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Quality Counts

NO stronger proof of the need of keeping only the best is required than that shown by the live stock markets. Especially is this true of the cattle market. For no other product that the farmer sells off his farm is there such a wide variation in prices as for cattle, unless it be horses. Look for a moment at the report of Toronto cattle market in last issue. There we find a range of prices for beef cattle varying from \$2.50 up to \$4.75 per cwt., a difference of about 100 per cent. If there is money in producing the \$2.50 stuff, what a heap there must be in the business of the feeding cattle which sold at \$4.75. But experience has taught that there is no profit, but an actual loss in producing the cheaper quality. And yet the bulk of the stuff offering on Toronto market to-day, and in fact on all markets, is not of the most inferior quality, is very far from finest, and does not begin to approach extra prime.

The higher priced animal costs but little more to produce than the cheaper one, but sells for a good deal more. If one-half of the beef animals offered for sale in this country to-day were of fair, let alone the finest quality, many thousands of dollars would be added to the peoples' wealth. But the inferior kind continue to be turned on the market in large numbers, and to sell for a price that does not pay for their production. And so with other lines, with the exception, perhaps of hogs of which considerably over 50 per cent. of those produced are of finest quality. Whether the small percentage of finest quality to be found at our leading cattle markets is due to poor breeding or feeding it is hard to say. It will be nearest the truth, perhaps, to ascribe it to both. Taking the country as a whole, there are comparatively few skilful cattle feeders to be found. Some say that the successful feeder of beef cattle is born not made. While to some extent this is true, we believe that a little closer study of this question on the part of our farmers would bring about a marked improvement.

Government Commercial Agents and the Cheese Trade

An important factor in developing Canadian trade abroad is the work of the various Government commercial agents. These agents are in a position to advise producers and shippers as to the condition of the market; the best way of extending trade, and how the goods please the consumer. Such advice should be of great value in extending and developing trade abroad.

But very often the agent does not stop here. He considers it to be his duty, whether he has a particular know-

ledge of the line of business under discussion or not, to give explicit advice as to how complaints can be remedied, etc. This frequently leads to advice being given that is at variance with the experience of those who have made a life study of the business, and, if followed, would lead to all sorts of difficulties. For instance, P. B. McNamara, agent at Manchester, writing to one of our exchanges recently about packing, states that Canadian cheese boxes from different sections are too frail. This is all too true. But he goes on to give a remedy, and advises as follows:

"The boxes should be sufficiently large to allow the cheese to fit into the boxes without coming in contact with the cover." Here is where he puts "his foot in it," so to speak. Everyone who has handled cheese knows that if Mr. McNamara's advice were followed it would result in largely increasing the percentage of broken boxes.

Then we find Mr. McAllan, who, by

The Clock Strikes Twelve

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the way, is a fruit man, and without any special knowledge of the cheese trade, advocating the discarding of the flimsy elm boxes and using fibre boxes instead. Now all this may look feasible to the average individual, but it does not work out in practice. These boxes are made of paste board and have been tried and found impracticable for several reasons. They cannot be trucked as ordinary boxes are. Then it is hard to get a supply at a reasonable cost to the factories. Besides, it is almost impossible to cooper them when broken. There is, no doubt, great room for improvement so far as boxes are concerned, and yet there has been steady advancement in this respect during the past few years, as the records will show.

But not only does Mr. McAllan condemn the boxes, but also the cheese that is in them, all of which is printed in large type to catch the eye of the reader. Even if it were true, this is not the best way to advertise Canadian cheese. But it is not true, and we have good ground for believing that, generally speaking, Canadian cheese is more than holding its own, in so far as quality is concerned. We prefer to take

the advice of those in the business, rather than that of one unfamiliar with it, and who has picked up his information at random from parties who are only too willing to make complaint when an opportunity is offered. It is an easy thing to get complaints, but it should be the agent's duty to sift these carefully, and find out whether the fault lies with the trade or with the importer himself and mismanagement on his part. It does not do to take as gospel everything a fault-finding importer says, and give it out as of first importance to the commercial interests of Canada. There are, no doubt, many complaints made that the shipper at home should know about. But it should be the agent's duty to state these only, and leave it to those better qualified than he is to advise remedies and bring about an improvement.

Will it Pay to Feed Cattle This Year

At this season of the year the farmer is in more or less of a quandary as to whether it will pay him to do much cattle feeding during the winter. There are, of course, those who make a business of feeding and fitting beef cattle every year. Sometimes they make a heap, other times not so much. But they keep at it, and taking one year with another make the business pay. With these, anything we might say as to the advisability or not of feeding cattle the coming winter, would have little weight. They have made cattle feeding a special business in their farming operations, and will likely continue so to do so long as there is any profit in the venture. But with the occasional feeder it is different. His efforts are more or less spasmodic. He sees his neighbor making big money by cattle feeding one year, and concludes to try it himself the following season, and does so very often to his sorrow. The situation should be thoroughly canvassed, market conditions studied, and the outlook for prices looked into as far as possible.

The question for consideration just now is what are the prospects for the cattle feeder the coming season. It would be impossible to speak with any degree of accuracy in this regard. And yet there are conditions that arise every season that have considerable to do with it. The experienced cattle feeder, whether in Canada or the United States, follows closely the condition of the American corn crop. It is a kind of barometer that indicates to a very great extent what the state of the market will be when his cattle are ready for shipping.

Latest advices regarding the corn crop seem to indicate that it will yield about