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EDITORIAL.

Sheep and the Labor Question.

It is, we believe, safe to say that no other branch of farming requires so little labor as sheep-raising. And the experience of those who have continued to give sheep a place in their farming operations through times of prosperity and of depression, is that no class of stock and no department of their business has been more profitable on the average, taking the years as they have come, than has the little flock of sheep. And yet, in this country, than which there is no other in the world better suited by climatic conditions and the ability to produce the most desirable forage and feed, we find not one farm carrying a flock of sheep where thirty years ago there were ten. The situation seems absurd, and is not easily accounted for on any sensible or reasonable grounds.

For more than half the year sheep will find for themselves, if given the run of the shortest pasture on the farm, requiring practically no attention, and in winter, with the cheapest of housing, and with feed conveniently stored, a hundred sheep may be fed in twenty minutes twice or three times a day, and virtually need no other care, no tying and untying, no daily cleaning of stables and bedding, and little extra care of any kind, except for a few weeks in the lambing season. Their winter feed may consist mainly or almost entirely of clover and pea haulms, the growing of which enriches the soil for the production of large farm crops of all kinds; and they seek the highest and poorest parts of a field for their lairage, fertilizing the land by their droppings. The natural increase of the flock is seldom less than one hundred per cent. annually, and often over one hundred and fifty per cent., while the wool—a crop no other farm stock produces—affords a dividend sufficient to pay for their winter's keep, and sometimes for the whole year's maintenance, leaving the lamb crop for profit, while they consume many noxious weeds which other stock will not touch, and thus help to clean the farm and keep it clean.

There is no more wholesome or palatable flesh food than lamb and mutton, which is becoming more popular with the people, and the demand for which is rapidly growing, as evidenced by the high market prices prevailing at the present time. And this demand will continue and grow with the growth of our cities and towns, to say nothing of our export trade, which would take much more of our mutton if we had it to spare.

We do not plead for specialization in sheep-farming, and would not advise the farmer putting all his eggs in this basket, as experience has taught that sheep do better in small than in large flocks, and we would not counsel buying heavily of high-priced stock to begin with in the case of those who have not had experience with sheep, but we do believe that on thousands of farms, where none are now kept, a small flock could be established and maintained at little expense and with very satisfactory profit. With this addition to the ordinary stock of horses, cattle and hogs kept on the farm, more of the land might be seeded to grass and devoted to pasture and hay, requiring less cultivation and grain-crop growing, and consequently less labor and less expense in running the farm. On cheap, rough lands unsuited to cultivation, sheep may form the principal stock, and, judiciously managed, might be made a specialty, with every confidence of being profitable; but even in this case it would be the part of wisdom to go slowly to begin with, and let the business grow with the experience of the owner. We know of no country

in which diseases of sheep are less prevalent than in our own Dominion. Even in Old England, where sheep-raising is regarded as the sheet-anchor of successful farming, the wet, chilling climate is in great contrast to our bright, clear atmosphere, and ailments of the flock are there ten to one of ours, while, with their congested population and numerous towns, dogs—the other bugbear or excuse so often quoted by Canadians for not keeping sheep—are probably ten times as numerous and more destructive than here, yet English farmers do not think of quitting the raising of sheep, but, on the other hand, confess they could hardly hold their own without the flock. We commend to the consideration of our readers the claims of the gentle sheep as a panacea, in part at least, for the labor difficulty on the farm.

Excessive Number and Width of Roads.

Discussion on the subject of roadmaking generally brings to mind the excessive number of public highways in the Province of Ontario, and also the excessive width between ditches that usually obtains. There are townships where the road allowance calls for a side-road every half mile and a cross-road every five-eighths. This means at least twice as great a mileage as there is any need for, although, now that people have built along these ways, it would be awkward, and in many cases unjust, to close them.

There are those who believe that a chain is a greater width than is necessary for ordinary roads. One consideration which had influence, no doubt, in reserving the common four-rod allowance, was the trouble from snowdrifts, which used to accumulate in the lee of the old rail fences, and, in ordinary cases, would not reach across the track if the fence were a couple of rods to windward. However, the removal of some fences altogether, and substitution of wire for rails in other instances, has altered the situation in this regard. While the change has probably increased the trouble from drifting, because the snow piles up in the track, whereas it used to lie under the fence, still it has obviated whatever advantage there used to be in having such wide roads, and, under the present order of things, we could do with three or even two rods of road allowance quite easily. What with superfluous roads and excessive width of the rest, we have in this Province about three times as much land in highway as there is any existing call for. This, however, is not saying that the width should be reduced. Once reserved, perhaps it is just as well to retain the allowance against the possibility of requiring it in the future for such contingencies as trolley-line rights-of-way, telephone lines, electric-power transmission, footpaths, automobile tracks—if we ever have need for these—avenues of trees, etc. Certainly, no corporation or municipality could hope to buy back the land as cheaply as it would sell now.

But if the present allowance is adhered to, there is one change which might be made. The width of the driveway could be reduced. There is no gain and much expense in having twenty-five or thirty feet of mud surface, merely because the allowance permits it. Wide roads are difficult to grade and drain, expensive to keep smooth with drag or leveller, are unsightly, and the extra five or ten feet serves no good purpose. Less width, well kept, would make a better highway, at less expense. We might do well to follow the example of some city engineers. In the City of London, where this paper is published, the street allowance is exceptionally wide, but instead of paving all, they pave the residential streets about wide enough for three teams to pass, and the rest of the street is seeded to a beautiful and economical

boulevard. As a result, they have attractive and excellent, yet not expensive, streets. A similar policy might, with advantage, be pursued by township councils. Just what width should be adopted, we would not like to say positively; it would depend somewhat upon circumstances. The matter is one on which we invite opinion.

Having narrowed the driveway, another good step might be to lease, on certain conditions, to each farmer whose land adjoins, a portion of the roadside, reserving enough for walks and other immediate purposes. In this way the land would be put to good use and the townships relieved of the too-often neglected responsibility of keeping that area free from seeding weeds. The lease, of course, should be terminable at any time, according to stipulated conditions. Even if little or no rental were obtained, there would still be an advantage to the Township on the score of economy, and, as the taxpayers are the landholders, they would be benefiting through what they might make from the land, and the community would also be just so much the richer.

The Winter Fairs.

Now that the long list of fall fairs has been exhausted, and their dates have been cancelled by the realization of the events, the mind turns to retrospection, and the question of their usefulness and profitableness, or otherwise, arises. The solution lies largely in the methods of their management and the use made of them by individual patrons. While the fall fairs are looked upon by the masses largely as holiday occasions, or as a means of recreation and entertainment, it is reasonably certain that those which have been to the largest extent managed with a view to a judicious combination of pleasure and practical utility have proven most effective in helpful results, and it is gratifying to know that the tendency of the times is to encourage the adoption of educational features in our fairs, making them a means of disseminating useful information, as well as providing for social intercourse and wholesome diversion. The character of the weather conditions of the autumn season in Canada is favorable to these cheerful open-air events, and our people do well to encourage and patronize them.

The winter fair, however, partakes of a more serious character, and, being less diversified in its appointments, and more concentrated in its area and aims, is better suited to educational work, and may fittingly be designated a short-course school of animal husbandry. Here, by the decisions of competent judges, the best types of meat-producing live stock are indicated, and in the slaughter tests comparison may be made of the character of the living beast with its dressed carcass, to determine the most salable and suitable product for the market. Here, free from the distractions of the sideshow and faker-stand, the time may be utilized in securing helpful information, in listening to lectures and discussions on agricultural and live-stock topics by practical men of experience, and lessons learned which may lead to the adoption of improved methods in the breeding and feeding of farm stock.

The poultry shows held in connection with the winter fairs are, by long odds, the most interesting and useful of the year, as at this season the birds are seen in their best plumage. Poultry is looming large in these times in the income of the farmer's family, and the field will bear enlarging to an almost unlimited extent. It is probably not too much to say that the poultry exhibit at the Ontario Winter Fair at Guelph is the finest to be seen anywhere in America, and is alone well worth the expense of a trip of a hundred miles or more.

The milking trials and butter tests in the