

## THE CANADIAN BACON TRADE

Mr. George Mathews, President of the George Mathews Co., pork packers, etc., in a letter some weeks ago to the *Lindsay Post*, gives some advice to farmers as to the kind of hog required for bacon purposes, and from which we take the following :

Farmers have often said, "If the hogs you advise us to raise are worth more than the ordinary run of hogs, why don't you pay an extra price for them?" That is just what we are doing now, and we hope that the farmers will see that it is to the interest of their pockets to turn out only first quality hogs and get the highest price. This is a more serious question for our farmers than it is generally considered. By sending, as we are now doing, a large proportion of No. 2 and Stout Bacon to England we are over-loading that market with that article (No. 2 and Stout) to such an extent that it actually depresses the market value of No. 1 selection some shillings per cwt. under the price it would bring if it were not for the large quantity of unsizable bacon (as it is called in England) going there from Canada. This statement is corroborated by the *Grocer*, the leading provision paper in England, in its issue of January 21st, '99. The following is the quotation : "The dealings in Canadian pea-fed have been similar to those in most other cures, being of a halting and timid character, and with the railway depots fairly choked up with later arrivals, a pressure to sell has been attended by the acceptance of less money. Never has so unmanageable a quantity of Canadian bacon been put forward at one time, and, worse than all, it consists of a greater percentage of unsuitable stuff than can easily be got rid of, and, with both the weight and volume of the imports increased, importers have despaired of meeting with purchasers at rates satisfactory to themselves."

It rests with the farmers to change this state of affairs by having their hogs the right quality and weight to make the first selection of bacon. I notice some speakers referring to this subject, both on the platform and through the press, say that the packers are always changing the selections so that the farmers cannot understand what they really do want. I have been in the export bacon trade for the last six years, and I know of no change excepting that in the late summer and fall we can take the hogs up to 220 as first selection, for at that season the hogs are not penned up, and

having plenty of exercise do not get as fat when weighing 220 pounds as they do in the winter when weighing only 200 pounds. A large number of the hogs that we are now receiving weighing 200 pounds each are altogether too fat to make first selection bacon from. Then there is the hog with thick heavy shoulders—the reason the English dealers want sides with light shoulders is that the shoulder is of only small value as compared with the rest of the side. In Smithfield market, London, the provision men have great stacks of smoked Wiltshire-cut bacon, some stacks of whole sides, others of sides with shoulders cut off, and others with shoulders alone cut from the sides after they have been smoked ; if you inquire the prices they will offer you the shoulders for just about half the price they sell the remainder of the sides for. That is the reason they will not pay the highest price for sides with heavy shoulders.

## DO PACKERS PAY A SUFFICIENT PREMIUM FOR BACON HOGS?

Those who have followed the weekly market reports in *Farming* for the past month or two anyway closely will have noticed that the difference in the prices paid on the Toronto market for choice bacon hogs and for thick fat hogs has been from twenty-five to forty-five cents per hundred pounds. In last week's issue there was a difference of only twenty-five cents between the prices paid for these two qualities of hogs. This is really a remarkable state of affairs. For the past two or three years nothing has been brought so prominently before our breeders and farmers than the necessity of having the right kind of hog for bacon-producing purposes, and yet we find that the packers and buyers throughout the country will at the most not pay more than fifty cents per cwt. for choice bacon hogs than for thick fat hogs. In fact, many drovers in the country make very often pay as much for one kind as the other.

With this condition of affairs existing is it any wonder that our farmers and breeders are not taking to the raising of choice bacon hogs as readily as was to be expected under the circumstances. So long as the farmer can get within a few cents, if not as much, per cwt. for his thick fat hogs as for the bacon type he will not be very eager to discard the former and adopt the latter. Breeders of what are termed the thick fat hog and farmers