



Damesfield Patricia, champion beast at the Norwich, England, Fat Stock Show, 1903.

Our English Letter

Disastrous Season for Farmers—Trend of the Markets— Prices for Christmas Fare.

London, Eng., 26 Nov., 1903.

Farmers in this country have had the most disastrous season for many years. In previous despatches I have endeavored to show the great amount of harm done by the heavy and incessant rains throughout the "alleged" summer. All the corn is not yet carried and on late and low-lying farms the crop will be of no use beyond getting rid of it as manure. The present month has fortunately been a fairly dry one and during the last fortnight the land has improved so much in condition as to allow preparations to be pushed forward for planting of wheat, and already a good area has been got in. Farm crops have all suffered from the inclement season, with the exception of hay, which was a very large yield, and got in good condition. The old saying that "a good stack of hay never stood in a bad place" seems likely to prove again a true one, for with anything like a seasonable winter many farmers will need all the food they have to keep their stock moving along in the right direction. The fat stock show season has opened very satisfactorily. The ball was opened at Norwich last week when there was an excellent collection of both cattle and sheep, the quality of the exhibits being substantially above the average. The Norwich Show is always looked forward to eagerly by breeders and feeders, as here they are able to get some idea as to how the future shows are likely to pan out. On my journey through the eastern counties I could not help noticing what a tremendous lot of water there was about, acres and acres being completely waterlogged. At the old Cambridgeshire city of Ely I incidentally fell in with one of the official lecturers in favor of our Chamberlain's protection proposals, and learnt that the movement is gradually making good headway in the country districts.

To return, however, to fat stock shows, we arrived in Norwich only to find the rain coming down and the streets a couple of inches deep with mud, while in London on the same day it was fine and cold for the Italian King and Queen to visit the Guildhall. The champion beast at Norwich was found in Damesfield Patricia, belonging to Mr. R. W. Hudson. This is a very beautiful Aberdeen-Angus—Dexter cross-bred heifer, which was not only first in her class at Birmingham last year but was declared to be the best

of the cross-breds shown. It is seldom a heifer is exhibited two years in succession as a fat animal, but this one excited so much admiration and seemed so faultless, both in symmetry and quality, that it was deemed a pity to send her to the shambles. Her success and high merit will draw attention to the valuable cross of the Aberdeen-Angus bull and the Dexter cow. Indeed it would not be at all surprising if it became all the fashion as blue-greys have been. A point in favor is that all the progeny will have small bones and their carcasses will yield what consumers patronise most—diminutive joints with a less proportion of fat to lean meat than bigger beasts yield. Perhaps the Dexter will become extremely popular for crossing purposes. The Shorthorn-Dexter in the hands of a few breeders has become quite a distinct type in Ireland, and perhaps the union of the Aberdeen-Angus and the Dexter will nick still more perfectly. H. M. the King was well up in the prize list, winning first and second for steers bred and fed in Norfolk and also a first and second for Southdown sheep. Red Polled Cattle were on their native heath at Norwich, and a capital display they made, but they do not seem to be adapted to yield early maturity beef from a showman's point of view. The sheep classes were well filled, but the exhibits call for no special consideration.

The Birmingham show opens within a few days now and this will be rapidly succeeded by the Smithfield Club Exhibition. At Birmingham there is always a capital collection of Herefords, and these, I hear, will be quite up to the average. Market prospects are not any too rosy just now, business in all trades is very slack and generally depressed. Many works are on short time and this naturally tends to restrict operations—food markets in which Canadians are especially interested. Meat of best quality is somewhat scarce just now owing to most of it being kept back for the Christmas markets, when it is hoped better values will be realized. There is sure to be a fair enquiry for top qualities but we are inclined to look on the market pessimistically. English poultry keepers have had a bad season, turkeys will be short in numbers, and buyers are looking to the large supplies from Canada to make up their deficiencies in the home-fed article.

The wet harvest was very trying to breeders here, and there was a large number of fatalities among the birds traceable to the inclement season.

FRUIT PRICES

Trade in our fruit market is exceedingly quiet. Apples are the fruit of the hour; the Nova Scotia fruit takes the palm for general excellence. Some of the Canadian fruit is excellent, but there is rather more spotted fruit than usual and it will be well if the Canadian growers attend to the details of spraying more fully. So far as we have been able to observe the Canadian fruit averages more spot this season than does the American, although the Canadian would be the best apple and certainly is when clean. It is a pity these spotted fruits are sent as it will do the ordinary Canadian no good. Nova Scotian Blenheims are a very fine fruit, as also are the Kings and Golden Russets. Many thousands of barrels are being landed in this country, yet there seems to be little fall in prices, showing what a tremendous demand exists for apples. Some Canadian pears (Keiffers) are on the market in cases and barrels, which soon find purchasers. Good business is now going forward.

A "bear" movement among bacon holders has driven down prices in all directions. Severe slumping has been going on in the department for Canadian bacon, and in the official list there has been a decline of 75 cents to 51 per cwt. The market for Canadian cheese at first had an inactive appearance, but latterly it has assumed a healthier tone, and especially are marked by more freedom, especially for "colored" cheese.

A Game of Bluff

In the Breeder's Gazette of Nov. 25th last, Mr. G. Howard Davidson, of New York State, issued a challenge to the effect that he would meet any Shropshire breeder anywhere with a flock of fifteen Shropshire ewes, the stakes to be anywhere from \$100 to \$1,000. Though the challenge was somewhat indefinite, it did not take our Canadian Shropshire breeders long to accept the challenge. On Nov. 28th, Mr. John Campbell, Woodville, Ont., issued the following, which was distributed freely over the show grounds at Chicago:

"This day, Nov. 28th, 1903, my attention having been for the first time directed to G. Howard Davidson's Challenge in 'The Breeders' Gazette' of Nov. 25, 1903, issue, I hereby accept said challenge to show fifteen Shropshire Ewe Lambs, all out of my own flock, believing I have twenty of the best to be seen in any flock on the continent."

"Earlier, before many of my best ram lambs were sold, I would gladly have accepted the challenge for them also, and I have little doubt there are other Canadian and American breeders who might safely accept the challenge were they so inclined."

Davidson did not accept this challenge and another was issued by some of the breeders present at the show offering to accept the challenge and have the matter decided then and there. The stakes were to be \$500 a side. The contributors to this fund were John Campbell, \$150; G. H. Harding, \$50; Henry Harding, \$50; John Jackson, \$50 and J. L. Duncan, \$100. But here again the challenger "flunked," and refused to play the game on his own terms. After a day or two's excitement over the matter Davidson finally made a most gracious backdown and apologized for his presumption in thinking he was the only one who could play the universe. It was a dangerous game to play, and unless one is prepared to stand by it he should not issue so sweeping a challenge.