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EDITORIAL

Show Us a Sign.

Preparations for the winter fairs in Saskatchewan and Manitoba are well under way both in the offices of the secretaries and in the stables of the breeders and feeders. Along with the winter fairs there goes, in Manitoba particularly, conventions of stock breeders and the two functions are intended to bring to a higher state of perfection the material that is placed upon our livestock markets. But the question is, do they do it? And do they do so to the fullest extent of their possibilities? Can it be said that there is a noticeable improvement in the cattle and hogs found upon our markets, as great a proportionate improvement, for instance, as we see in our show yards? A claim to this latter improvement must be conceded to the winter fair or more properly, to the live stock conventions, since a prominent feature of these meetings has been to illustrate the best types and most desirable characteristics, and so raise the ideas of breeders and give them a clearer conception of the characteristics that should be developed, also a knowledge, by discussing feeding, of how certain features and functions may be enhanced. In all these respects the conventions and fairs have been most successful, and without a doubt the average quality of our cattle and the type of hog most in demand by the markets has been improved.

We have now come to a time, or have been some years at it, when the commercial side of stock raising should receive more discussion at the stockmen's conventions. What the breeders of stock are needing more than anything else is a larger market for their produce, but this cannot be developed so long as the general farmer neglects stock raising, and the general farmer will not take up stock raising until he can be shown that there is something more in it above small wages. On the one hand he sees a lot of constant attention and steady work, and on the other a market where prices seem to be as flat and level and depressing as a miasmatic marsh. The buyer says "give me a better class of stock and I will be able to pay a higher price"; while the producer replies, "give me a proof that I'll get a higher price and I'll produce the better animal." Thus the circle continues to revolve. Buyers have been backward to encourage improvement, in fact, have discouraged it by paying a flat price to the producers for all kinds of stuff, and while it can be generally demonstrated that it costs no more to raise the class of animal that best suits the market than it does a bag of bones, yet the producer knows he puts more care on the good one and it being worth more intrinsically than the poor one is disgruntled if there is no premium put upon the former. To argue that the producer of good stock is compensated by the higher average that is maintained than if all were bad avails nothing. The encouragement to raising good stock must be more direct.

These are the conditions. What the stockmen's conventions should do is to try to discover some remedy for them. Something might be done toward this end if producers, owners and abattoir men would get together and tell each other where their difficulties lie. Doubtless there would be considerable blame laid upon the drovers, the most elusive of the three classes represented in the livestock business, but the situation is sufficiently serious to warrant considerable exercise of patience and sacrifice of time to endeavor to establish better relationships and develop more business.

Fundamentally the principles and practices of stock improvement are of immense value to the country but how the producer is to get compensation for the value of his services to the country, is the problem before the stockmen today. What we want now is a fuller assurance that stock raising under our present conditions is profitable, and will continue to be so. Members of the stock breeders associations should offer suggestions freely to their secretaries and endeavor to work up a healthy discussion of the live stock trade by those who engage in it. The secretaries will welcome suggestions and these columns are open for the preliminary skirmishing.

What Do We Know About Trees.

Occasionally we receive photographs of farmsteads in the older settled parts of the country that show that some considerable attention has been given to the planting of trees and the development of the "home idea." We wish there were more. These examples, however, illustrate another thing as well as the appreciation of the value of the association of trees, shrubs and flowers and that is a discrimination in buying such beautifying adjuncts of home. Trees are necessary if one is to make a home a comfortable place to live but it is no use buying trees indiscriminately. It is just as necessary to know what trees are hardy and suitable as it is to plant them out. The country is never without representatives of nurseries whose first object is to get orders. These agents in most cases are perfectly honest in their intentions, they believe the goods they are selling are needed, and the sight of bare, bleak, front yards and lanes without trees so grates upon their aesthetic sense that they are stimulated to frantic efforts to transform, as far as lies in their power, the uninviting aspect of the landscape. Their intentions are most commendable and play no small part in effecting a sale. But how frequently do these nursery representatives labor under a delusion or actually misrepresent the whole case!

Each year the country simply throws away fortunes in trying to get unsuitable, tender, unacclimatized trees to grow where nature never intended that they should be grown.

We have received copies of orders for trees that give evidence of the most glaring fraud, ignorance and lack of common sense on the parts of the seller and buyer. Generally the orders which contain a list of the most unsuitable trees also bear a guarantee that all stock that does not live over the first season will be replaced, which makes the transaction look quite straight forward, whilst in reality almost any tree will live the first season it is set out. The lesson to be gathered from the expensive experiences with trees by some and the successful efforts to beautify the farm home by others, is to know what is suitable. And such knowledge may be had from many sources without depending upon the biased suggestions of the uninformed, inexperienced representative of the nursery, whether it is reliable or not.

The Slipped Cog.

One of the most careful readers is perplexed to know why the price of grain has been so variable this season and writes as though he is convinced that the mutual arrangements, whereby local dealers abstain from bidding against each other, are carried into the larger field of operations, and that large dealers, exporters, millers, etc., by their manipulations, are responsible for the wide fluctuations that we witnessed during October and the present month and also the change from an active to a lethargic market.

There is no question that local buyers at many points arrange to maintain "harmony" in the trade, and it is also true that the operations of

large dealers have an effect upon prices, but it is only very seldom that the larger dealers are agreed sufficiently to either lower or raise prices. The world's supply and the opinions of a large section of the public who "trade" in wheat, both operate to bring values to an approximate level; after these influences, the operations and arrangements of dealers then effect prices within a certain range. (Note the choice of the words values and prices.) The wide fluctuation in late October and early November was caused by the enhanced importance of a certain incident which has always been considered as a matter of course, namely, the getting of actual cash with which to handle wheat. The shortage of cash was not in any way of advantage to grain dealers nor was it confined to the grain trade, but was felt in all other branches of commerce even more than in the wheat business. Just where the responsibility for the unavailability of cash which has caused a fall in the price of grain should be placed is a matter of conjecture but the most likely explanation is that a shaking of public confidence due to revelations of financial rottenness in the States and to excessive trading in speculative commodities in Canada such as Cobalt and other stocks and Western real estate, has resulted in those having money refusing to put it to any other use than as small loans at high rates of interest with good security.

The Relation of the College to the Institute.

At the annual meeting of the American Association of the Farmers' Institute Workers, held towards the close of last month in Washington, D. C., some pertinent problems in reference to the organization were discussed. Methods for institute organization, the kind of lecturers to have on the staff and the co-operation which should exist with other educational agencies, were subjects of report from special standing committees appointed last year, and while no definite action was taken by the Association on any point the reports were important, namely, as showing the present trend of thought in American educational work in agriculture. It is becoming ever clearer to those engaged in this work in any of its branches, that the two outstandingly important organizations, the Farmers' Institute and the Agricultural College, have so much in common, are so clearly alike in function, that they must inevitably be brought closer together and operated as one. The opinion is gaining ground in America that the Institute should be a branch of the College or Experimental Station. The demand of the present day in institute lecturers is for men who in addition to having a practical understanding of their subject, are strong as well in scientific knowledge of the topics which they discuss. For this reason the college professor is the most sought for man in institute work, and for the same reason college extension work, so-called, is more popular than the regular institute. This college extension work as it is called for want of a better term, is simply the extension of agricultural knowledge by the college to those who cannot seek that knowledge within its walls. It is in this direction that the institute in the future is going to develop. There is no visible line of demarcation between what should be termed college extension work and institute work. The two organizations are too closely united for any clear cut division being made on this point. The institute itself is an offshoot from the college and the college extension business is a branch of work which the institute was partially neglecting and which the college was best adapted to assume the direction of. We mean the scientific side of modern agricultural education. There is no necessity for clashing between the two forces; there is little danger of overlapping the work. The Farmer's Institute is going to develop right along the lines which the college extension work is blazing for it; it must develop in this direction or it will not progress at