

THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE

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Editorial.

Ranting About the Embargo.

Periodically the embargo anvil is hammered until the welkin roars, and everybody is much edified thereby. The Scotchmen, anxious to feed Canadian stores, jump on the Sassenack farmers (who, by the way, are all protectionists) and accuse them of discrediting, on the score of disease, the Colonial cattle.

So far as disease relates to cattle in Great Britain and Canada, all well-informed persons know that of the British pure-breeds many of the Angus and Shorthorns are pretty badly infested with tuberculosis, and, also, that many herds fail to yield their normal annual increase, on account of contagious abortion; while in merrie England swine fever (termed in Canada "hog cholera") is always about. The score of disease, then, is not one on which the British farmer is very tender. Unless his stuff dies in droves, or an unkind meat inspector fetches him up short, he is quite hardened otherwise to disease, and the Colonial is lacking in respect who mentions the appalling rottenness of some British herds above a whisper. We recall how, on one memorable occasion, in Britain, a vigorous protest was made re the Canadian Government's tuberculin tests, and the sentiment was expressed that no foreign government should dictate to them how to keep their cattle. How the silly yokels applauded the promulgation of an idea which meant, in other words, that they (the producers) would say what the market must take—a violation of trade ethics so gross as to be laughable. But, aside from the bugaboo of disease in Canadian cattle, in the minds of the majority of Britishers, what are the benefits to be derived by Canadians from the removal of the embargo, and at what cost?

In the first place, the removal of the embargo on Canadian cattle alone (we do not believe it will ever come off to Canada, but if it does, we expect the U. S. will share also) would mean the resumption of the ninety-day cattle quarantine all along our Southern boundary, and the American invasion of immigrants would be stopped entirely—which would be a disaster to the Canadian West. In addition, a large force of inspectors would be needed, at a much-increased cost to the country—and where would be the gain?

The possibility of feeding range cattle, such as we see in the stock-yards at Calgary, Medicine Hat, Winnipeg, Schreiber, Montreal, and coming off the boats at the Birkenhead lairages, is not to our mind a rosy one; the docility essential is entirely lacking, and the insurance on lives of farm hands in Great Britain would at once become more costly.

As for the Eastern bees, the people down there know enough to feed theirs to a finish; the land demands it. There are really no store cattle that Canada can afford to ship to Britain to be finished, but we will suppose everybody shipped their beef cattle as stores to the Old Country, and a big trade was established. If foot-and-mouth or some other bovine disease broke out in boats sailing from Boston or Portland, the store-cattle business would be at an end in 24 hours; and what a tremendous slump there would be in cattle, because the trend of business would again have to change from the marketing of stores to the marketing of finished bees.

To our mind, for Canadians to excite themselves over the removal of the embargo is futile. They stand to gain practically nothing. The

shouting Scotchmen have buildings and wharves, representing sunken capital, which they hope to raise by buying Canadian stores.

The need of Canada is the building up of a dead-meat trade, in which we can well afford to imitate the senors of Buenos Ayres, who, as soon as they found they could not ship cattle to Britain on foot, embarked in the chilled-meat business on a big scale (vide J. A. Kinsella's report to the New Zealand Government), and are making a success of it. The dead-meat trade is the thing, and to it Chicago owes its reputation as a live-stock market.

Register Your Stock in the Canadian Books.

One of the reasons advanced for nationalizing the records was a patriotic one, namely, to help along our own record system. Such being the case, it is now up to the agricultural societies, exhibition associations and individuals to demonstrate the faith that is in them. The organizations, large or small, holding shows in Western Canada, might do well to incorporate in their regulations a rule that all registered stock shown must possess a certificate—to be produced—of registration in a Canadian National Record Book.

In all movements such as the nationalization one, everybody is zealous until a certain point is reached (usually about half way through the job), then the enthusiasm wanes, and the project lives along half-heartedly. It is yet too soon to see all the benefits expected to accrue. Such, however, will come to a greater or less degree in the form of lessened cost, on the whole, for registrations, transfers and the printing of herd-books; more light on the methods followed in the payment of expenses to members of executives, such only to be paid when services are rendered; more accuracy in the recording of pedigrees and issuance of certificates, which heretofore has been far from that perfection which should be inseparable from the live-stock recording business. It is to be hoped, also, that we will see the eradication of duplicate certificates, which have been far too loosely distributed, a laxity for which the associations concerned were to blame. The equitable division of offices to Provinces outside of Ontario is no nearer accomplishment than ever, judging by the first election of officers. This fact is much to be regretted, as the effect of cliquism or monopoly of offices in any association is to strangle in its birth the enthusiasm felt by new members, that is so essential to the progress of any association. There is likely, under the new system, to be very small chance of fraudulent work in pedigree and certificate issuance, and the absence of spheres of influence from the registrars is as it should be, but these registrars, fortunately, are not Government officials; still, they will be more than human if they do not observe civil-service hours and all the numerous holidays for which the Federal Capital is notorious. That a Government official will keep a time-sheet on the employees of the records associations is utterly preposterous. At present, without a head, they will be strictly on their honor to do well the work for which they are paid. The national move has been of value in consolidating the records, and should now be backed up by the help of the parties indicated at the beginning. The individual will find that early registration is essential to accurate recording, and that imported animals must be registered in the Canadian books if their progeny is to be recorded. Get your registration to Ottawa soon!

Value of Soil Moisture.

Because it is of interest to all grain-growers to know something of the processes at work in Nature to produce crops, we summarize here some of the facts that have been collected upon the relation of moisture to grain-growing. The first use of water, to a growing crop begins long before the seed is placed in the ground. In the soil are myriads of minute organisms at work transforming the crude plant food which is locked up in particles of earth or in crude vegetable matter, or is circulating as gases in the soil atmosphere, into compounds ready to be appropriated by the plants. To these organisms a certain amount of moisture is absolutely necessary, and extreme drouth is most certain to destroy their usefulness. Then, apart from this biological use of water in the soil, it is continually at work elevating compounds from the sub-soil to the surface, and keeps the soil in the best physical condition for the circulation of air and the life of micro-organisms.

Coming to seeding time, moisture in just the proper amounts is necessary to put the land in good tilth and to start the chemical and biological processes by which the cells of the seed become distended; then, dividing, add to their number, and so develop growth. After growth commences soil moisture begins to play a larger part in plant development. First it brings the plant food of the soil into solution, then carries it from more remote parts to the roots of plants, transports the food in solution through roots and stems up into the leaves, where the moisture escapes, leaving the elements necessary to growth spread out in green tissues of the leaves to be further elaborated into plant food. For the purpose of transporting the plant food from the soil to the leaves a most enormous quantity of water is required. Careful calculations have deduced the fact that, in order to produce a yield of twenty-five bushels of wheat to the acre, over five hundred tons of water are required, and for every fifty bushels of oats matured, eight hundred thousand pounds of water passes through the plants, besides which much evaporates from the surface of the soil during the growing season.

These facts illustrate the immense importance of soil moisture in the production of crops. They also justify the care usually exercised in retaining moisture in the soil. A reflection upon them at once provokes the question, "How can we keep the maximum amount of moisture in the soil?" and in the pursuit of all such investigations it is the part of wisdom to keep close to nature. Nature's best agency in retaining moisture in soils is humus or decaying vegetable matter. This is the sponge Mother Earth uses to keep her face from cracking, and its fibers are the binding ties that prevent her particles drifting away. In the wild state nature always endeavors to cover the earth with a mat of humus, for the reason that the soils containing it can receive more rain without injury to themselves or crops, and resist drouth longer without harm to the plants growing thereon. The extent to which our modern methods of farming interfere with this scheme of nature's should set men thinking. Clearly, continuous cultivating and cropping tends to diminish the humus supply in the soil, and consequently the moisture supply, relatively. New land is invariably the most productive, not simply because it contains a large amount of plant food, but because of the larger supply of decaying vegetable matter it contains, and consequently the larger supply of moisture. The lesson from this is to conduct operations with the object of retaining moisture.