

Our Scottish Letter.

Within the past fortnight we have fairly inaugurated the summer show season of 1894. Besides the interest awakened by these in the west country, the Royal Commission on Agriculture is fairly under way, and while the Western Sub-Commissioner, Mr. John Speir, has little more than begun his work. His eastern colleague, Mr. James Hope, has issued his views on the agricultural situation. Interest is also much excited, especially in the feeding counties of the east of Scotland, on the subject of the opening of the ports to Canadian cattle. It may be said that opinion in Fifeshire and Torfar is all but unanimously in favor of this course; in Aberdeenshire it is divided, and north of that the preponderance of feeling is against opening the ports. Perthshire is about equally divided in opinion, but the rest of Scotland is generally opposed to the admission of foreign stores. Breeders of cattle of every class and dairy farmers are all opposed to the free importation of store cattle, and in England, with the exception of some Norfolk graziers, there is no demand at all for the admission of foreign cattle. It was expected that Mr. Gardner, the Minister of Agriculture, would have made known his mind ere this, but he has not yet done so. Meantime his verdict is eagerly looked for by all parties, and business in the cattle trade is in a somewhat uncertain state until it is seen how matters tend. In the interest of the numerous army of small farmers and crofters in this country, whose revenue is largely dependent on the prices obtained for their young cattle, I am in favor of the ports being kept closed against foreign stores, and so long as beef remains at its present price it is hard to see what reason exists for altering present arrangements; of course, this is written from the point of view of a British farmer, who is also a breeder. I can very well understand the feelings of the man who is a feeder. He has to pay a fair price for his stores; in plain English, he has to buy them in a protected market, but he has to sell them, fat, in a free market. He has there to compete with foreign meat sent in by the ton, and naturally he objects to the one-sided arrangement. The question really resolves itself into an inquiry as to whether the breeding of cattle in this country is not to cease altogether. Plainly, whatever the issue may be there will be loss and suffering on the part of one section of the community. Our free trade policy, while no doubt favorable to industrial prosperity over all, is in some respects hurtful to the agricultural interest. In spite of this, however, Mr. James Hope, the Sub-Commissioner, does not favor protection. He admits that a duty on corn would help the prices, but the enhanced value would, in the long run, go into the landlord's pockets, and the farmer would be stranded, as at present. He, however, indicated a preference for reciprocity, commenting on the one-sided character of our fiscal relations with America. With a large-hearted magnanimity, which cannot be too highly commended, Great Britain allows herself to be the free coup of the commercial world. She takes all that comes and charges nothing, but when she sends even such necessities of life as potatoes to her cousins in the United States, they very generously charge an *ad valorem* duty of from 30 to 40 per cent. before they allow the tubers to be landed. This strikes Mr. Hope as a little absurd, and no doubt, being an extensive potato grower himself, he appreciates the state of matters thus indicated.

A word or two on the recent shows may suffice. The exhibition held at Kilmarnock is usually strongest in Clydesdales and Hackneys. Ayrshire cattle make a fairly good show, but Ayr remains their headquarters. Black-faced and border Leicester sheep are rapidly growing in favor with the gentlemen who favor Kilmarnock with their presence. This year the show was held on a miserable day, rain of a cold, irritating type falling all the time, and neither beast nor body could find any enjoyment in the surroundings. Mr. Abram Kerr, Castlehill, Durrisdale, who is unfortunately leaving the farm which he has tenanted for a long series of years, was a successful exhibitor of Ayrshires. He has one of the best herds in the country, and its dispersion in a few weeks should mark a record in the history of the Ayrshire breed. The show of Clydesdales was, as is usually the case at Kilmarnock, exceptionally good. Mr. Gilmour showed two of his fine mares, Montrave Gay Lass and Montrave Lady, both descended from the Poteth breed of the late Dugald McKinnon, and the former was first in the brood mare class and champion of the show, while the latter was second in the yeld class. Mr. David Mitchell, of Millfield, won first prize in the yeld class with the Flashwood mare, Lillie Langtry, a mare which, if not of the greatest size, is remarkably sweet, level and even. Mr. W. W. Galbraith, of Croftfort, Gartcosh, was first in the three-year-old class, his representative being Neda, a sweet filly, which won first prize last year at Glasgow and Hamilton. Her dam was a lovely Darnley mare named Zeynah, a well-known prize-winner, and her sire, Gay Wyndham, which

gained first prize at the Glasgow Stallion Show when a two-year-old. Mr. Leonard Pilkington, Cavens, Kirkbeau, owned the first prize two-year-old filly, Fairy Footstep, by Prince of Carlung, a really good animal, which will take a lot of beating. The great feat of the show was the phenomenal victory of Mr. Andrew Mitchell, Barcheskie, Kirkcudbright, who won first, second and third prizes in a very large class of yearling fillies. They stood in the same order at Castle-Douglas, and the first is by Macgregor, the second by Goldfinder, and the third by Rosewood. What makes Mr. Mitchell's victory all the more remarkable is the fact that the first and third fillies were bred by himself. In the colt classes the result of combining Prince of Wales blood with a double cross of Darnley blood was easily seen. Mr. W. S. Park's Prince of Erskine, by Prince of Albion, was first prize three-year-old. Mr. William Park's Prince of Brunstane was first prize two-year-old, and a colt of Mains of Airies was first prize yearling. The most interesting competition of the day was that for the stallion championship. There competed, the famous horses Prince of Kyle, Prince Alexander, Prince of Erskine and Prince of Brunstane, and victory remained with Mr. Renwick's Prince Alexander 8800, which thus added another to his numerous laurels.

The draught sale at Mains of Airies realized fairly good prices. The first Cawdor cup winner, Irene, was sold for 300 gs. or £378, and the Darnley mare, Leonora, without any record in the show yard, at 350 gs. or £367 10s. The purchaser of Irene, which is own sister to Prince of Carruchan, the Cawdor cup winner of 1894, is Mr. Sinclair Scott, Burnside Largs, and the purchaser of Leonora, Mr. Alexander Cross, of Knockdon, Maybole, twelve brood mares made an average of £120 8s. each, and one of the two-year-old colts, a son of Prince Alexander and Pandora, was sold for £202 10s. to Mr. John Marr, Cairnbrogie, Oldmeldrum.

Next week will be a very busy one; Mr. John Thornton holds three important Shorthorn sales in Northumberland. We have Ayr and Maryhill shows in the west country, and good things are being done in the east. SCOTLAND YET.

How, When, and Where Shall We Market Our Wool, and the Sheep Trade?

[Paper prepared by D. McRae, Guelph, Ont., for the Dominion Sheep Breeders' Association.]

Canadian wool is generally of good quality, sound and strong in staple. It is not usually sent to market clean and free from foreign substances. It is desirable that it should be in the best of condition, if it is to command the best price. This cannot be easily done with our present surroundings and modes of feeding, but much can be done to make it better than it is at present. First, we must clean our fields and fence corners of all burdocks and other weeds of an objectionable character; the great trouble in Canadian wool is the large, soft bur, which has to be removed by hand. The smaller, hard bur can be taken out by suitable machinery, but the larger one can not be treated in this way. It frequently happens that even with ordinary care a flock will pick up a few burs in the fall; these should be carefully removed by hand as soon as noticed. Another trouble is our winter feeding, and it is very difficult to arrange any mode of feeding that will keep the fleeces clean from straws, seeds, etc. The closely-built racks with the opening at the bottom are a help, but even with them the wool about the neck is frequently full of bits of straw and chaff. The whole of the Canadian clip will be lowered in price by about three cents per pound on account of the presence of burs and straws in the fleece. The springtime is that usually selected for shearing. Some experiments have been made in fall clipping, but these have not been very successful. Breeders of pure-bred sheep usually clip in the grease, and where the animals are in high flesh, and valuable, it is much safer to do so. The price obtained is lower than that usually paid for washed wool, taking both on a scoured basis. With a free market in the United States this will soon right itself. Already several Canadian manufacturers are anxious to get all the unwashed wool they can buy at current rates, which are one-third less than washed prices. When the flock are clipped each fleece should be spread carefully on a clean table—an old door or trestle does very well for this purpose—the clipped side down, and the fleece examined and foreign substances removed, also all dung-larks pulled out, not clipped off. These dung-larks should be kept apart and cleaned, but not put in or with the fleeces. The fleece being cleaned, the sides are folded inwards, leaving a breadth of about two feet, varying according to the size of the fleece. Clean, loose locks are put in the middle. The fleece is then rolled from the tail towards the neck, neatly and tightly, the neck twisted into a rope long enough to go around the fleece, and the end tightly secured below the rope.

The fleece thus rolled with the clipped side out is a bundle easily handled, and can be packed and re-packed without trouble or breaking. Broken fleeces are not worth as much to the dealer as those neatly packed. Any trashy, seedy or cotted fleeces should be kept by themselves, as they bring an inferior price. The shearing fleeces are better kept separate, though few of our country dealers take this trouble. The time to sell is usually when the market has fully opened. The first wool is often bought at a low price, and the highest point reached is frequently on the flush of the market. This is the case with ordinary washed wool; for unwashed, it may be sold as soon as clipped, and at this time the price will often be finer than when the market has opened for washed wools.

The place to sell is, of course, where the highest price can be obtained, and this will frequently be at the mill which is using the class of wool grown by the farmer. Cotswold is the coarsest grown in Canada, and is specially well adapted for mills manufacturing carpet warp. The strongest and longest breech wool is well adapted for this purpose. The same mills can use the finer parts of the fleece for the manufacture of other yarns. Leicester and Lincoln wool will be bought by worsted mills. The various kinds of Down wool can also be used by these mills, and they are also very suitable for hosiery purposes, and the most of our knitting mills will use ordinary wool; if of a fine grade, any wools of a Down quality. Many mills use a large amount of "Southern" wool, which, with shoddy, enters largely into the cheaper grades of "all-wool" Canadian goods. If not near a good mill, the large firms of wool dealers have agents and correspondents in all the leading towns and villages, and the cash value can generally be got for any of these.

THE SHEEP TRADE.

With wool very low in price, the flock master has had to face a very dull market for his lambs. For several years past the lambs have been selling well and the prices have been good, gradually but steadily tending upwards. Last year there was a decided reaction. Prices for ordinary lambs were last fall away down. In some sections they have been almost unsaleable; this has been caused by the low prices in the United States market, which is almost our only export market for lambs. In the leading live stock market of that land cattle have held their own; hogs are still keeping fairly well up, while sheep have fallen far below the average of former years. One chief cause of this was the rush to sell. For many weeks and months the weekly arrivals in Chicago in the sheep pens were from 60,000 to 70,000; this was more than fifty per cent. above the ordinary receipts for the same time the previous year. Perhaps one cause of this is the "free wool" tariff proposed under the new Wilson Bill. Wool-growers who have been getting protection prices for their wool became alarmed and rushed their sheep to the shambles in greater numbers than the market could quickly absorb. A speedy fall in prices followed. The result has been a drop in the Canadian lamb market at Buffalo. The reaction, however, seems to have set in. The McKinley tariff fixed the duty at 75 cents per head. This was the one point where the McKinley tariff did not put up the duty. It is said that in estimating the duty, McKinley was not aware of the good quality, and therefore of the high price of Canadian lambs, and really thought he was increasing the duty. The return to an *ad valorem* duty of 20 per cent. will be higher, if good prices prevail, than it is now. This is the duty proposed on all animals under the new Wilson Bill. The duty of the Canadian breeder is to raise the very best lambs, feed them well and have them in the best possible shape when ready for market. The Americans now raise plenty of medium and inferior mutton and lamb. What is wanted is a first-class article. There is much room for improvement here. Use only pure-bred rams. Dock all, and castrate male lambs while young; keep fields free from burs, and have abundance of good feed for your ewes and growing lambs. Second growth clover or a nice field of rape for the fall is excellent feed to bring on lambs. Another line in which there is plenty of room, and in which there seems to be considerable profit, is the raising of early lambs for the spring market. There is a good demand at long prices, and very little of this class of stock is available. Those who have gone into it say it pays well.

As regards the prospects for the future, sheep breeders need not be discouraged. The past was an off year, but the probability is that there will be more attention paid to raising a good mutton sheep in the United States, and that there will be a good demand for rams of the best mutton breeds. The reduced prices for wool will almost certainly cause this. Mutton is becoming more and more a popular article of diet, though, in this respect, the whole of the American continent is far behind Britain in the use of mutton as a staple food. It is the most wholesome of all the meats for human food, and as a better quality is supplied, the amount used will certainly steadily increase. The awards at the World's Fair, at which our Canadian flocks took such a prominent place, will clearly point to Canada as the place to get the best stock to improve the flocks of the continent. Some of our best come from Britain, but in Canadian hands they become acclimatized and accustomed to the changed conditions of life on this continent, and therefore more valuable to the American buyer.