

FARMER'S ADVOCATE

AND HOME MAGAZINE

* AGRICULTURE, STOCK, DAIRY, POULTRY, HORTICULTURE, VETERINARY, HOME CIRCLE.*

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VOL. XXXIII

LONDON, ONT., AND WINNIPEG, MAN., APRIL 1, 1898.

No. 451.

EDITORIAL.

To all appearances the farmers' season of 1898 is commencing right. Not only is work on the land commencing early, but the prospects for clover and fall wheat (where grown) promise well. These favorable features following the hope-inspiring season of 1897, should prompt every man to do his best in every department, sowing only good, pure seed in properly prepared soil, and by draining, fencing, tree planting, etc., prepare for greater profits and more genial surroundings.

Our New Department.

The remarkable growth of our "Questions and Answers" and other practical experience departments show how fully the FARMER'S ADVOCATE is being used as the channel of inter-communication between farmers everywhere. In order that all may be better posted as to supply, demand and prices of leading lines of stock and products, we began in last issue and continue in this, as our readers will notice, a "Farm Gossip" department, which is being well received, and to which concise information on important features from other sections will be appreciated. Write us say a week before the 1st or 15th of the month so as to be in good time for publication.

Another Canadian Honored.

The recent appointment of Mr. R. S. Shaw, a graduate of the Ontario Agricultural College, and son of Professor Thomas Shaw, to the professorship of Agriculture in the College of the State of Montana, located at Bozeman, will be regarded by all who know Mr. Shaw, and have watched his career as a student, as an excellent one and one that will almost certainly prove satisfactory in every respect. Mr. Shaw was a brilliant student and made his mark high on the honor roll at the Agricultural College at Guelph, where he was highly esteemed for his many excellent qualities, both by the professors and his fellow students, who will be pleased to learn of his appointment to a position which he is so well qualified to fill. Since his graduation he has been managing the home-stead farm, near Hamilton, Ontario, and, we believe, has been more than once engaged on the lecturing staff of the Farmers' Institutes in Minnesota and other Western States, where he made a good impression. He adds another to the already lengthy list of graduates of the O.A.C. who have received appointments of trust and responsibility in American institutions, and we heartily wish him success in his new sphere of labor.

The Fencing Question.

We publish in this issue the commencement of an excellent lot of letters in reply to our article in March 15th number, on the subject of "Farm Fencing." We regret that we have to withhold several excellent communications, especially upon wire fencing, for subsequent issues. This is a live topic at this particular age of our country when many of the first fences are done beyond repair and men have to resort to new systems and materials. At this season many will read these letters with much interest, especially those contemplating the repair of old rail structures before the stock go out to pasture. The straight fence made from rails, stakes or posts and wire seems to be most in favor by our correspondents, and as these are most easily erected while the ground is soft, the present is the time to go at it on farms still too wet for seeding. In a very few days an excellent showing can be made by two or three willing hands, when not only will a troublesome, unsightly and unsafe fence be displaced by a neat and secure one, but an entire summer's fuel can be gained from the broken and half rotten rails, which are easily worth the labor of building the new fence. We invite a still further discussion, especially upon the re-erection of rail fences, from those who have found satisfaction from a method not already referred to by our correspondents.

The Demand for Pure-bred Stock.

The great success attending the recent public sales of Messrs. Isaac, of Markham, Ont.; Simmons, of Ivan; Hunter, of Alma, and other Canadian breeders, is noteworthy. Not within the last ten years or more has the demand for pure-bred stock of all classes been so active as at the present time, or the prices paid so uniformly good. The most sanguine optimist could hardly have believed a year ago, when the mist of agricultural depression began to show indications of rising, that in so short a time the business outlook in all lines could have become so bright and cheering. It speaks volumes for the solidity and the recuperative power of the great industry of farming that in one year, with a good average crop and only moderate prices, so great a transformation has been brought about, not only in itself, but also in the many industries which are dependent, directly or indirectly, on agriculture, for nearly every industry has felt the influence and effect of the farmer's improved condition, and has rejoiced with him in the encouraging prospect. But while every branch of farming has felt more or less the effect of the revival of better times, none has been so distinctly stimulated as has that of live stock, and especially the pure-bred stock industry, and pre-eminently that of the beef breeds, while the dairy breeds still hold their fort, enjoying a healthy demand at good paying prices. The latter had a palmy innings even in the days of the depression, when the beef breeds were begging for buyers and bulls were bred at a loss, but now all are in demand and are bringing satisfactory prices. Dairying is still on the advance, and dairymen have this distinct advantage, which stands them in good stead in times of depression, and indeed at all times, that their calves are profitably raised on the skim milk while the cows are making money out of the fat product and "keep the pot boiling" the year round.

When twelve to fifteen months old bulls of the beef type are selling at less than one hundred dollars there is little if any money in it for the breeder, since the cow's whole milk goes to the calf and he is fed liberally on a grain ration, the value of which, together with the fat in his mother's milk, if computed and charged up to him, would leave him in debt to his breeder. Viewing the matter in this light, from the standpoint of the breeder, it was time for a change to better prices, and it must be gratifying to them that a new era in values seems to have dawned, though there is no boom, and that they are now receiving paying prices for their stock. With the low prices prevailing in the past few years there was little encouragement to breeders to invest in high-class sires, and, indeed, the quarantine regulations were so severe that few were willing to take the risk of importing new blood, though it was acknowledged that new blood was needed to keep up the standard of our stock.

That Canadian breeders are not lacking in the spirit of enterprise has been proven by their promptness in venturing to import the moment the restrictions of the quarantine were relaxed sufficiently to make it reasonably safe to do so, and the prices obtained at the recent public sales for both imported and home-bred cattle, as well as those made by private contract, have been such as to encourage breeders to spare no reasonable expense in improving their herds by importing good bulls or buying from each other the best obtainable. Canadian breeders have taken the lead in importing the best, and there is no good reason why they may not keep it. We believe we have among them the best judges on this continent. They have the advantage of close acquaintance with the breeders of Great Britain, and an intimate knowledge of their business customs and methods, and are therefore in a position to find and purchase the best stock to advantage. The rates of transportation and the regulations govern-

ing quarantine are as favorable as in the case of other countries, if not more so, and there are many reasons for believing that Canada will continue to be the chief breeding ground and source of supply of high-class stock for the American continent. A note of warning we would utter to those who contemplate importing stock and those who may be open to buy such. Let cheap and ordinary animals alone, and handle only those of first-class quality and breeding. Now is the time to set and keep the standard high.

To the average farmer and stock-raiser the cause of the rise in prices may not at first sight be apparent, since the market prices being paid for beef cattle, and especially for export cattle, are not far above normal, but a little reflection should convince him that owing to the heavy drafts made upon our supply of stockers by United States buyers, and the fact that in the past five years fewer calves of the beef grades were raised, there is a distinct shortage of good young cattle in the country, and a larger proportion of the more far-seeing of our farmers have realized the point, which we have been repeatedly urging in these columns, that in order to hold our own in the British markets, and to obtain the best prices, we must produce better cattle than we have been sending there, and that the first essential step towards that end must be the general use of pure-bred bulls of the best stamp and quality.

The Ontario Portfolio of Agriculture.

With political affairs that have no direct bearing on the work or business of the farmer, or with the future of political parties, the FARMER'S ADVOCATE does not concern itself; but we cannot close our eyes to the fact that in the Province of Ontario the Government in charge must ere long set at rest the uncertainty now existing as to its Minister of Agriculture. Ontario is essentially an agricultural province, one of the foremost in that respect on the continent; hence, the Legislature and Government are largely concerned with agricultural affairs. We have in existence a large number of State-aided organizations dealing with live stock matters, dairying, fruit-growing, poultry, beekeeping, and other branches of farming, the registration of pure-bred stock; also, exhibitions, dairy schools, the Agricultural College, agricultural societies, farmers' institutes, experimental stations, and other educational lines of work involving large expenditures and requiring close oversight. Obviously, the position of Minister of Agriculture is one of the most important in the Cabinet.

It is also one of the most difficult to fill. We have no lack of good farmers, good business men or good speakers in our various legislative bodies, but how few combine the characteristics of all these classes! What is required in the occupant of a portfolio of agriculture is practical—we might almost say expert—knowledge of the leading departments of this great industry, tried business capacity, ability to discuss public and practical questions, holding his own among able men of other professions in public or in the Legislature or Parliament, with broad, progressive ideas, but sagacious, common-sense methods, and in touch with and commanding the confidence of farmers.

The Province of Ontario has been fortunate in its Ministers of Agriculture—first Hon. Mr. Drury, and then Hon. John Dryden continuously since 1890. During the latter term we have seen live-stock interests and organizations greatly developed, travelling dairies sent out and dairy schools opened, experimental fruit stations to serve special needs established, practical demonstrations given in spraying, a Provincial Instructor in Roadmaking appointed, the Agricultural College and farm at Guelph greatly strengthened, the farmers' institute system extended, the settlement of an agricultural section of North-western Ontario promoted, and other steps taken designed to promote