

FARMING

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TOPICS FOR THE WEEK

The Wheat Supply.

Chicago is the great centre of operations in wheat on this continent, and what goes on there is of the greatest moment to every farmer in America. In an ideal market changes in prices would always correspond to real changes in the conditions of supply and demand; but in Chicago, unfortunately, this rule does not hold, and many fluctuations in price that take place there are wholly due to speculative efforts on the parts of bulls and bears that have no correspondence whatever with the conditions on which they are supposed to depend. An other bad feature of that market is the impossibility of getting accurate information as to the alleged causes upon which the changes in price are based; and reports of shortages on the one hand and, of forthcoming supplies on the other, are exaggerated in importance beyond all reason, although no doubt these reports do play an important part in each day's transactions.

During the past week the Chicago market has been the scene of many strong attempts both to raise the price of wheat and to lower it; but, on the whole, the attempts to lower it have been the more successful ones. It is claimed that the reports from Argentina indicate that a good yield of wheat may be expected from the forthcoming harvest there; but as that harvest will not be safely in till December, it would seem to be scarcely wise to place too much importance upon it at present. Similar reports have come to hand in regard to the forthcoming harvest of wheat in India; but as India wheat cannot get on the market till next April, the reasonableness of the supply from there at that time affecting present prices here may be doubted. On the other hand, *Beerbohm* has raised its "shortage" from 113,000,000 bushels to 120,000,000 bushels, and it reports that stocks of wheat in Europe have never been so light at this time of the year for twenty years, and that western Europe will require until its next harvest a supply of 8,000,000 bushels a week. Again, according to the *Mark Lane Express*, Russia, which exported 128,000,000 bushels last year, can this year export only 64,000,000, which is only 14,000,000 bushels more than she exported in 1892, her great famine year. Again, too, the latest reports from Paris show that France has a shortage of 118,000,000 bushels, as compared with her supply a year ago, and that the whole yield is poor in quality. But the most

startling development of all was a new calculation, said to be based upon facts, to the effect that the total European shortage at present cannot be less than 184,000,000 bushels. (See last week's FARMING for previous estimates.) On the whole, however, the price during the week, if anything, declined. But nothing has come forward to show that there need be any fear that the decline will continue or be at all serious.

Keep More Sheep.

In FARMING two weeks ago we spoke of some of the advantages that would accrue to the Canadian farmer if he kept more sheep. What we are contending for is that every farmer ought to keep some sheep, say twenty sheep on a hundred-acre farm. This number could be easily kept without in any way interfering with the rotation established on the farm, or causing any additional help to be hired, and without necessitating any different crops to be grown other than would be grown in any case, or the erection of any farm buildings other than those which are usually found.

These twenty sheep, if purchased as lambs, would in one year, by the wool they would produce, pay for their own keep and the keep of their lambs, and the lambs they would produce would more than pay for their original cost. Every subsequent year there would be the profit on the sale of the lambs obtained from them. Finally, when it would be necessary to replace an old ewe by a young lamb, the carcass of the ewe would be worth to the farmer the cost to him of the lamb with which he supplied her place. There is thus to the farmer who keeps these twenty sheep an annual profit of the value of the lambs which he produces and sells. The twenty sheep, we are told by practical sheep raisers, may be safely reckoned upon to produce at least twenty-five lambs yearly.

There is not only this direct profit, but there is also an indirect profit. The twenty sheep upon a hundred-acre farm would do a great deal towards keeping the farm clear of weeds. Sheep will eat weeds which other stock will not eat. They will go into fence corners and keep them clean when other stock will pass all such places by. They will find food and act as scavengers in and about stone-heaps, stump roots, etc., which cows and horses do not care to go near, and which cannot be touched by the plow. They will pick up a good living on pastures that cattle have finished. Finally, they will leave the best of manure on every part of the land they cover.

Another point is that sheep will do all this at no expense of money to the farmer who owns them, and at little expenditure of labor. In winter sheep need protection only from the rain and from draughts. Their quarters must be kept dry under foot, but otherwise their winter housing and keeping are very simple matters. They will thrive well even on pea-straw and nothing else; though if a few peas be left in the straw they will certainly do all the better.

We Canadians are exceptionally well favored in our sheep breeding. We have no disease in our flocks, nor is there any danger of disease. Our climate is specially adapted to profitable sheep-raising. We cannot, it is true, keep our sheep out-of-doors all winter; but we are compensated for that deprivation by being able to raise sheep that are hardy, vigorous, and free from disease, and that produce the best of mutton and the most desirable of wools. We are, also, specially favored in our markets. We not only have, as we saw in FARMING two weeks ago, our own market and the British market, but we have also the American

market, and this latter market, despite the duty we have to pay to get there, is by no means an unimportant one.

There is one branch of profitable sheep-breeding which our proximity to the American market gives us an especial advantage in; that is, the raising of ram-lambs for use on the western ranches. The western American ranchers frequently have flocks of from 5,000 to 10,000 ewes each. The rams used on these flocks are rarely pure bred, what is used are high bred grades of any good mutton and wool producing breed—the breeds most commonly used being our own standard breeds, the Cotswold, Leicester, Shropshire, Oxford, and Southdown. When a rancher wants to buy rams at all he will buy from one hundred to three hundred at a time. He will, indeed, rarely buy less than 150. He comes to a district where sheep are bred, and going about, picks up what he wants. Of course he likes to get his lambs (or yearlings as the case may be) as near together as possible, so as to save expense. And he likes to get them of as nearly a uniform type as possible.

Now, here is a branch of the business that we in Canada have not got worked up, or taken advantage of. But that the trade is possible and desirable the experience we have already had amply shows. Not long ago to our knowledge, a western rancher came to an Ontario town and picked up 130 ram lambs (all grades), the selection in this case being principally Cotswolds, Leicesters, and Shropshires. We have heard of other similar purchases. Similar supplies, too, are needed for our own Northwest sheep ranches, which in no long time will be both numerous and extensive.

What is wanted are more sheep and better sheep. The ranchman who is picking up rams for his flock of five or ten thousand ewes; the shipper who is picking up car loads for the English market, even the drover who is purchasing lambs for Buffalo, does not want to spend too much time or too much money in going about from place to place to get what he needs. He desires to make up his tale quickly and in one locality, so as to be able to ship from one railway point. Again, he wants good stock. If he is buying rams, none but the best grades will answer his purpose. If he is buying sheep or lambs for the English or Buffalo market he wants to get them of the best mutton producing breeds, and well put up at that. And for the sheep raiser to get the profit out of the business there should be got, the sheep must be of the sort that will produce both good wool and plenty of it. The time was when any sort of wool would sell, and when all wool would bring a good price. In those days any sheep that had a strip of wool along his back was a profitable one. But to-day it is only the sheep that grows wool all over, and that, too, of good quality, that can be reckoned a profitable sheep.

The loss to Canadian farmers from their present indifference to sheep-raising cannot be short of many hundreds of thousands of dollars every year. A farm of a hundred acres that sells less than twenty-five lambs a year is doing that much less than it ought to do, and could do. We know personally of one case where a man paid the entire purchase price of his farm, \$7,000, out of the sheep that he kept on his farm, without touching what he made from all his other stock, and from his grain, and roots, etc., and there are a good many similar instances.

The Horse Market.

All the indications are that the prices of horses in Canada will steadily rise for some time to come. Notwithstanding the Dingley duty, Canada is not