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The Advance in Beef

AS reported last week, the advance in the price of beef is by no means a local affair. There is an advance all along the line, not only in Canadian centres but in the large cities of the United States. In Great Britain the situation is the same. In fact it is because of the scarcity of beef in the old land and the marked advance in price there that prices have soared so high on this side. For the past few months everything in the shape of export cattle have been bought up readily and shipped across the water. For this trade numbers of the heavier and better classes of butchers' cattle weighing from 1,100 to 1,150 lbs. each have been taken thus lessening the supply for the local butcher and advancing the price for the poorer grades of cattle to an equality with the very best grades a few months back. It is this extra export demand that is primarily responsible for the local advances in beef prices during the past fortnight.

How long these high prices will continue cannot be foretold with certainty. From what is known of the situation here it is pretty safe to state that they will continue well on in the summer. Leading wholesale cattle dealers here favor this view. To the consumer three or four months of present high prices for meat will seem a long time, while to the producer it will seem only too short. The latter will hardly have time to adjust his affairs to these new conditions before a change comes. But, however, that may be, the farmer, who has been following the turn of events in the beef cattle market during the past year or two will have made some provision for this thing and be in a position to reap a good margin on the cattle he has to sell. As reported in our weekly market review, there has been a scarcity of really prime cattle not only in Canada but also in the United States for some time back, without any reasonable prospect of the supply being increased for some time to come.

But while this scarcity of prime cattle has been most noticeable, there has been on this market, at least, enough and to spare of the medium and inferior grades of all classes. One would judge from the trend of affairs at the present time in regard to price, that supplies on this market have been much less than they were a few years ago. But this is not so and the very opposite has been the case, supplies of cattle on Toronto market just

now being greater than they were a year ago at this time. During the first three weeks of April, 12,000 cattle were received at Toronto cattle market or 2,000 more than the number received for the same period of 1901. In this connection a glance at the receipts of cattle here during the past few years will be of interest. In 1896 the total receipts were 104,887; in 1897, 138,155; in 1898, 147,252; in 1899, 140,154; in 1900, 133,210 and in 1901, 174,869, or 41,650 over 1900 and nearly 70,000 over the receipts of 1896. In 1901, 141,227 sheep were received or nearly 23,000 more than in 1900. The only line in which there was a shrinkage was in hogs, the receipts of these being only 153,306 in 1901 or 43,000 less than in 1900. At some of the American cattle centres, notably Omaha, receipts have been larger than at this time a year ago. At Chicago, however, during the past few weeks supplies have been short and considerably less than a year ago.

The fact that supplies on this market have been large while prices have been advancing, should be a matter of satisfaction to producers. Very often when an article is very high in price, the farmer has not much to sell. This would not seem to be the case with cattle at the present time if we judge by the receipts here during the past few weeks. And though these large receipts may be due to the higher prices bringing out larger supplies it gives the advance a more permanent character and one likely to obtain for a longer period than if it were due to a local scarcity alone. But while this may be true it must not be taken for granted that because of this extra local supply beef cattle are plentiful in the country. Everything seems to point the other way. The large numbers of stockers that have gone from this province to the United States and to British Columbia during the past eight or nine months will have some effect in depleting the future supply of beef cattle. The cattle situation on the whole then is strong, and the outlook for good profitable prices for some time for prime beef cattle bright. Farmers cannot go astray in raising the best of beef cattle suitable for the export trade. Prices for these have reached the highest point in years, and still they are considerably below what the Chicago market will warrant. \$6.50 per cwt., is, as compared with the old days, a very high price for Canadian export cattle, but it is still over \$1.00 per cwt. less than what prime steers are selling for at Chicago to-day.

The Beef Trust.

American consumers are doing their best just now to break up the beef trust, which practically controls the wholesale prices for all meats in the United States. Whether they will succeed as not remains to be seen. They have secured the highest authority in the land for their side. Attorney-General Knox, by direction of the president, has taken proceedings to have the methods of the trust declared a violation of the federal laws, and orders have been sent to the district attorneys in the federal districts where the centres of the trust's operations are located to join in the movement against it.

The beef trust is operated on a most gigantic scale and controlled by the six largest packing concerns in the United States who control an annual trade amounting to \$600,000,000. Since the middle of February, through the influence of the trust, the wholesale cost of prime beef to the butcher in New York, has advanced from 9½¢ per lb. for the week beginning Feb. 21st to 12½¢ for the week beginning April 14th. The trust has a grip on the railways as well as on the retail trade. To dislodge this gigantic monopoly and bring freedom to the American consumer will be no small task, and there are grave doubts as to its being accomplished as the trust has matters arranged so as to afford as little room as possible for the law to reach it.

Nova Scotia Agriculture.

In our correspondence column this week, appears a letter from a Nova Scotian, who seems to take a somewhat pessimistic view in regard to the progress which agriculture is making in the province down by the sea. We spent a summer in Nova Scotia ten years ago and found the methods he speaks of, such as selling eight-inch hay, practised largely by farmers in the outlying districts. But we were under the impression that during the interim all this had passed away and that, although the average Nova Scotia farmer was not, perhaps, carrying on his farming operations in a way to produce the best results, he had gotten somewhat out of the old rut and was following better and more up-to-date methods. That this is not the case, as our correspondent's views would seem to indicate, is only another proof of how difficult it is to induce people, and especially farmers to change their ways and adopt new-