

The Farming World

For Farmers and Stockmen

VOL XVIII

JUNE 18th, 1901

No. 43

Good Cattle Scarce

THERE is a scarcity of really prime beef cattle in the country. Of this fact it is, perhaps, hardly necessary to remind the readers of The Farming World. For the past two or three months our market reports from week to week have shown a great scarcity of this quality not only on Toronto market but elsewhere. While this has been the case the supply of inferior and unfinished animals has, with one or two exceptions, been greatly in excess of the demand.

The lesson to be learned from this is that it does not pay the farmer to raise and feed inferior stock. A really prime, well-finished animal always finds a place at the top of the market at a good profitable price. This is the kind that should be bred and fed and for which there has always been and always will be a good active demand. It costs no more to raise and finish a good animal than a poor one, so that the extra price received is nearly all profit.

A feature of the situation worth noting is the great scarcity of feeders, a fact that must be conducive to present high prices remaining for sometime. This scarcity of feeders is not a local question merely. All through the Western States the same complaint is heard and large feeders are finding it difficult to get their usual complement of store cattle even at much higher prices than they have been accustomed to pay. Similar reports come from Great Britain. Some Scottish farmers are said to have paid this season as high as 40s. per cwt. live weight for store animals even when fat cattle have been selling there at 5s. per cwt. less. Unless high prices are maintained and increased in many instances somebody has got to lose. The careful and experienced feeder is, however, not likely to pay such high prices for his store stock, unless he sees a way of getting his money back, which may be taken as pretty good evidence that the outlook for beef cattle is a pretty bright one.

The High Commissioner for Canada in his report, referred to elsewhere, makes the following statement regarding the development of the dressed meat trade:

"Even if it were proved that to ship chilled beef were more profitable than to send live cattle, Can-

ada could not make the business pay until possessed of a far larger stock of animals of high quality—because chilled beef ought to be of high grade—and until provided with better shipping facilities."

It will thus be seen that this new trade which is likely to develop to fairly large proportions in this country, affords no better opportunity for disposing of inferior animals than old conditions did. The prime beef animal is the one wanted and our farmers must be prepared to supply this if our market for this product is to be extended. There are too many competitors in the field to admit of its being enlarged by any other means.

Our trade in beef cattle with Great Britain is growing, nevertheless, and more good quality sent over would cause it to advance very rapidly. For the four years ending with 1896 Canada sent to Great Britain 362,832 head of cattle, as compared with 433,888 animals for the four years ending with 1900. This is an increase of about twenty per cent. and indicates a more healthy growth of the export trade in cattle of late years.

Agents and Pedlars.

Some weeks ago one of our regular correspondents to the Farm Home department dealt with the subject of agents and pedlars, special stress being laid upon the annoyance and the wasting of the farmers' time caused by these individuals. This article aroused considerable interest in more than one of the country sections and the question was taken up by correspondents of some of the local papers. A correspondent of The Penetanguishene Herald, in dealing with the matter, in which he strongly commends the article in The Farming World, says:

"There are some agents, though a minority, who are honorable and who demand our respect, but not even for these can we sacrifice a principle. The agency business is on a rotten basis, and its evil effects are evident. Many a poor farmer who had not the moral courage to say "no," and stick to it, has been induced by smooth-tongued agents who lie and misrepresent their goods, to buy what he cannot afford to pay for, and very often inferior goods into the bargain. These are victims which should excite our commiseration even more than the tramps, for farmers are wealth pro-

ducers, while the agent belongs to a class who uses roads more than anyone else, but who does no roadwork and pays no taxes, and who is in the most proper sense of the word a human parasite. We are at present cognizant of several cases where machines have been thrust upon the hands of men who had no earthly use for them, and who in sober judgment would never buy them. Do we need to be told when we need machines? The merchant never comes to our homes and tells us that our tea and sugar are done and that it is time to order more. The only necessary office which an agent fills is that of providing a central place where farmers can produce their machinery. The system which we advocate is that such a central place be established and let "one" man represent "all" manufacturers, and let each farmer go when he likes and get whatever kind he likes, without being misled. Then nine-tenths of the agents could go home and hoe potatoes, and the other tenth would waste no time in canvassing but would simply supply the demand. Then manufacturers would have to depend for their success, not on the convincing powers of their agents, but on the inherent merits of the product."

"Such in brief is our notion, and any intelligent man can see its advantages if he is not blinded by prejudice."

From all this it would seem that the agency business is being very much overdone and is fast becoming a nuisance and a needless expense to the country. No doubt there are good and bad agents representing good and bad enterprises, but of late it would appear as if the bad ones so much outnumbered the good ones as to bring the whole business into disrepute. A respectable agent representing a legitimate business and selling a useful and necessary class of goods that farmers are in need of, should serve a good purpose in any community. But where agents and pedlars of all kinds of goods, for which there is little or no special need, endeavor to force their wares upon farmers, whether they want them or not, the business becomes an unmitigated nuisance. We quite sympathize with any farmer forced to put up with these troublesome fellows who stop at nothing so long as they can dispose of their wares. We have such characters in the city, and there is not a day passes but one or more pedlars, and gen-