

THE SCARCITY OF BUTCHER'S STOCK.

A popular cry has been worked up in the United States that the heavy advance in the price of beef has been caused by manipulation, and a demand has been made for a government investigation. The cry of anti-combine, always a popular theme with the unthinking masses, has been raised in this case, and the meat dealers are being vigorously denounced. Of course the farmers are not in this outcry against the alleged combine, as they are reaping the benefit of the high prices for beef cattle. It is therefore a combine, if the expression is permitted, which will be popular with the farmers. At the same time, the cry of combine in this case appears to be purely imaginary. The fact appears to be, if statistics are correct, that there has been an enormous shrinkage in the number of live stock in the United States. This shrinkage has been going on for years, until it has reached the point of making a scarcity, hence the higher prices. Bradstreets says:

Not for seven years past was the number of beef cattle in the United States so small as on January 1 this year. The number of sheep was the smallest for fifteen years and value the lowest on record. Hogs were smaller in number than in any year since 1883, and, with the exception of 1891, the lowest in values for ten years. Horses, owing to special circumstances (such as the introduction of trolley cars and bicycles), added to the all-powerful business depression, were lower in value than in any year since 1879, and since 1890, four years, their value has fallen 42 per cent. Under the circumstances it is not strange to find that the total value of farm animals is the lowest reported for fourteen years.

THE TRAMP NUISANCE.

The Portage la Prairie Liberal newspaper has a timely article on the tramp question. The season is now at hand when the tramp nuisance will be here again. During the last few years hundreds of these undesirable gentry have made their appearance here annually, coming in the summer season from the United States. The tramp should not be allowed to go abroad in the land with impunity, and the Liberal is right in calling for some means of dealing with this riff-raff of creation. We would like to see some law passed when the provincial legislature re-assembles, which will be specially suited for ridding the country of tramps. The tramp is not only a nuisance, but he is a menace to every community. While laziness is perhaps the chief characteristic of the tramp, a great many of them are vicious. They are very low in the scale of morality, and will not stop short of committing any crime which may be prompted by their low and brutish natures. The record of crime, frequently including murder and outrage upon defenceless women and children, which stands against the tramp, demands clearly that these low creatures should be shown no quarter. In the isolated homes of the rural districts, the tramp is the terror of the more timid females, who have sometimes to be left alone while the men are away at work in the fields. A little vigorous treatment would drive him from the country, and we would like to see measures adopted to give him a "warm" reception this season.

PENITENTIARY FARMING.

We want an experimental farm for eastern Manitoba. How would it do to try and induce the government to establish an experimental farm in connection with the penitentiary, which is located in a very advantageous position for such an institution, near Winnipeg? An experimental farm in connection with the penitentiary would serve a double purpose. It would not only afford a means of carrying on the ordinary experimental farm work in the interest of the country, but it would also afford an opportunity of educating the unfortunate inmates of the penitentiary in agricultural pursuits, so that when their term of service had expired, they would be in a position to seek work as expert farm hands, or settle down and become useful citizens. The idea of carrying on manufacturing enterprises in connection with prisons is not generally regarded with favor, as interfering with private enterprise, but farming is something to which no objection could be made. A large and fine farm might easily be maintained in connection with the penitentiary, at a moderate outlay over the ordinary expenses of that institution, and at the same time a great public good would be accomplished.

CIVIC GOVERNMENT.

The Winnipeg board of trade will investigate the important question of the best method of governing the city. Mr. Bole, who has had considerable experience in municipal matters, has given notice that at the next meeting of the board he will move for the appointment of a committee to report on the best system of municipal government for the city. No more fitting question than this, perhaps could be taken up by the board. The members of the board are the largest property owners and tax payers of the city, and they are directly interested in the question of civic government. It is not only wise for the board to take up this matter, but we may almost say it is the duty of the board to give some attention to this very important question. It is to be hoped the investigations of the board will lead to some desirable results as regards the government of the city. The present system, as Mr. Bole expressed it, can never prove satisfactory. The Commercial fully agrees with him in this assertion. The government of a city by an irresponsible council can never be satisfactory. While the old plan may be made to work fairly satisfactorily in the case of small towns, it will never, we feel sure, prove entirely desirable in the case of large towns and cities. What is lacking in civic government seems to be responsibility. Until we can have a system by which close responsibility can be fixed upon some one or more persons, we can never expect anything better than a very loose mode of conducting the business affairs of a city.

BOOTS AND SHOES AND LEATHER.

Hides keep firm, and leather and boots and shoes must advance more yet to be on a parity with hides. No. 1 buff hides at Chicago have reached 8c per lb. Hides have advanced 100 per cent, which is double or more the

advance in leather so far, so that the latter commodity will have to appreciate considerably yet to be on a fair basis in comparison with hides. The Montreal Trade Bulletin says:

"The advance in the price of boots and shoes has become pretty general among Montreal and Quebec houses. The advance upon which actual business has transpired is 10 per cent on staple lines and 5 per cent on the finer goods; but this is regarded as only the initial step in the upward movement, as the prices of leather have moved up from 20 to 50 per cent, while the price of hides has gone 100 per cent skyward, so that a further advance in the price of boots and shoes is a foregone conclusion. The upward movement in leather continues to be a leading feature in the market, a further advance of 2c per lb. having been established in Spanish sole leather, being now the lowest price for No. 2, while 20c is the quotation for No. 1. At the recent sharp appreciation in values, buyers are naturally timid, but they will no doubt have to toe the mark when they are compelled to replenish their supplies."

THE PETROLEUM "BOOM."

The boom in petroleum has led to the discovery that stocks are remarkably low. Ten or eleven years ago stocks of crude petroleum averaged 80,000,000 to 40,000,000 barrels, from which time it decreased steadily to about ten and a half million barrels in 1890. With lower stocks came a spurt in prices in that year, which in turn stimulated production, and stocks increased to about 18,000,000 barrels in two years. Since 1892 stocks have decreased until they were only something over 2,000,000 barrels according to a late estimate. This accounts for the present bulge in petroleum. It remains to be seen whether the present advance will bring about a large increase in production. A great incentive will be given to efforts to increase production, and we will soon know what truth there is in the statements that the oil territory is giving out. If a great increase in production does not quickly follow the present high prices, it may safely be attributed to the inability of the oil territory to yield the product.

NEW KIND OF PROTECTION.

A new kind of protection is to be inaugurated in Canada. Manufacturers and producers in the eastern provinces have complained about the low railway rates from United States points, goods being hauled from distant points in the United States to consuming markets in Canada, at much lower rates than were charged for similar Canadian products, hauled a much shorter distance to the same markets. Thus nearness to markets did not prove any material advantage to the home producers. We are now told that at a meeting of the railway agents, held at Montreal recently, in conjunction with the metal manufacturers, it was agreed to advance railway rates from western and southern points from 15 to 40 per cent., in order to protect the Canadian manufacturers from the competition of United States goods. What with the customs tariff and railway freights both arranged to protect the Canadian manufacturer, the Canadian consumer is sure to have a hard time of it.