

A Review of the Season's Dairying in Western Ontario

By R. J. Skelton, B.S.A.

THE early part of the season of 1916 gave promise of being a record breaker in the dairy world. The too-abundant rains which so discouraged the farmers in their endeavour to put in their spring seeding, gave the pastures a good start, with the result that the milk flow was heavy. Markets were good and prices high for both cheese and butter, and all signs pointed towards a big year for the dairyman.

But early prospects, like many of the "schemes o' mice an' men," did not materialize. The wet spring was followed by one of the dryest and hottest summers on record. Pastures burned up under the scorching summer sun, and farmers, the country over, were wondering why they had not built that summer silo for just such an emergency.

The cheesemaker's greatest problem this season has been the securing of sufficient coagulant with which to make his cheese. Hitherto our chief source of rennet supply has been Germany and Austria. The failure of this supply sent prices soaring to anywhere from seven to ten dollars per gallon for rennet and even then the supply was limited.

The necessity of securing an adequate supply of coagulant for cheese-making purposes led to considerable experimenting with pepsin. The Finch Experiment Station and the Cheese-making Department of the Ontario Agricultural College carried out various experiments with a view to securing an acceptable substitute for rennet.

Numerous pepsin compositions, good, bad and indifferent, were secured from various manufacturers and given a trial. These experiments showed that pepsin can be used as a coagulant for cheesemaking without injuring the quality of the cheese. This led the Dominion Government, through the Dairy & Cold Storage Commissioner, to secure a large quantity of pepsin and distribute it at cost to cheese makers, at the same time giving adequate directions for its use.

The action of the Government and the more or less extensive use of pepsin, has apparently given rise to some misgivings on the part of rennet manufacturers that rennet will not be needed again when we get back to normal conditions. They may rest assured, however, that rennet will come into its own again unless pepsin be manufactured on a more extensive and scientific scale than it is at present. In the meantime, we would do well to realize that here in Canada we waste annually enough calves' stomachs to make more than sufficient rennet to supply our needs. It should be possible to form some system of co-operation between farmers and dairymen, whereby these rennets could be collected, and thus make ourselves independent of foreign countries in this important dairy requisite.

The Canadian National Exhibition has come and gone once more. As usual Ontario captured most of the prizes in cheese. The judges were heard to remark that practically the whole exhibit would class as "extras."