

THE SHEEP INDUSTRY IN NOVA SCOTIA.

By M. Cumming, Secretary for Agriculture.

Nova Scotian conditions are admirably adapted to the successful development of all branches of animal industry. Dairy cattle, beef cattle, horses, swine and sheep all flourish, and have joined to add to the profits of the Maritime farmer. He, in turn, has learned that he cannot afford to farm without the aid of one or more of these classes of stock, whose products or themselves, sold off the farm, remove so little fertility, as compared with the fertility which is removed when hay and oats and roots, in their unmanufactured condition, are put on the markets. Each of these classes of stock possesses individual advantages over the other, and in the management and marketing of each special difficulties are met with, which, in part, offset their peculiar fitness. Dairy cattle give sure profits, but require extra labor; beef cattle economize labor, but frequently give small profits; horses are profitable stock, but require a special skill in management, and, moreover, entail extra risk; swine pay well if you have enough by-products to feed them on, and do not have to buy too much expensive millfeeds; and sheep do well if you only protect them from their foes and give them a fair chance.

There are few countries where sheep farming cannot be profitably carried on, but Nova Scotia possesses exceptional advantages which make it possible for the skilled manager to surpass results which can be obtained in many parts of the world: (a) The country abounds in hilly, well-watered pastures, which, when properly treated, afford the best of feed for successful sheep-raising. (b) The climate is cool and moist, and, as a result, sheep are generally healthy and free from contagious disease. (c) The quality of the wool is considerably superior to that produced in the inland parts of America, and, as a result, local manufacturers are prepared to pay the highest market prices for this product. Nova Scotia wool products are being more and more appreciated in various parts of America. The superiority of these products, so our manufacturers state, is in no small measure due to the superior quality of the wool produced in this Maritime Province. As a result, sheep-raisers are safe in counting on a continuance of high prices for wool. (d) The possibilities of marketing mutton are excellent. During the greater part of the year, the local demand is so keen that it exceeds the supply, and lambs and mutton have to be shipped from other parts of Canada to supply the market. In addition, an export market for lambs has been established with the Eastern United States, the inhabitants of which have learned to appreciate the quality of this Nova Scotia product. (e) Lands are generally inexpensive. In France, on lands worth \$250 per acre, there are farms devoted almost exclusively to mutton and wool raising. The same is true of parts of England. The advantage of cheaper lands of Nova Scotia, as a means of reducing the cost of production, is apparent to anyone. (f) Perhaps the most conclusive statement of all in favor of sheep-raising in the Province is that those farmers who are engaged in intelligently carrying on this industry report large profits.

That the advantages easily surpass the disadvantages is clear to anyone; but, despite these considerations, there has, during the thirty years, beginning 1871, been a large decrease in the number of sheep kept in Nova Scotia. In 1871 there were in this Province 398,000 sheep, and in 1901 there were 285,000, a decrease of 113,000 in the past thirty years; i. e., a little over 28 per cent. This fact, in regard to the decrease in the number of sheep kept in Nova Scotia, has received considerable attention from various writers, who have, in many cases, attributed it to such local causes as the prevalence of dogs, etc. While, unquestionably, the dog nuisance, in part, accounts for the decrease, yet a consideration of the following facts shows that the cause lies deeper than that. In Germany there has been a decrease in the corresponding thirty years of 60 per cent., in France 30 per cent., and in Great Britain 15 per cent., and in the United States 25 per cent., in the number of sheep kept, and similar decreases in sheep-raising the world over.

The causes for this widespread decrease are easily explained. Thirty years ago, large areas in Australia, New Zealand, the Argentine Republic, and the Western United States, were devoted to sheep-raising. The sheep kept on these ranches were, for the most part, Merinos and their grades, a class of sheep especially adapted to the production of wool, but not well suited for the production of mutton. Under these conditions, enormous quantities of wool were produced, and prices naturally dropped. This caused large numbers to give up the business. Concurrently with this, droughts in many of the sheep sections of the world caused great losses. As a result, there was an enormous decrease in the number of sheep kept, amounting altogether to, it is estimated, 90,000,000 in the world. Following this, there has come a decrease in the supply of wool, and prices have gone up, but this time on a much more permanent basis than heretofore, for

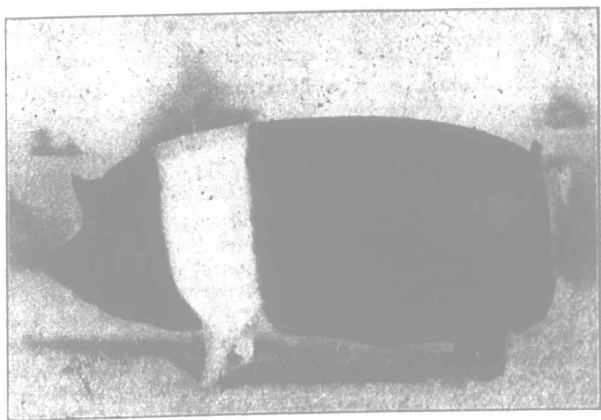
the reason that in large areas, especially of the general farming sections, mutton sheep have begun to supplant the old Merino strains. Consequently, the farmer in Canada, as well as the rancher in Australia, or the Argentine Republic, has now two markets at his command, namely, a market for wool, and the market for mutton. With this new lease of life, it has come about that large areas, especially in the Western United States, which were formerly available for sheep-ranching, are now settled and devoted to general farming. Hence, this great source of supply can no more be counted upon, and, as a result, it is the opinion of experts that sheep-raising will for the next years be pursued to a larger extent than heretofore in such general farming sections as the Eastern United States, the Maritime Provinces, and other parts of the Dominion of Canada.



Count Fascinator.

Shorthorn bull; roan; calved 25th January, 1907; sire Fascinator (88569). Bred by A. T. Gordon, Combscausway, Insh., Scotland.

During the past four or five years, with both the mutton and wool market at his command, the shepherd has received good prices, and the world has gradually been coming back to its rightful number of sheep. No statistics later than 1901 are available in regard to the number of sheep in Nova Scotia, but, from correspondence received in reply to inquiries, we feel safe in saying that there has been a considerable increase in the past few years. Every well-wisher of the Province cannot but hope that this increase will become much more marked in ensuing years. The industry is capable of great development, and it will be a long time before the possibilities of the Province for sheep-raising will be realized. In 1901 there were kept in Nova Scotia one sheep to every 35 acres. In Great Britain, the average is almost a sheep to the acre; and, while we have large areas of non-agricultural lands, which in part offset the poor showing in regard to the number of sheep kept here, yet the figures signify a large scope for development. Since the above was written, a bulletin, just published by the



A Hampshire Boar.

(See "Gossip," page 757.)

Census and Statistics Department, at Ottawa, places the increase in sheep in Nova Scotia, since 1901, at 106,391, so that there are now only 6,609 sheep less than in 1871.

Farmers advance a number of reasons why they have not and will not embark more heavily in the sheep-raising enterprise. We will give a little consideration to each of these reasons in their turn:

1. We do not care for sheep. The farmer who has not a natural fondness for a particular class of stock will seldom succeed with that stock. By some it is considered that sheep require less care than any other animals on the farm, and while, in a measure, this is true, yet the fact remains that no animal will respond quicker to proper management than sheep. We have known two

farmers to start with equally good flocks of sheep on equally good farms, and, while the one may have realized anywhere from ten to forty per cent. profit, the other has suffered almost an equal loss. There are, then, farmers who, unless they teach themselves to care more for sheep, had perhaps better dispense with them. As a business proposition, however, there are few farms, outside of the fruit sections, where a small stock of sheep cannot be turned to profitable account.

2. Sheep-raising does not pay. A few years ago, when prices for wool were low, sheep were not very profitable stock, but, even in these years, good shepherds report a reasonable profit. With present prices prevailing, no more profitable stock is kept on the average farm. The future, moreover, seems assured, and it is significant that level-headed farmers are everywhere increasing their flocks of sheep. No one, seriously, under present conditions, adduces this as a reasonable objection to sheep farming.

3. The difficulty of fencing. This, I believe, is one of the greatest reasons why many farmers have disposed of the sheep which used to be kept on their lands. At the time when barbed-wire fences first came in, many farmers used two strands of this wire for fencing. This was perfectly effective against all other kinds of stock but sheep. Fortunately, this criminal kind of fence is being given up, and woven-wire fences and more humane pole fences are being used. The man who is too careless to keep up his fences, not only has difficulty with sheep, but seldom succeeds with any kind of farming. In any case, sheep merit a little extra labor spent on the fences, for they ask for only cheap buildings for winter shelter, and for far less labor in caring for them than other classes of stock. Moreover, so far as their breaking through fences is concerned, a little training makes a great difference. Sheep that are constantly frightened are far more apt to break through fences than those that are properly cared for, and that have no fear of their owners. Once a flock of sheep has become so thoroughly domesticated that they will make little effort to break through fences, one should always be careful not to put in with them sheep from a breechy flock.

4. They are hard on pastures. No doubt pastures which are already stocked to their limit with other classes of stock, and that are called upon to support, in addition, a flock of sheep, must appear to suffer from these omnivorous eaters. But where a fair allowance is made, and where the sheep are not turned out too early, it is the opinion of many of our stockmen that a reasonable flock of sheep are no harder on pastures than any other class of stock. And then they surpass all other farm animals in that they eat quantities of weeds that no other stock would touch, and hence assist in keeping farms free from these pests. We were discussing this phase of the sheep question a few weeks ago with one of the most extensive farmers in Scotland, who said that he always found it necessary to put a few sheep in the same pasture with his dairy cattle, beef cattle or horses, in order to keep down pernicious weeds. In these days, when labor-saving devices are so keenly sought after, it would seem reasonable to suppose that almost every farmer would appreciate a small flock of sheep, if for no other reason than that they will save hoeing, cultivating and other manual labor necessary to eradicate these troublesome pests.

5. The dog nuisance. That there have been large numbers of sheep destroyed in this Province by dogs, everyone knows. That many farmers have been driven out of the business owing to the ravages of dogs, and that many others have been prevented from entering into it from fear of the same source of loss, no one can deny. Undoubtedly, the evil has, in some quarters, been exaggerated, but nevertheless it is a real one. The question arises, can anything be done to remove, or, at least, reduce to a minimum, this serious obstacle to sheep-raising?

The Province already has a very good regulatory law, but by many it is considered that it does not go far enough, and ought to be amended.

We have already stated that sheep can be cared for with less labor and at less expense than any other class of animals on the farm. There is, however, a minimum of care and feed which is necessary before any real success can be achieved. We have frequently read popular articles in reference to sheep, which would lead one to believe that these profitable animals can live upon the dry hills in summer time, and upon the cheapest of fodder in the winter time; need receive no special care, and will pay a handsome profit in response to this kind of treatment. Nothing could be further from the truth, for, while sheep can be kept comparatively cheaply, yet no animals respond better to care. The pastures on which sheep will succeed need not be clothed with a rank growth of grass, but should provide a thick, succulent mixture of grasses, and, if possible, considerable white clover. The dry wire-grass so often found on run-out fields will not even maintain a sheep in weight. There are farmers who have such pastures whose sheep are fleshier in