

Our Scottish Letter.

THE BRITISH FARMER IS NOW DOING SOME THINKING.

1905 opens with fair prospects for the British farmer, but so far as actual revenue is concerned, he is likely to be worse off than he was after the disastrous season of 1903. He had big crops that year, which were badly saved. In 1904 he had smaller crops, which were well saved. Potatoes were a great source of revenue last year from the crop of 1903. This year they are not at all as likely to yield so well, as prices are very much lower, and the crop is heavier. In 1904 the bad effects of 1903 were not fully realized; this year the full weight of the bad season will be felt. Those who know better than most how matters stand with farmers, have serious misgivings, as to the results in the coming year.

The winter season of 1904-5 has been a singularly open one, and farm labor is unusually well advanced. The short and sharp experiences of severe weather were few, and did no damage; rather they did a great deal of good. The open weather has resulted in a great saving of turnips and fodder, the latter especially, and this is a great matter in a season when straw, to begin with, was scarce.

The men who fed cattle for the Christmas markets, got good returns this year. Numbers were short, and prices therefore ruled higher than usual; but there is reason to believe that the quality of the Deptford and Birkenhead cattle from overseas had also something to do with a reduction in the number of home-fed cattle put on the market. In December last, the number of cattle at Smithfield was not more than one-half what it used to be. This means that the Scots feeders in Aberdeenshire and Eastern Ross are disposing of their cattle during the year, and not holding them all for the glutted London Christmas market; a very sensible proceeding, in following which they are to be highly commended. The truth is the world is a much smaller place than it used to be, and the competition to be reckoned with comes not from home feeders, but from the ends of the earth. The splendid equipment of cattle ships renders the transportation of cattle from America to Great Britain less risky than the transportation from Ireland to Great Britain. I believe more deaths, direct and indirect, are caused by the short sea passage of six or eight hours, than by the long ocean passage of fully as many days. The British farmer has to contend with a factor undreamt of in Cobden's philosophy. The great free trader never contemplated a time when wheat could sell as low as 45s. per qr., or fat cattle be conveyed alive from North American ports to the Clyde, the Mersey, and the Thames. But so it has come to pass, and he who is a child to-day will see greater things than these.

Dairy farmers here have been debating this subject at some length. Chamberlain's proposals have at least made people think. Theories accepted as sound gospel are now put into the crucible, and if they do not stand the test they are cast aside. The dairy farmer is a little at a loss to comprehend the situation. He would like to have some modification of existing conditions, but he is by no means sure what modification would help him, or whether any be possible in which his last state would not be worse than his first. He desires a better price for his dairy produce, but Mr. Chamberlain says he is going to give a preference to the Colonial cheese-makers, who come closest as competitors. If they get the preference they will certainly enhance the quantity and the quality too. On the other hand, the dairy farmer says he wants to reduce the cost of producing his milk in order to meet his loss through increased competition in its sale. But Mr. Chamberlain says that may not be, as he proposes to put a small duty on foreign grain, and all experience shows that a duty of any kind has always a tendency to raise prices. If the dairy farmer is to be benefited he must have either or all of these things:

- (1) An enhanced price for his produce.
- (2) A reduced cost in production; or
- (3) New markets.

It does not appear that Mr. Chamberlain's proposals will give him either, and therefore he is rather disposed to hold his hand, and let matters work out more exhaustively. It will be time enough for him to commit himself to Mr. Chamberlain when he sees clearly that the Birmingham man can put him right. It ought to be observed that Mr. Chamberlain has never proposed to do so. He angles well for political support, and he puts the thing favorably for all parties he comes across; yet he has never made a really plausible bid for the tenant farmer's vote. We suspect he cannot. It is not in it.

Farmers have recently been debating another important theme—abortion in cattle. This entails enormous losses on the agricultural community. These losses are understood to be heavier than from any other single disease; or, indeed, from all other diseases combined. The difficulties in combating abortion have hitherto been regarded as insuperable, and although from time to time inquiries have been made little good

has resulted. There are two distinct kinds of abortion. The first is simple, and may be caused by accident; the second is mysterious, and up to this date inexplicable, and so far incurable. There are many supposed causes of the epizootic, but so far none has been accepted as infallible. The bull is said to be as much to blame as the cow, and the most exhaustive measures are taken to make sure that his organs of generation are thoroughly disinfected. The female organs are also disinfected by those who are determined to be rid of the scourge—while the syringe for the uterus is in constant use. It does seem to be possible to stay the ravages of this disease by the adoption of such measures as these, and those who have taken infinite pains have not been without their reward. The administering of bran mash in which a proportion of carbolic acid finds a place has also been recommended, but there is some difference of opinion as to the results. A curious feature in the disease is its tendency to exhaust itself in three years. This tendency is accepted as a fact by responsible members of the veterinary profession. It is a favorable refuge of the man who has an "abortion cure" to exploit. He sets to work, say, in the beginning of the third year of the cycle. He gets the farmer to adopt his nostrums, and matters progress smoothly, until at the close of the season it is seen that the epizootic has run its course. The medicine man says he is to get the credit, and perhaps he may be entitled to some share therein. But the close observer knows that the better day had probably dawned before the medicine man began business, and he demurs to putting the whole credit on this man's shoulders.

"SCOTLAND YET."



Cheviot Ram.

Cheviot Sheep.

The Cheviot is named from the range of hills on the Scotch and English border, its native district, where it has been bred from time immemorial. The original was a less compact and handsome sheep than the present-day type, improvement having, it is said, been effected many years ago by the use of Leicester and Lincoln blood. The points of a good Cheviot sheep are, in many respects, similar to those of other good breeds. The head, while not too heavy, should be bold and broad, well set off by a bright, dark eye, and erect ears of moderate length, covered with clean, hard, white hair. The nose is Roman in type, the skin around the mouth and nostrils black, and both sexes are hornless; in short, they are a hardy, upstanding white-faced, white-legged hornless, fine-woolled sheep, capable of standing severe winter weather and thriving on short, scarce pasture. The wool is moderately long, dense, straight, and free from kemp (or the short, coarse hairs that go by that name), and covers well all parts of the body, the belly, breast and the legs down to the hocks. The fleece weighs from five to seven pounds in the ewes, and the rams a half more. Matured ewes weigh about 160 pounds, and rams about 250. Importations have been made at various times to the United States, and small flocks are found in New York, Pennsylvania, Iowa, North Carolina, and in all these widely different and distant localities are doing well. We are not aware whether any flocks exist in Canada at present, though it is possible there may be some.

Campbell-Bannerman, and the Embargo.

Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, the present Liberal leader in Great Britain, has publicly intimated that he personally favors the repeal of the prohibition against the importation of Canadian cattle for feeding purposes. He has added that, until it was made clear to him by the representatives of a deputation, he had no idea of the strength of the case that could be made out, and has promised that he will work for the removal of the embargo. This pledge, on the eve of a general election, is regarded as an important gain by those who have worked so long for its removal.

Notes on the Short Courses at Guelph.

The short course in live-stock and seed-grain judging has been the order of the day at the Ontario Agricultural College, Guelph, for the past two weeks. The judging pavilion has been pretty well filled. Farmers and farmers' sons, college students and professors, institute workers and speakers, fraternize together and discuss the weighty problems that interest the agricultural world of Ontario. And such a good-natured crowd! Sometimes there are keen discussions, clear, incisive debates, and earnest questionings after knowledge, but with it all a thorough earnestness and perfect fairness that one is willing to acknowledge the possibility of two good judges agreeing to disagree.

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Every morning, the short-course men meet in the gymnasium for grain judging. A mighty man is Zavitz with the short-course fellows. The meeting lasts for an hour, and he holds them steadfastly for every minute of that time. You can't help being interested. He points out the differences between varieties; how to distinguish a good-feeding kind of oats from those not so good, and shows how to judge grain, as it should be judged, with system and intelligence. One thing has been strongly impressed on every one present. That is, the importance of selecting seed grain. Take the example given one morning to illustrate this point: A sample of barley was distributed. The students were asked to pick out the large plump seed, the small plump, the broken grain, and the shrunken. "Now, for the yield from these different samples," said Mr. Zavitz, "here it is":

Large plump seed.....	53.8 bush. per acre.
Small plump seed	50.4 bush. per acre.
Shrunken seed	46 bush. per acre.
Broken seed	43.2 bush. per acre.

And this is the story I would have you present to every farmer in the Province: Select, select with care every bit of seed sown on your farm. It is the little things like this that help mightily to build up the wealth of our Province.

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We have had the pleasure of a visit from John Gosling, of Kansas City. We might almost say John Gosling, of the United States, for everybody in the cattle business knows Gosling, and where he lives, and that he is one of the best judges of fat stock on the continent. He spoke one night in Massey Hall, and gave some reminiscences of the cattle trade in early years; how Swift and Armour and the other big Chicago firms had grown until they handled as many animals now in three days as they did in three weeks thirty years ago. A great change has come about in the class of animals demanded. In the early days an animal might weigh a ton. Now they want an early-maturing little fellow of about twelve hundred pounds. Mr. Gosling is a very pleasing speaker. He threw in a lot of personal anecdote with his talks, and his work here was very much appreciated.

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John Gosling was the judge of the steers in the dressed-carass competition. The animals were first judged alive, and then, after slaughtering, the carcasses were brought in as an illustration to the class. The following were the weights alive and dressed:

No. 1	1,495 alive; 912 dressed.
No. 2	1,500 alive; 978 dressed.
No. 3	1,470 alive; 932 dressed.
No. 4	1,715 alive; 1,172 dressed.

The numbers are given in the order of the awards, and the placing was the same alive as in carcass. Mr. Gosling explained to the class how the fourth-prize animal was overdone, how No. 1 excelled No. 2 in the even quality of the meat, and how No. 3, although possessing meat of exceedingly fine quality, lacked the balance of carcass—the even distribution of fat and lean and the dominance of high-priced cuts that the winners of first and second places possessed. It was a good object lesson, well given, and highly appreciated by the class.

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The sheep-judging classes aroused considerable interest, but not so much as the beef cattle. Beef cattle are on top, as far as general interest is concerned, but the sheepmen are coming strong, and must not be neglected. Some classes aroused keen discussion, and sometimes considerable difference of opinion. As usual, the fat class for the carcass competition was the most interesting. It took time to fight out the placing, but there were veterans on the field, men who knew sheep from the ground up, and, in the end, the awards were made, and made consistently.

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The judging of sheep alive and dressed was conducted on Wednesday, January 18th, by Professors Day and Cumming, assisted by Messrs. John Campbell, John Jackson, J. C. Snell, John Rawlings, and others. Shropshires, Cotswolds, Oxfords and Dorsets were used in the competition for live animals, and cross-bred lambs for the