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TOPICS FOR THE WEEK

Agricultural News and Comments.

In many quarters it is expected that Canada will have a lively boom in its trade and transportation because of the war between Spain and the United States. The indication so far seems to point that way. At Montreal and St. John there have already been heavier passenger bookings on ocean-going steamers than for some time past. The extra war insurance freight rates at American ports will help Canadian trade. The Danes have been making enquiries at Montreal as to the availability of that port for Danish shipping. A New York commercial paper ridicules the fears of intending shippers in regard to the large American seaports being blockaded and shipping interfered with. However this may be, people will much prefer to do their shipping through neutral channels than run the risk of being detained by an enemy's blockading force.

Reports from the Western States still show a scarcity of cattle. According to the *Kansas City Times*, such states as Wyoming, Utah, and South Dakota, will not market this year within 75 per cent. of as many cattle as they did in 1897. The reason of this is that owners intend to hold over as many cattle as possible so as to bring up their herds to something like their old time proportions. The states east of the Missouri river, owing to their high-priced lands, no longer raise the number of cattle they once did and it is doubtful if the number of herds in these states will ever equal that of former years. The west and southwest, therefore, are the districts which will have to be depended upon in the future for a large share of the beef consumed in the United States and also that which may be needed for export.

There has been quite a noticeable movement in hogs among western packers during the past week or two. The number of killings has greatly increased during the past two months. From March 1st up to the last week of April, the total killings were 2,980,000, against 2,385,000 a year ago, an increase of 585,000, or about 25 per cent. Prices latterly have averaged higher and at the end of the month were fully 10 cents per 100 pounds higher than the week previous. To a certain extent the speculative element is accountable for the increase in values. But the demand is reported good and exports liberal, and unless the present

disordered situation of ocean commerce brings higher rates for transportation to foreign markets present values will likely be maintained for a time.

The demand for Canadian oats in England still continues. Both continental and English buyers are getting anxious about their supplies. Some large sales of Canadian oats have been made recently to European ports at an advance of 1s. 9d. to 2s. per quarter. The short supply of Russian oats, along with the uncertainties of war, has contributed to the appreciation of values. The stock of oats in store at Montreal a week ago was 1,117,723 bushels as compared with 867,740 bushels a year ago, showing an increase of 349,980 bushels. A large share of this stock is, however, engaged for shipment.

In New South Wales, Australia, the Minister of Agriculture has decided to import a number of selected cattle from the best herds in Great Britain with a view to improving the dairy herds of the country. The breeds selected are: Short-horns, Ayrshires, Jerseys, Guernseys, Kerrys, Holsteins, Dexters, Red Polls, and (Irish) Shorthorns. The first selection of 20 purebred Ayrshire cows is now on the way to the colony. Some purebred pigs will also be imported. The imported stock will be placed on the Government Experimental Farm, and arrangements will be made for their progeny to become distributed throughout the colony. This shows enterprise, and that our far-off competitor in the dairy field means business.

Cattle dealers are somewhat in doubt as to the effect the war will have upon the cattle trade. In the United States the effect of the war so far has been anything but pleasing to the cattle feeder. The contraction of credits at the banks and the bad condition of the export markets have afforded an opportunity to local buyers to put down prices. At this season of the year feeders must sell, and are compelled to take current prices. If the situation does not improve shortly, it is expected that many feeders will be put out on the grass by those who can afford to hold. But a large number of the cattle now on feed in the west are carried by the banks, and as the banks are refusing extensions, men who have put out cattle on paper are calling them in.

The authorities of the Omaha Exposition intend to reconsider their decision in regard to giving money prizes for live stock. This is the result of the pressure brought to bear on those in charge by the stockmen and agricultural press of the west. It is likely now that the proposition submitted by the Live Stock Commissioner of the Exhibition, Hon. J. B. Dinsmore, will be adopted and offer the \$35,000 in cash prizes for live stock as recommended. This is a wise move, for had the authorities adhered to their resolution to give medals only, the live stock part of the show would have proven to be a "fizzle."

There were thirty-three cheese factories in operation in Prince Edward Island in 1897, and five creameries. The cheese factories made 2,801,975 pounds of cheese. There were thirty-one cheese factories and creameries in Nova Scotia. Twenty of these made 365,670 pounds of cheese and 192,887 pounds of butter. During the same year there were forty-nine cheese factories in operation in New Brunswick, and seven creameries. The cheese factories made 1,107,281 pounds of cheese and the creameries 41,768 pounds of butter. In the three Maritime Provinces there were in operation last year 111 cheese factories and fourteen

creameries, which made 4,384,256 pounds of cheese and 408,455 pounds of butter.

The province of Manitoba is likely to make a big advance in wealth and population during the present year. Emigrants are going in in larger numbers than since the boom of 1882. The area of wheat sown is fully 20 per cent. more than last year. The seeding has been made under splendid conditions, and the seed is much better than usual because all the wheat last year was good, and the practice of sowing inferior seed, while the best wheat is shipped out, could not be followed. A prominent Winnipeg grain merchant estimates that, if the weather conditions during the summer are favorable, this year's crop of wheat will be nearly 50,000,000 bushels.

Wheat and War.

That the outbreak of hostilities has had a lively effect upon the wheat markets of the world goes without saying. From nearly every quarter come reports of an excited market and an upward tendency in prices that is in no ways slow. But it is in Great Britain and Europe where there is the greatest excitement. In fact, had it not been for the upward movement in wheat in Europe on the outburst of war, it is not likely that prices in America would have shown any great advance on that account.

A month or two ago, European buyers began to take things easy and were not very anxious to get in large supplies, as the general outlook regarding the world's supply of wheat in sight was growing more favorable. With the crop prospects good and the acreage sown much larger than last year, the situation greatly improved and the projected scarcity of some months back seemed farther away than ever. So it was that the outbreak of war found European supplies comparatively low and consequently the fear of the American supply being cut off, owing to a probable danger to American shipping by the Spaniards, caused the operators to become excited, and prices to go up by leaps and bounds. After a week or two, when the first flurry is over and the skies begin to clear a little the markets may become quieter and operators settle themselves down to a normal trade, though present values may be maintained for a time.

It is little wonder that the European market world becomes excited at the slightest prospect of a shortage in the food supply. There are millions of people depending upon the outside world for supplies for their very existence. A great many European countries grow large quantities of wheat, but outside of Russia none have a surplus after the home demand is supplied. France alone consumes 700,000 quarters per week for food, so that the amount necessary to supply her needs for the two months before the harvest will run up into the millions. Then the requirements of Great Britain are enormous. If a war takes place, especially a European war, and outside supplies are shut off, it will be easily seen that the inhabitant of the thickly settled European countries has no bright prospect before him.

Though the markets are excited and the war is here there is no great cause for alarm. The supplies in sight a week ago amounted to 64,394,000 bushels as compared with 53,626,000 bushels a year ago, or an increase of 10,768,000 bushels in favor of this year. Therefore, though the war may continue for a time, there is no great fear of a wheat famine before the next crop is harvested and, if the price does remain high, so much the better for the