

The
Farmer's Advocate
and Home Magazine.

"PERSEVERE AND SUCCEED."

ESTABLISHED 1866.

REGISTERED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE COPYRIGHT ACT OF 1875.

VOL. XXXVI.

LONDON, ONT., AND WINNIPEG, MAN., SEPTEMBER 2, 1901.

No. 533

An Open Letter.

To the Hon. Sydney Fisher,
Dominion Minister of Agriculture:

Sir,—No man having at heart the well-being of live-stock husbandry, upon which the permanent success of Canadian agriculture depends, can view without grave apprehension the continuance of what has been styled the Tuberculin-test Crusade. The magnitude of the interest involved, the injury already inflicted, and the menace which overshadows the future of cattle-breeding operations in consequence of the application of this so-called test under and by virtue of your authority, justify me in addressing you publicly through the periodical specially concerned for the interests jeopardized.

Permit me at the outset to pay a just tribute to the vigor which has marked your administration of the Portfolio of Agriculture, and to the beneficent results accruing from such measures as the removal of a vexatious ninety-day quarantine preventing the disposal to American feeders who desired them of our surplus feeding cattle and giving our stock-feeders freedom of access to an advantageous raw material required in their operations, and also to the strict attention given to the marketing of our agricultural products abroad. Dealing with an enlightened and progressive people, it has been found wise and statesmanlike to remove hindrances and facilitate advancement. In its application the tuberculin test has, unfortunately, had exactly the opposite effect. While with one hand you have removed burdens, you have on the other permitted progress to be arrested by hindering the importation and spread of the breeding animals imperatively required if our live-stock trade is ever to make the improvement and progress of which it obviously stands in need.

It would seem needless to adduce or reiterate testimony showing the unreliability and futility of tuberculin testing. The experiments of the Royal Agricultural Society of England, showing 17-64 per cent. of error, discredited the test as not sufficiently trustworthy to accomplish the purposes desired, and there it has certainly lost ground. The Dublin experiment showed a similar rate of error, condemning the innocent and letting off the guilty. I have before me particulars of the testing of a notable dairy herd on the ground of public weal through the knowledge to be gained. Some that failed to react were slaughtered and were found to have tubercles in their systems, while a number that did react were found to be perfectly sound. Animals passing the test in England have been condemned on reaching the Argentine or Canada. Is it not a fact that under test cattle have been condemned by your officers in quarantine, and on being officially tested again were pronounced free from tuberculosis? Is it not also true that late last year an importation for Canada all passed the official test in Britain, but, importuned by Canadian officials, the distinguished owner, thinking to do his country some service, allowed them to be re-tested. About one-third of them were condemned. In a few months, under re-test, did not all these animals pass without a reaction? A bunch of beautiful heifers, evidently in the pink of

health, purchased in England for Canada, were tested and condemned; in two months they were tested by another officer, and all passed. Twelve animals were tested for an importer by a British veterinarian, and nine reacted. In five weeks those rejected at first all passed, and those that passed the first test were condemned. Another breeder had a lot tested and several gave a reaction, but in six months' time all the condemned ones passed, and one that first passed, reacted at the second test. It would appear from experience gained this year that strong, fleshy animals are more liable to show a rise in temperature after an injection of tuberculin than leaner ones, of apparently less constitution, and for this there is presumably reasonable ground, as the tendency to react is in a measure dependent on cellular activity (promoted by nutrition and blood supply), and also by the amount of the dose. Consequently, this season some of the best and most robust animals selected in British herds for export to Canada were left behind.

Furthermore, there can be little doubt that the animal is liable to many changes in physical condition, causing variations in temperature which may easily be confounded with the condemning rise or feverish reaction occasioned by this subtle poison—tuberculin—in the system. Careful trials in several herds have shown that animals on regular feed and evidently in perfect health, but without any tuberculin injections, gave a rise in temperature, arising from some natural cause or change, sufficient to condemn under the test.

Surely, sir, you must be aware of these facts, which I cannot conceive have been concealed from you, and you must see that the test is utterly unworthy of confidence, and that its value as a preventive against the importation or weeding out of any diseased animals, or the propagation of sound stock, is actually nil.

Canada and the States enjoy a discreditable pre-eminence in this business. Britain, which has produced more and better pure-bred stock than any other countries put together, has, fortunately, not been led astray with this inoculation fad. The solid good sense of the Britisher has saved him from being overridden by a veterinary caucus. To the credit of the English veterinarian, he has shown no marked disposition to approve the test or make its use compulsory, nor have any of them attempted to hold the Government in leading-strings. And I am glad to say that not a few of the more thoughtful men of the profession in North America have not been carried away in the delusive and costly pursuit of an ignis fatuus which has landed breeders, people and governments in a quagmire, and accomplished no good whatever.

It has been frequently charged that the tuberculin test is responsible for many cases of abortion in pregnant animals, in consequence of the influence which the lymph has upon the tissues. I observe by an official report of the Canadian Quarantine Department, that breeders were warned, in studying the test, to see that only "reliable tuberculin" be used; and Prof. Nocard, of France, has issued a warning against the use of tuberculin as a diagnostic of tuberculosis in man, owing to the danger that it may start the mischief afresh in a portion of the lung that was healing. In view of these possible dangers, would it not have been a proper and prudent course to have set afoot scientific inquiry into these serious questions before embarking on an unknown

course, which, as we now know, has resulted in confusion, uncertainty, and loss?

Again, this policy is anti-Canadian. Leading American breeders desire access to the herds of Canadians, and prefer to trust their own experience and knowledge of good healthy animals, rather than trust the vagaries of inoculation with an unknown fluid. But they are prevented from doing so, and trade is destroyed. Within their own borders the test is not allowed to embarrass them. Hence the Canadian Veterinary Department is simply made a tool of. Since Canada was the first to impose the test, leading to its adoption by the United States, you, sir, should be the first to remove it.

The result of the investigations by Dr. Robert Koch, admittedly the highest living authority on the subject in the world to-day—the man who invented tuberculin, though he was not responsible for the test system—is that human and bovine tuberculosis are distinct diseases, and not intercommunicable, and that the precautions against infected cattle may at once and for all be abandoned. No one could reasonably believe that the people dying annually from consumption in Canada contracted it from our cattle, which are healthy. An animal wasting and dying of tuberculosis is the rarest of occurrences, and the same is true of British herds. But for the unfounded fear of disease to man, the tuberculin crusade had no real strength, and was not needed for the cattle themselves. But your Chief Veterinary Officer appears to be laboring under the hallucination that the breeders of this country, who have demonstrated their superior capacity and skill in every arena on the continent, are either dishonest or lacking in sufficient knowledge to conduct their own business. They cross the Atlantic, select, at a cost of thousands of dollars, the best bred, most robust constitutioned and good conditioned animals to be found for the improvement of our stock, but our Official Tuberculin Censor puts about one third of them on the black list, raises doubts as to their soundness, and casts a stain on the reputation of the herds. Need we wonder if the British stockman receives coldly your application to raise the embargo against the admission of Canadian feeding cattle?

In conclusion, wherein has it been shown that either humanity or the animals themselves have benefited by the system instituted by and to which your Chief Veterinary Officer has clung with such deathlike but misguided tenacity? Had it been some lawyer or physician whom the exigencies of politics had made Minister of Agriculture, I would have been less surprised at the course of events, but from an enlightened farmer, and a stockman to boot, as I am assured you are, better things were expected. I have never heard or read of a breeder who does not welcome any reasonable proposition whereby the health and condition of stock may be improved, but I am amazed at their long forbearance with the test system and the injury it is doing them, and also under the broken promise of assured relief in February last. Other considerations aside, the political instincts of a statesman would naturally suggest the propriety of not arraying the breeders and the leading farmers of the country in a strong spirit of antagonism, but rather to take these men into your confidence, as they are the persons who are directly concerned and whose operations I venture to hope may still be accorded that measure of security to which they are entitled at your hands.

STOCKMAN.