

A Chatty Letter from the States.

[From our Chicago Correspondent.]

Between the spring and summer strikes among the laboring men, which unsettled all branches of business, and the disastrous drouth of the past summer, the people of the States have fared badly, and it is not very wonderful that many in the live stock business have become sadly discouraged. The two causes combined have brought about a state of depression which completely overshadowed the temporary bright promises of the early spring. It is reported from various quarters that stockmen, especially those in the fine stock lines, have determined to quit the business and seek something more reliable. Very naturally, the trade depression of the past few months has tended to make everybody conservative, and herdsmen just launching out in the business have been very shy of animals with long-priced pedigrees. The speculative branch of the fine stock business has not flourished because of the receding prices, and the general apathy among those in the West who usually buy young and improved stock. Anything which operates to keep the mere speculators and jobbers out, can hardly be called an unmixed evil; at the same time, it must be confessed that those who are called the mere traders in fine stock have done much toward spreading the demand for improved stock. As for the tendency among many breeders to quit stock raising, there is nothing surprising in that; it is but human to seek for the sweet unmixed with bitter; and we are all too ready to quit a familiar line of work as soon as we know enough about it to have experienced its disagreeable features, and take up with something else of which we know and can see only the good parts. Changeableness is one of our besetting sins, but, as a rule, what is the misfortune of some is the good luck of others.

About a year ago there was great dissatisfaction among sheep growers, and many of them have during the present year abandoned their flocks and taken to cattle raising, only to be more discouraged at the late outcome than ever before. And so it goes. Whenever a man gets into a legitimate industry he had better stick to it, provided he knows all about it; for as water seeks its level, so does trade, and any arrangement, which, for instance, makes sheep raising very unprofitable, cannot last, and must in time correct itself.

The Western range cattle season opened rather discouragingly, as a good many 1,100 to 1,200 lb. Wyoming cattle sold at about \$3.20 to \$3.40, or about what rangemen ordinarily expect for their cows and tail-end steers. But the trouble was that the cattle were not good in flesh; they were too good to class as canning stock and yet fell below the shipping and dressed beef grades, and so were destined to sell poorly at any rate, as they had no competition from either class of buyers. It seemed that rangemen who shipped such undesirable stock in the early part of the season were discouraged. The almost unprecedented dry weather cut the grass growth short and cured it prematurely; then came late summer rains, which only tended to make the cured grass washy, and prevent the cattle from getting fat. But range cattle from more favored sections near the Canadian line, came to market sleek

and fat; and about the middle of August 1,200 to 1,350 lb. Montana rangers sold at \$4.20 to \$4.60, with winter Texans averaging 1,050 to 1,150 lbs. at \$3.80 to \$4. These prices were certainly not to be complained of; and all really fat range cattle sold better in proportion than prime barn-yard beefs. The coming winter will witness a larger number of plains cattle in the feed lots than ever before. The range industry has lately been in a discouraging condition, and all traces of the late big boom in that direction have faded away. The fact is that the free grass ranges have been shamefully crowded, and the markets have been overstocked with cattle that could not be put in marketable condition; and now those in the business realize that they will be compelled to adopt strictly business principles in range management, the same as in anything else. Five years ago one could buy a herd of cattle and pay nearly two prices for it, with the assurance that in a year or so the natural increase would make it grow into a good investment, but the margins of profit will no longer admit of such slipshod calculations.

The Powder River Cattle Co. has about 60,000 cattle in Wyoming and Montana, but is compelled to move northward to better ranges. The company expects to send some 10,000 young cattle to Alberta this year, and the calculation is to eventually send them as beefs to England by way of Canadian ports.

The difference in the manner of conducting the live stock exportations in the States and Canada is quite marked, in one respect at least. The American export business is conducted by a very few men of large capital who handle the entire trade, while in Canada the business seems to be divided among a very large number of comparatively small operators. The tendency of all branches of trade in America is to concentration and centralization.

This idea of concentration so popular in the West among stock growers, does not seem to flourish as it once did, as the small growers who have no more stock than they can properly care for, are doing better these hard times than the concerns which boast of "cattle on a thousand hills."

The Horse's Ease in the Harness.

Dr. Harvey, in a lecture delivered before the Penn. State Board of Agriculture, made the following allusion to the above subject:

"The horse should be made comfortable at his work. His harness should fit without galling. His bridle should be long enough to bring the bit down to the angles of his lips—not so short as to draw them up an inch or two above their natural position, as is so frequently the case. The blinds should not touch his eyes, nor his eyelids, either. His head should not be reined uncomfortably high. On a long journey, or in pulling a heavy load, he should not be reined up at all. He is surer footed when his head is free, and, if he should stumble, he recovers better if he can throw his head down and thereby relieve his forelegs of a part of the weight of his body until they get in place again. It is the same principle as is applied when men jump and throw a stone backward from each hand at the same time. If a horse's neck is tired by tight reining, he is a tired horse, and he has been tired without having accomplished anything to show for

it. We have all felt what it is to be tired all over by the torture of tight shoes, and the relief that comes to the whole body with a pair of slippers. He should always have a free head when traveling in the night. He needs then the free use of all his faculties. Do not understand me as meaning that the check rein should never be used at all. It has several uses. A horse can be more easily managed, if he is disposed to be a little too lively, by checking his head up. Horses naturally carry their heads up when excited, and reining them up into that position excites them. A dull horse may, for a short time, be made much more lively by checking his head up a little while he is going. This effect will not continue long, but, for a short drive about a town, with a light weight behind him, there is not much objection to it if the horse is fresh. When a horse is checked up while going he should be unchecked while standing, that he may rest. The check rein should be easily shortened and lengthened, so that his neck may be relieved without giving him entire control of his head while standing, for he might rub his bridle off or get his foot over the lines if he could put his head low down."

Sheep and Wool.

One of the most important questions for consideration this month is that of the future character of your flock, and you should at the same time come to some conclusion about early lambs. The period of gestation being twenty-one weeks, ewes served about the middle of this month will drop their lambs about the 10th of February. If you have proper winter quarters for your flock, lambs should flourish better in February than in April or May, for you have more time to devote to them in the former month, and the lambs, when young, will evade the cold, raw winds of the latter months.

Even if properly managed during weaning time, the ewes may have lost somewhat in condition, and they should now, during the service season, be in good, thriving condition, but not fat. Any sudden change from a poor to a rich ration is injurious. The treatment after service decides the character of the lambs; if stimulating foods be given and the feeding be irregular, look out for abortion, weak or dead lambs, and other disasters. The feeding should be liberal and regular, but not overdone, changing the ration frequently and feeding plenty succulent food. Ewes younger than eighteen months should not be served; and the ram should be vigorous, not being overfed, and should not serve over 50 or 60 ewes in one season. It is a common practice to keep the ewe until she is only about five years old, and then fit her up for the butcher. No absolute rule can be set down, but when you have an exceptionally good ewe, get as many lambs as you can from her, even if her carcass finally brings you no returns from the butcher, and any ewe which does not fill this condition is not worth keeping for breeding purposes. Such a ewe should have a well-formed udder, be a liberal milker, should carry a good, marketable fleece, should be vigorous, and, when put to a good ram, should throw not less than two strong, healthy lambs each year.

No department of husbandry has its ups and downs so much as sheep and wool. The business has been greatly depressed during the