus be free to say what we have to say without being trammelled by the necessities of a strict classification of subjects. We shall “seize the humour as it flies;” we shall go from theme to theme, from a fact of one kind to that of quite an opposite character—“from grave to gay, from lively to severe;” but with all this, not forgetting what the object of our papers is—to communicate information—that it is not so much how we say a thing as that we must have something to say.

The great event of the month has been the Smithfield Club Cattle Show, held in the Agricultural Hall, Islington. This is one of the most important, if not the most important, of all our Stock Shows. No Society has done more to improve the breed of our cattle, sheep and pigs, than has the Smithfield Club, and its meetings, therefore, are always looked forward to with great interest by farmers, as there will be found displayed the very best of the animals of each class which the various districts of the kingdom can furnish. In consequence of the Cattle Plague or Rinderpest, the interests of the Club have been materially influenced, if we cannot say injured, so far as the exhibition of cattle is concerned, through the restrictions placed upon the movements of cattle from one district to another, and which prevented cattle forming, for some time, a feature of the Annual Show. For the first time since the breaking out of the Plague, cattle were this year exhibited, but under the restriction or stipulation, that all were to be slaughtered within ten days of the closing of the Show. From this it may be supposed that a considerable influence of a deterrent kind was at work to prevent the Show from being so very well attended by breeders as might otherwise have been the case. Notwithstanding this restriction, and further, notwithstanding the comparatively short notice which breeders had that an exhibition of cattle would be permitted at all—for at one time this was very doubtful—the number of stock exhibited far exceeded the number shown in 1861, which was the last year at which the Show was held at Baker Street Bazaar, the crush and crowd in the confined galleries of which some of your readers may perhaps have had experience. Thus in 1861, taking all classes, the number of classes exhibited was 169, against 213 in this year. One very remarkable feature, and worthy of special notice here, as illustrative of the change of views of breeders with reference to purity of breed as against cross breeds for fattening purposes, which has taken place within the last few years, is shown in the returns for 1861 and those for 1867. Thus in 1861, while the cross breeds only numbered 8, in 1867 they had doubled; while, on the other hand, there has been a remarkable coincidence in the number exhibited in the two years in the pure breeds, with the exception of the

Herefords, which have more than doubled. We need scarcely wonder, however, at the increasing estimation in which cross breeds for fattening purposes are held, when we consider the rapid manner in which they increase in weight, and the high price which they now bring. The breed preferred for crossing is the Shorthorn generally, which for this purpose is used everywhere. Pure-bred cattle in some districts have gone almost quite out, notably in Scotland, where the cattle are nearly all cross-breeds. One thing seems pretty well established from the experience of the more recent cattle markets, that more money is to be got out of a herd of cross-breeds than out of one of pure-breeds. Upon this point we shall have something more to say at a future period.

To return to the display of stock at the Smithfield Show, we have already noted that in spite of the restrictions upon the cattle department, the display was wonderfully good, both in number of animals and in quality. At the same time we are not inclined to characterize this year's display in the high terms employed by some critics,—rather, indeed, are we inclined to think that, as a whole, the points of the animals do not even in the best of the exhibits come up to, certainly they do not go beyond, the standard offered by the exhibits of former years; while in many cases they fall far below it. It is much more easy to indulge in the language of indiscriminate than in that of discriminate praise. Thus, in respect of the Polled Ox (in the class of Scotch Polled Steers or Oxen of any age) exhibited by the celebrated breeder, Mr. W. McCombie, of Tillyfour, Aberdeenshire, Scotland, all sorts of high-flown expressions have been used—of which that of “wonderful” is probably the least highly spiced. Yet, to our mind this undoubtedly fine Ox, and which in many respects deserved the first prize which it obtained, was certainly more “wonderful” in respect of its huge bulk and proportions, than of its handsome symmetry—indeed, this is scarcely the term to use respecting it, for from the thickness with which the flesh was got up to, and the irregularity with which it was laid on, symmetry was not at all apparent. Such, however, was the animal, as a whole, and such the reports which had been made of it, that Her Majesty conceived a desire to inspect it personally, for which purpose this Behemoth of the bovine breed was sent down by Express to Windsor—an offer of him at the same time accompanying him from the owner. This present, however, and as we think with good taste, Her Majesty did not accept, but ordered a “Royal baron of beef” from him to be forwarded by the butcher who might kill him. He has been secured for this purpose by Messrs. Lidstone and Scarlett for the sum of £120 sterling—\$600—a rather “tall” price, as a Yankee would designate it.

Having named Her Majesty in connection with one feature of this Show, we are naturally reminded that Her Majesty was herself an exhibitor in the class of Devon steers, not exceeding two years and six months old; in which she took one first prize. This was a fine animal, not of great size, but beautifully formed, with fine quality of flesh. In the class of Hereford steers, not exceeding three years and six months, her Majesty was also an exhibitor, and the winner of the second prize; Mr. Beach, of Dudley, taking the first prize for an animal by no means remarkable for fineness, although possessing at least one very good point. Although the Hereford breed is more distinguished for producing good fatteners rather than milkers, still some of the latter are very fine. At the Show, Mr. Bettridge, of East Hannay, took the first prize in the class of cows above four years old, with an animal which, for some points, excels any other which has been previously exhibited—the line from back or chine to rump, with the depth of the frame, being something specially worthy of notice. In the Shorthorn Steers not exceeding two years and six months, the Duke of Sutherland took the first prize with an animal having