FARMING

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Our Farm Products in England

Professor Robertson gave some interesting evidence before the Committee of Agriculture recently relative to the outside markets for farm products. He pointed out that the market for cheese in Great Britain was not so good as it might be, owing to cheese getting heated in curing and developing a flavor which the British people did not like. Butter was making headway, except that on the way from the steamer to the retail shops it seemed to lose its flavor. Other countries used some sort of preservatives besides salt, which were not harmful. Since 1895 Canadian butter had steadily advanced on Australian butter, and last year was, on the whole, above it in price. There had been a similar gain on Danish butter to the extent of about six to eight shillings a hundredweight. Canadian bacon is taking very well, but a large proportion of it was classed as second; that is, too fat, although of good quality otherwise. This sells for 1½ to 1¾c. per lb. less than first quality. The apple trade was in a bad way, and should be thoroughly discussed by the committee, which was agreed to. The exports of agricultural products have increased from $48,791,388 in 1896 to $55,533,592 in 1897, and $75,834,000 in 1898.

The Outlook for Wool

Last week we pointed out that in many of the great sheep raising countries wool has become a kind of by-product. The frozen mutton trade and the demand for large and well-fed lambs have caused the farmer in the countries referred to to engage in sheep-raising, with the object of supplying the lamb and mutton trade rather than for growing wool. This new condition of things has brought about a distinct change in the quality of the wool produced, and has caused an over supply of the coarser or cross-bred wools. This changed order of things is especially noticeable in Australia, the greatest wool-growing country in the world.

One direct result of these changed conditions has been, as we have just stated, an over-production of the coarser and lower grades of wool. But they have also brought about a scarcity in really fine wools. To such an extent is this the case that at the leading English and European wool markets since the beginning of the year there has been a regular boom on in Merino wool. At Antwerp the prices for Merino wools have ranged from 43c. per lb. in January to 51c. per lb. at the end of April. There was a decrease in the supply of wool in Australia in 1898 amounting to 70,000,000 lbs., as compared with that of the three previous years. As the proportion of cross-bred wool has largely increased, it is safe to assume that all this decrease in the quantity of Australian wools is composed of Merino wool. In South America there has been a large increase in cross-bred wools, due to the sheep raisers there raising sheep for mutton purposes.

This scarcity of merino wools and the high prices they bring in European markets may have some effect upon the price of other wools. In fact there are indications of this in the English markets, but the advance is only in proportion as the wools are nearest to the merino in quality. But the quality of coarser and cross-bred wools being produced is such as to prevent these higher prices from ever reaching them. The wools approaching the merino in quality may reap some benefit from the scarcity of the latter, but the bulk of the wool produced in this country will hardly be affected by it.

The fleece wool situation in so far as Canada is concerned is very well summarized in the following paragraph taken from the *Monetary Times* of recent date: "The past year has been in this department in every way unsatisfactory. Dealers have been working on a declining market and have made little money on the clip of 1898. It is estimated that there yet remains from 750,000 to a million pounds of 1898 combing wool in Canada, and about one-third or half this quantity is in Toronto warehouses. Of the remainder of the clip, about 200,000 pounds is held in Hamilton and the rest is in the hands of the woollen mill owners and country merchants. The clip of 1899 will soon be on the market, and as wool is a by-product, and its production uninfluenced by market rates, it is improbable that there will be any diminution in the quantity of wool marketed during the present spring and coming summer."

From all this we may fairly conclude that we are not likely to see any higher prices for Canadian wools the coming season than last year. In fact, it would not be at all surprising if prices were considerably lower. The bulk of the wool produced by the farmers of this country does not class as fine wool, and consequently has to go to a market that is over-supplied. But, as we have already stated, wool must be looked upon as a by-product, and the farmer must be prepared to take just what he can get for it.

This unsatisfactory condition of the wool market, however, should not deter anyone from raising sheep. The profit in sheep-raising in this country is in the lambs, and what returns there are from the wool should be looked upon as an extra.

Seed Growth and Selection

Prof. Robertson Advances Some New Ideas on the Subject

In his evidence before the House of Commons Committee on Agriculture last week Prof. Robertson made some new and important statements in regard to the fundamental principle of agriculture, more particularly in reference to the growth and selection of seeds. From a condensed press report in the *Daily Globe* we take the following in regard to his address: "Moisture was controlled by rolling and cultivation, and experiments had shown that the temperature three inches above the soil on rolled land was 3½ degrees higher than on unrolled land. He adduced a mass of evidence to prove that by carefully selecting the seed the best crops were secured, by raising from year to year the varieties that had been found to be most productive in each particular locality. That, while the characteristics of each variety were the same in all localities, productiveness varied according to locality and conditions, and, therefore, it would pay farmers to carefully collect the best seeds from their crops for this year and plant them in a seed plot for their next year's seed. If farmers grasped this principle of seed selection they would secure an increase, as shown by actual and extensive experiments, of 10 per cent. in their crops.