

The Combination Stock Sales.

To the Editor FARMER'S ADVOCATE:

SIR,—I have read with considerable interest the discussion, pro and con, in the ADVOCATE, on the question of the proposed combination sales, and while I think some very good arguments have been brought out on both sides of the subject, I do not think it has been fully exhausted, and with your permission I will take a hand in it, and will endeavor to be brief, lest I exhaust your readers. In the outset I wish to say that I trust you will not caricature me in the heading of my letter as you did Mr. Linton, of York County, in his, for however appropriate the caption may have been to the tenor of the letter, I can hardly think he would choose to be represented in a cartoon as going out with his little tin pail to "milk the Government cow," though I do not know who has a better right to milk that same cow, and what's the matter anyway with his proposition "to get all the money out of the Government you can and ask for more?" Don't they all do it? And what's the money there for but to be spent? And why shouldn't the leaders in this great national movement for the uplifting of the great live-stock industry of this country have a share of the public money to pay their travelling expenses and hotel bills while on their philanthropic mission in the interest of the small breeders? I think those who know the mover of the famous resolution at the Shorthorn breeders' annual meeting, declaring for stock sales under "Government supervision," and who heard his appeal for aid to the small breeders, had little difficulty in believing that they were not crocodile tears that shone in his eyes as he pleaded, but were convinced that he has lost much sleep and some hair from worrying over the disabilities of the small breeders, and they will have little sympathy with the one very small breeder in a back seat who "winked the other eye" and whispered the suggestion that he was "playing to the gallery."

It seems to me that with such influential breeders at the head of this movement as Mr. John I. Hobson, president of live stock associations too numerous to mention; Mr. Arthur Johnston, who has repeatedly shown his ability to move most any resolution that is placed in his hands; Mr. Wm. Linton, son of his father; Lieut.-Col. McCrae, and Col. John A. McGillivray, Q.C., ex-M.P., under the command of the Dominion Live Stock Commissioner as field marshal, there should be little difficulty in believing that, in the words of Mr. Linton, "success from the very commencement is assured," as these are known to be men who have demonstrated their willingness to spend and be spent for their country's good, and cannot be said to be affected with an itch for office, or even to care to hear the sound of their own voices in public, as some of them have modestly declared.

Fears have been expressed that the first sales of the proposed series may not be very successful, but that they will improve as the people gain confidence in them. Now, I do not look at it that way. It is not the first sale I am concerned for, but the last one. I am informed that precautions were taken before the proposition was made public to get a number of breeders pledged to send at least one good animal to the first sale to give it a respectable appearance, and as people generally keep their pledges, it is reasonable to expect the stock will be forthcoming unless the breeders "boggle" at the model set of rules which has been prepared and submitted to them, as a condition of the Government grant being given, one of which stipulates that every animal entered "must be sold to the highest bidder." I do not know whether they had contemplated such a serious condition as that—it is so unusual a feature in auction sales. Another serious rule is that "there shall be no by-bidding, either by the owner or anyone on his behalf." I wonder if the present generation of breeders know what that means. I had thought it was out of date, and that the compound word, by-bidding, was obsolete. I understand some thirty years ago it was quite common, especially in a certain county in Ontario, by certain breeders in that district who used to hold occasional auction sales, to put in italics in the announcement in their catalogues, "there will be no by-bidding," but it got to be a by-word, in that there was said to be more by-bidding than buy-bidding at the sales held by those people, and they had to quit holding such sales, for the reason, I suppose, that the public had lost confidence in their being bona fide. But though there have been no auction sales of any account in that county in the last 25 years, I think it is safe to say that in no other district in the Dominion in that time have so many good cattle been sold at as satisfactory prices by the ordinary process of private contract, and it is difficult to realize that the best breeders in that section have felt that they have suffered for want of auction sales, and especially of the combination sort, and yet, if the reports published are correct, it was a leading breeder from that district who, at a recent meeting in Toronto,

in touching words and impassioned tones pleaded for this class of sales to relieve him from the "humiliation" of under-bidding his neighbors in trying to make sales of his stock in the ordinary way, and who, strange to relate, enjoys the reputation of being one of the best salesmen in the country.

It seems to me that anyone with ordinary perception ought to be able to see at a glance, with half an eye, that it will be a great improvement to have our business done for us by Government officials. It so nearly realizes Bellamy's dream of the good time coming, when the State will take over all the business in the country, and pension all business men before they become bald-headed. It will surely be a great relief of the strain upon the mind of having to make one's own sales, when all the breeder will have to do is to keep his stock till the end of the year, send them to the machine and have them put through while you wait, pocket your check, pay your freight and hotel bills and be happy, the Government paying the outlay for auctioneering, advertising, printing, etc., and the bills of the officers at the "Grand Central."

Reverting to the use of the term by-bidding, I do not remember having seen it in a sale catalogue for 25 years till this spring in connection with a sale of Shorthorns held near Guelph, and now we have it in the model rules prepared for the combination sales. I don't know how others regard it, but I confess it always makes me feel a little suspicious when I see such an announcement. It savors so much of wearing of the old flag on the breast to convince the world that you are true to Queen and country. I think a fine sense of honor would lead

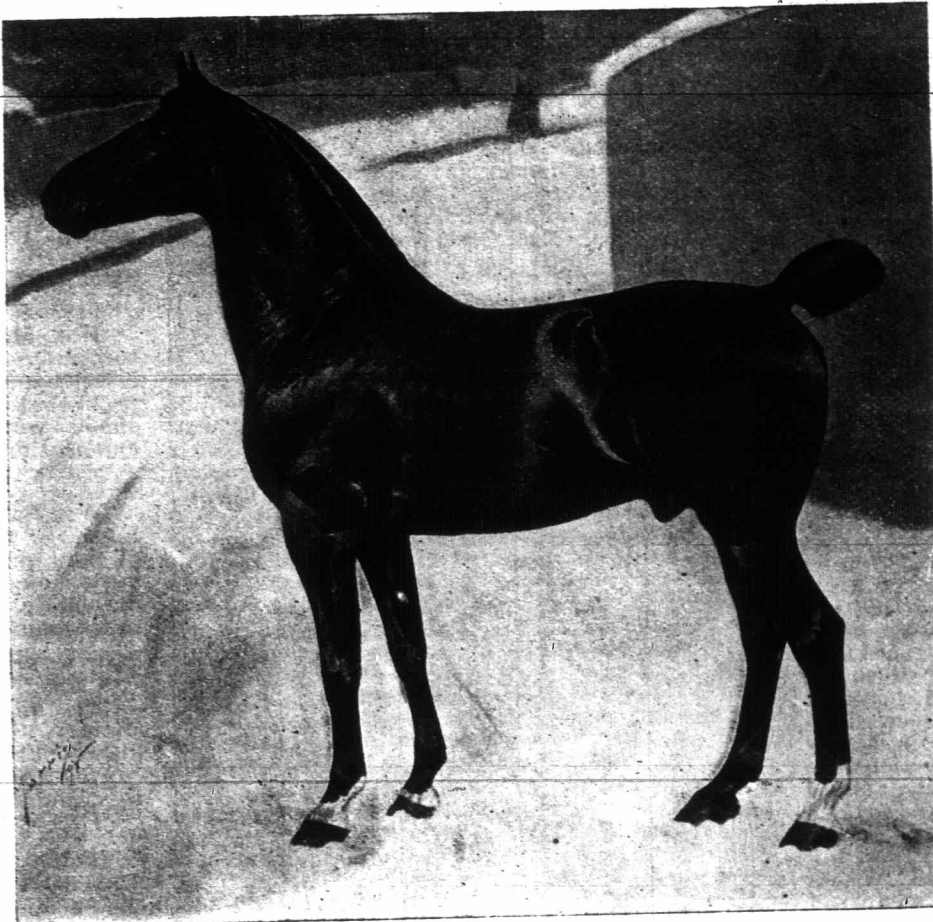
It was, I believe, at the last of the Toronto sales under the supervision of the Breeders' Association, that registered Shorthorn cows sold for \$35 "a skull," and yearlings at \$13 apiece, but of course there were no inspectors under that arrangement to visit the farms and to see that the "critters" offered were put through the fanning mill before being accepted. That will not happen under the new regime, for has it not been intimated that such eminent expert judges as the president and second vice-president of the Shorthorn Society are to be appointed inspectors, salary not stated, to travel through the country on free passes, and to be supplied with long rubber boots, and blue jean overalls with bibs on, to pronounce upon the animals offered as to whether they are eligible in type and breeding, and sound in wind, limb and waterworks. It has been suggested that these gentlemen, being magistrates, be given a roving commission (even if a special Act of Parliament be necessary) and empowered to take evidence, in a fence corner, a cow byre, or any place, as to the cows entered for the sale having been properly served on a given date by a registered bull of the same breed, and that they shall keep a record of the movements of the said cows after the sale to ascertain whether they produce offspring at a date to correspond with the date of service given. This, I think, is a very important point to be guarded, for it was at the last of the Toronto sales, I am informed, that a young breeder was congratulated on getting great bargains in three fine-looking heifers said to be in calf, the date of service some months before being given, but the young breeder was not so elated when he sold two out of the three to the butcher the next year, as being hopelessly barren.

It was, I believe, at that last sale, too, that a small breeder who had brought cattle to the sale, paying heavy freight bills, was so discouraged at the end of the first day on account of the wretched prices that were being obtained, that he proposed to sell out privately to a big breeder and go home. He was offered a mean price and accepted it. The cattle were run through the sale next day in the name of the original owner, the second owner bidding on them, with a decoy bidder or by-bidder to bid against him, with the understanding that by a system of wireless telegraphy he was to stop at a given sign. A small breeder seeing a big breeder bidding on one of the cows, concluded she must be a good one, and put in his little bid, when something dropped, and he found she was his at a price which left the big breeder two other animals for practically nothing. But the decoy-duck thought it too good a thing to keep, and some time later "quacked," with the result that for a time there were "strained relations" between the second and third owners. But of course that class of big breeders are all dead, and all this sort of juggling will be done away with under the new dispensation, for we shall be working under a model code of inflexible rules, the ninth and last of which is that "the Live Stock Commissioner may decide in any case whether or not all or any of the required conditions have been complied with, and his decision shall be final." "A man," to quote Mr. Linton again, "eminently qualified for the position." This should surely dispel all doubts and quell every fear.

It will doubtless be reassuring to the little breeders to know that the leaders will not monopolize the sale, but are willing to limit the number of animals they shall enter. This, of course, will be no great sacrifice for some of them, who own no stock, but to others it will be a real deprivation, and such selfishness can only be compared to that of Artemus Ward, who generously consented that all his first wife's male relations should be given the privilege of enlisting for the war before he claimed his right to bleed and die for his country. Indeed, some of the leaders have, I am told, gone so far as to state their willingness to pledge themselves that they will not mention to prospective buyers at the sale the stock they have at home till the last animal in the combination is sold, and will not even give or show their private catalogues of stock, as the manner of some is at private breeders' auction sales, except it may be in a very extreme case, when they will invite the party behind the barn, and caution him to put it in his inside pocket.

Allow me to state that I think there is not much to fear from the bogey which some one has trotted out, that this thing may lead to political scandals. Is it not true that most of the leaders are in loving sympathy with the Government, and what object could they have in getting the Minister into a mess? And, anyway, will someone please rise and explain what politics has to do with the price of pork. It is comforting, too, to know that the Live Stock Commissioner is reported as having denied the rumor that the tuberculin test would be applied to cattle entering for the sales, and I presume it will be so advertised, so that any buyers coming from the United States will understand that they will have to assume the risk of that test themselves.

BREEDER.



BARTHORPE PERFORMER (5097) 237.

Imported Hackney stallion to be sold in dispersal sale of Hillhurst Hackneys, at Toronto, April 28.
PROPERTY OF HON. M. H. COCHRANE, HILLHURST, QUE. (SEE GOSSIP, PAGE 242.)

one to leave it to the world to judge of our honesty or loyalty by our life, but it may be merely a matter of taste, and there is no accounting for tastes, as the lady said when she kissed her cow—no doubt it depends a good deal on the breed or the breeding.

Col. McCrae, in advocating the combine at the Toronto meeting referred to, I am told, frankly admitted that although the first of the sales held at Guelph under a local breeders' organization was fairly successful, the last was not so, as he bought some of his animals back after the sale, paying from \$10 to \$25 advance on what they were sold for. Of course that is perfectly legitimate, but not every breeder would enjoy that way of doing business, except in the sense in which a person is said to "enjoy bad health." But I have it from one who knows, that not all the contributors to that last sale were as honorable as Col. McCrae, as a friend of his, not a breeder nor a farmer, who was present was asked by one whose cattle were going at slaughter prices, to do a little by-bidding for him, which out of kindness he did, but, in the babel of three auctioneers selling at once in the same building, he made a mistake in the number of the animal, and to his consternation found that a bull belonging to another contributor was knocked down to him. The latter breeder being an honorable man, who felt that he had a character to maintain, could not or would not understand the explanation; indeed, I doubt if he could have been induced to take \$10 or \$25 to have had the animal seen on his farm after the sale, and he shipped the bull to the buyer, who had no more use for a Hereford bull than the man in the moon, and was the butt of the jokes of his friends for some time after.