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EDITORIAL.

THE TURN OF THE LIVE-STOCK MARKETS.

Notwithstanding that familiar proverb, "The darkest hour is just before the dawn," a great many people are always mistaking it for midnight. This has been recently exemplified by the trend of the live-stock markets, particularly in the case of hogs. Last fall, when feed prices looked forbidding, there was a rush to cash in everything available in the way of domestic quadrupeds, despite the prevailing low prices for animals. While in some instances necessity compelled such a course, the movement was swollen, and meat markets correspondingly glutted by those who were actuated, not by necessity, but by something akin to a panic-fear. Wise words of warning were uttered at this stage by the agricultural press, and by expert agriculturists, such as Prof. G. E. Day, who, by reason of their position and experience, had the advantage of a wide and reflective outlook. Influenced to some extent by such adjurations, as well as by their own judicial estimate of the situation, a considerable proportion of farmers resisted to some extent the temptation to plunge with the crowd, and, by economical feeding and good management, undertook to carry a reasonable quantity of stock through the winter in anticipation of attractive spring values. The winter situation, however, subjected their judgment to a severe test. Hard times in the cities undoubtedly restricted consumption both at home and abroad. Close times on many farms maintained the pressure and consequent temptation to realize on both stock and feed. Animals were sent to the shambles at the earliest possible opportunity, often before they were decently fit to kill, and an abnormally slack demand was still further discouraged by over-heavy receipts of inferior stuff. Heifers and young sows, instead of being retained on the farms to insure future supplies, have been sacrificed on the block, thus contributing to the temporary depression of values. Litters of pigs have been either killed or left to eke their way along with scant supplies of grain, while their dams have been slaughtered. On top of all, Canadian hog-producers have had the cold satisfaction of witnessing the importation of American pork by Canadian packing companies to keep their plants going and furnish raw material presumably for this great Canadian bacon trade, which we had been educated to believe could only be supplied with the class of hog raised north of the international boundary. In fact, it would seem as though everything has conspired by a process of action and reaction, reinforced by certain adventitious circumstances, to keep down prices for animals and their products, thereby testing the patience of producers to the breaking point.

At last the tide seems to have turned, and those who held on have promise of liberal recompense for their foresight and perseverance. Scarcely had the echoes of certain recent recriminations died away, till the boom of advancing hog prices was heard, and the first few ripples were followed by waves of substantial volume. The panic developments have run their course. The approach of spring, with prospects for a plenitude of feed, the subsidence of abnormal supply, a probable resumption of normal demand, and the gradually apparent effects of the widespread slaughter of breeding stock, will all tend to bull the market, and unless some disastrous culmination of untoward influences occur, such as a backward spring and a continuance of close times in the cities, there is every reason to expect profitable and advancing prices for beef and pork. Indeed, it is

doubtful whether any combination of factors that is likely to occur can longer restrain values. Those who have litters of pigs or young cattle coming on will do well to give them every chance to make rapid gains, while those still fortunate enough to have sows will make no mistake in breeding them to farrow at the earliest possible date. It is the long-suffering stockman's turn to smile.

INSTRUCTION OR DISPLAY?

For one discriminating, stable mind, capable of holding steadfast to an original purpose, there are usually several prone to yield to the distracting influences of a popular clamor and the seductive prospect proverbially held out by distant fields. Happily, public opinion, while it may occasionally pitch and lurch a little, has generally sufficient ballast to "bring it to," and, with a few wise and steady men at the helm, usually proceeds on its way after a comparatively brief spasm of furore and loss of time. In the recent sporadic agitation for the removal of the Ontario Winter Fair from Guelph to Toronto Junction, the more active movers seem to have lost sight entirely of the true purpose of establishing this institution. Hon. John Dryden, ex-minister of Agriculture for Ontario, strikes the nail on the head when he says that the show was designed to be and is educational in its aim and scope, whereas the ideal of those agitating for its removal is rather spectacular. It was not intended as a mere plum for a number of exhibitors, but as a means of instruction to farmers and breeders, with sufficient inducement in the way of prizes to draw out a reasonable competition of stock. It is in no way contrary to the spirit of this intention to urge that in some cases, at least, the prizes might be increased and extended, but it must be borne in mind that the chief purpose is educational benefit.

The Chicago International is an impressive institution, but, while very grand and worthy in its way, it does not begin to compare with our own Canadian Winter Fairs in downright practical helpfulness to the individual visitor. We cannot compete with Chicago in scale. Why try? We can and do excel it in utility, and that is the true path to follow. One annual winter International Exposition is at present enough for this continent, but we cannot well have too many such exhibitions as those at Guelph, Ont., Amherst, N.S., and Brandon, Man. The path of winter-fair development has been wisely mapped out in Canada, and the unique and valuable institutions we have evolved are a matter of admiring praise to every foreign visitor. The educational ideal appeals to the sober sense of our people, and we have no intention of allowing ourselves to be swerved from it by a great hip-hip-hurrah and hullabaloo for a second-rate imitation of a less valuable American ideal. It is particularly gratifying to note that party politics are not being introduced to complicate the issue. The present Minister of Agriculture, Hon. Nelson Monteith, is, so far as we are aware, in full accord with the policy of his predecessor in this matter, and will not be persuaded to depart from it by a fatuous desire to do something different.

Of course, if Guelph expects too much aid from the Provincial treasury towards providing the necessary increase of facilities, a change of location might become necessary, but that is the only reason which could justify the removal of the Winter Fair from Guelph, where it is almost sure to remain educative, to Toronto Junction, where it would almost certainly degenerate chiefly into a spectacular and competitive display.

HOW EARTH ROADS ARE SPOILED.

Almost any country district at this season furnishes striking examples of how roads are spoiled. Gravity is the destructive force. Gravity is what we commonly call weight. It is what causes the team and wagon to bear down on the road, and when the surface is soft to cut into it. Gravity causes water to run down hill, and, in doing so, to erode or wash out little channels in the road, carrying away silt. Gravity gives the mud its tendency to subside from the high to the low places, thus gradually flattening out under the influence of traffic. Gravity, in short, tends constantly to destroy the crown. The rapidity of its action depends upon the attendant conditions of weather and traffic; also upon the drainage of the road and the height of its crown. When the road is hard, dry and smooth, its particles cohere strongly together, and the settling or subsidence is slight, the principal loss then being by dust blowing off the road. Water, under the influence of traffic, converts the hard clay into mud, which has little cohesive force, and yields readily to the levelling influences which gravity imposes on it. A muddy road soon flattens like a pancake; a hard, smooth, dry one retains its shape like a bun.

At certain seasons, particularly in spring when the frost is coming out, mud is bound to form on the surface of an earth road, and, if allowed to become too deeply cut up with hoof-prints, ruts and pitch-holes, it will impede drainage, holding water to soak into the soil, keeping the road soft, and making the mud gradually deeper, till, on some particularly waxy clays, it will tire a team to haul an empty wagon five miles at a walk. Now, what happens? Hoof-prints are punched fetlock deep; ruts are plowed out till wheels sink almost to the hubs; the very bowels of the roadbed are opened up, and a condition created that half a summer's traffic will not wholly redeem. A roadbed thus mired up is not so solid and durable as one that has been preserved intact, while the dried surface is horrible to travel on.

Moreover, as pointed out above, every passing vehicle tends imperceptibly but surely to press and crowd the mud outward, each rig and each horse doing a little at a time. This effect will be most pronounced when the road is sloppy, and when spattering of mud assists the constant subsidence. Go out and contemplate a much-travelled road in spring. With stakes and straight-edge, measure the height of the crown, then later measure it again. A few observations will explain why so many roads have seemed to call for repeated grading. The work of the machine is undone each year by the elements. One baneful result is the formation of a little ridge at the edge where the grass grows. Splattered mud and settled dust increase this ridge or shoulder and interfere with drainage. Lack of free drainage to the ditch means more mud, and subsequently a worse condition. Thus it goes from bad to worse—except in those cases where the existing condition is so bad that a worse one is impossible.

Where does this earth, removed from the crown, finally go? Some of it merely to the ditches; some of it to low spots in the road, about the ends of culverts and bridges; some of it to the rivers and lakes. Water carries it away. Then, what happens? The grader is brought on, a plow run in the ditches, and a furrow of good sticky blue or yellow subsoil clay (the worst of all road materials except pure sand) is drawn up on the road and deposited in the form of turfs, clods and dust, which traffic avoids