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EDITORIAL.

The Winter Fairs.

With the present month the fall fairs will have been worked off the list for this year. Where well managed, a fair share of attention having been given to their practical and educative features, these have served a good purpose in presenting the best types of live stock for breeding purposes, the best varieties of agricultural products and manufactured goods, and, where advanced fair management has obtained, the processes of manufacturing dairy and other products of special interest to the farmer and his family. In addition to these practical demonstrations, there has been the enjoyment of the well-deserved holiday for recreation following the strenuous summer season's work, and, it may be, worry, for with all the admitted reasons for thankfulness for the outcome of the year's work, doubtless quite the usual budget of difficulties and perplexities have been met and contended with.

Now the attention of a large proportion of farmers, especially of those who give particular attention to the breeding and feeding of high-class meat and milk-producing stock, will be turned to the fat stock and dairy shows slated for the December month—the International at Chicago, mainly in the first week (commencing November 28th); the Ontario Winter Fair at Guelph, opening on the 7th, and the Maritime Winter Fair at Amherst, Nova Scotia, on the 14th.

Important and useful as are the earlier fairs of the year conceded to be, yet as an exhibition of finished products in high-class meat-producing animals, the winter fair furnishes by far the best opportunity for the study of the most approved types for the best markets of the times, where free from the distractions of what are termed the attractions of the earlier fairs, lessons instructive and helpful may be had, and comparisons of the living animals and the dressed carcasses made, which cannot fail to be of intense interest to all who have to do with farm stock.

While sheep and swine departments at the Guelph show have in former years been admirably filled, it is too true that the display of fat cattle in the last two years has not been what might reasonably be expected in a Province in which the breeding herds of beef cattle rank so high in quality and character, and it behooves breeders and feeders to make a special effort to raise the standard of the exhibits of finished cattle. It is not complained that the best shown are not up to a high standard, for a few really first-class animals have been shown each year, and the men who have brought these forward are deserving of all praise, but there certainly should be a larger number of first-class cattle competing for the liberal prizes offered than has yet been seen.

The "Farmer's Advocate," in its report of last year's show, forcibly stated this lack, and appealed to breeders and feeders to make a special effort to redeem the character of the show in this department, and it is hoped that a noticeable improvement will be seen this year. The generous prizes offered, and the exceptional opportunity of making good sales of fat stock at this show should serve to stimulate strong and keen competition. It is not too late yet, especially in the class for export steers, for many to prepare exhibits that will be creditable to the capabilities of the country, while by judicious

feeding and care many choice young animals may yet be prepared to make a fair showing. There is also much room for improvement in the display of dairy cows over anything that has yet been seen at the winter fairs, and we hope to see the various breeds and grades better represented than heretofore.

The lectures by competent specialists, illustrated with living and dead specimens of stock, constitute an intensely interesting feature of these shows, one that is of itself well worth all the cost to those who avail themselves of the opportunity of attending, and all who can should lay their plans to take in these interesting events.

Cattle Feeding.

A hearty welcome would be accorded the person who could come forward now and tell feeders what prices cattle will realize next spring, or even four months hence. At present, prospects for the future are uncertain. Export cattle are low, without any good apparent reason. Cattle are not wanted in Britain, but that does not explain the cause of the lack of demand. Other food products are high. In part it may be due to the large number of cattle put on the market during the past year, and to the increased use of cheese, bacon, and mutton. However, the question that exercises the minds of feeders now is not so much the price of export cattle at present as the price they will be for 1904, and about the only index we have to a solution of the problem is the probable supply for that time. That supply, as far as we in Canada are concerned, will be largely influenced by the number of cattle fed in the corn States. In those districts there are always a certain number who feed cattle regardless of the price of corn or beef, and in years like last, when there is a big supply of cheap corn and a possibility of securing cheap cattle, the number of feeders is considerably increased. This year corn promises to be a short crop and prices high in the central States, where cattle are largely fed, which in the natural course of events would indicate that feeding will be confined to the regular feeders, and that, consequently, the number of cattle coming forward for export next spring will be less than in 1903. Dairying continues to hold its own so strongly in Canada that the number of the beefing type of cattle coming on is not making any marked increase. Whether the beef market's will be sufficiently cleaned out of this year's cattle to create a strong demand in 1904 is a question that only the future can answer. Cattle for export have been plentifully offered by the ranchers of the Northwest, but prices are so low that many are preparing to keep their stock over. This stock, however, will scarcely be fit for shipment until late next summer, consequently it will not come into competition with stall-fed cattle from the East. Mr. J. T. Gordon, the greatest Western exporter, is reported as stating that only about one-third of the number of cattle have been shipped this year, as compared with last. The reason was soft grass on the ranges, making the cattle late, and low prices in England caused by hard times and over-supply.

So much for the market prospects. What about the situation at present as compared with other years? So far feeders have not been buying cattle as actively nor at as high prices as they did last year. Grain is a good price, but rough feed is plentiful, with the exception of

roots, and cattle can be bought for a reasonable figure. These conditions, taken collectively, are encouraging enough to warrant a considerable number of cattle going into the stalls, but the rather backward condition in which the market has existed during the last six months has made feeders unusually cautious. Last year cattle were bought too high for the way the finished product sold, and there was a heavy advance in freights, which cut into the exporter and feeder. Mr. Simpson Rennie says feeders should have a margin of at least 1½ cents between cost and selling price of the bullock. The man with the good feeders to sell naturally wants as much for them as he can get. Whether there will be improvement in the near future is the question, and it is this uncertain feature of the cattle-feeding situation that is responsible for the fluctuations in prices. If one could only tell what the future of a market would be there would be a uniformity of price from year to year. Generally speaking, it is probable that the live-stock market will follow the course of all other markets under similar conditions, i.e., for a time subsequent to a depression the numbers offered gradually decrease until the demand causes a revival in the particular line suffering from the depression. The best beast ready at the right time is the one that makes the money. Among the most successful of Canadian farmers in the past, and whose farms show a high state of fertility, are those who have made finishing cattle for the British market a special feature of their operations. These men have raised their own feeders, or a part of them, or if they purchased all, aimed invariably to do so at a price which kept them at a reasonable remove from the position of mere speculators. For such, present indications, on the whole, appear favorable.

Advantages of Underdraining.

To those who have observed or experienced the benefit of underdraining land, it is surprising that in Canada it has been adopted to so limited an extent. While there is some land the subsoil of which is of such a nature that underdraining is not required and would be of no great advantage, it is safe to say the great bulk of the farms of the older Provinces at least would well repay in increased crop returns the cost of partial if not of thorough underdraining. There are few farms on which there are not low-lying portions where the fall to an outlet is not sufficient for the prompt removal of surplus water by means of surface ditches, and these wet places often delay the spring seeding many days after the main portions of the field are in the best condition for cultivation, thereby reducing considerably the harvest yield of the whole, for it is generally conceded that with the soil in the proper condition the early-seeded fields as a rule give by far the heaviest and best crops. If the expense of thorough underdraining, which means a complete system of tile drains throughout the entire field, at a distance of say thirty feet apart, is considered too expensive an undertaking, though there is good ground for the claim that on most farms it would, if well done, prove a paying investment, at least the slack places where water lies too long should be improved by this process, and a map showing the exact position by measurement of each drain prepared and kept, so that if later it is decided to complete the system it may be carried out methodically. It is not our pur-