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## EDITORIAL.

### Scarcity of Live Stock.

The acknowledged uncertainty of the wheat crop as a main dependence for Canadian farmers, and the low price so long prevailing for that cereal, a condition which even a war of considerable proportions, once a sure precursor of higher prices, now fails to appreciably affect, has properly led to a more general dependence upon live stock and its products for returns from the farm. The active market prices now ruling for all classes of meat and milk producing animals and for dairy products, as well as for good horses, has only one drawback, and that is the fact of the scarcity of stock in the country at the present time. A keen demand and good prices are welcome experiences and are doing much to relieve the conditions for farmers and stock breeders, and the only element of regret in the situation is that they are not in a position to reap the benefit more largely without unduly depleting their reserve of breeding stock, and thus, it may be, seriously discounting the future. The increased demand and rapid rise in values in the last three years, following a period of depression, found farmers anxious to avail themselves of the opportunity to realize on everything in the way of stock they could reasonably spare, and as a consequence the feature which most forcibly strikes the observant traveller through the country is the undoubted shortness of the supply of stock on Canadian farms. The stereotyped complaint of the market reporters is the paucity of the supply of suitable animals for the export beef trade. Feeders complain that they cannot find the class of cattle likely to make paying returns for the feed required to prepare them for market, while for the inferior class available higher prices are asked than they feel justified in paying with any hope of a margin of profit. A letter recently received at this office from a dealer who in the last two years had succeeded fairly well in filling orders for several hundred stockers for the Western States shows that he is utterly unable to repeat the experience this year, as the cattle simply cannot be found, and one man, met upon his travels, who, by taking time by the forelock, had managed to get together a considerable number on pasture, was assured of 5 cents per pound for them in the near future. In an extended trip through a considerable section of Western Ontario, fairly representative of the Province, in the last two weeks, visiting a number of breeders of Shorthorn cattle, the writer found the herds in every case noticeably short in numbers as a result of numerous sales, the owners in a majority of cases apologizing for the smallness of their herds and enquiring where they could buy to replenish their stocks. Not only were bulls fit for service found closely sold out, but the supply of females reduced to a very considerable extent, while buyers from the States were still scouring the country for more, a carload of pure-bred females leaving London for Iowa only last week, and three carloads from this district in the last three weeks for different destinations.

The temptation to sell when good prices are offered, and the natural aversion to seeing a buyer with good money go past, is more than the average breeder can successfully withstand, and, as a result, many have sold animals which they have felt in their better judgment ought to be retained in the herd to breed from and to build it up to better proportions. Justification for this course may be found in the determination entertained by some, at least, to fill up the blanks by importations, or the purchase of high-class imported animals, and by this means infusing fresh blood into their herds, and it is gratifying to find enterprising men of means so ready to take the risks of importing so largely as

they are of the best that can be bought, and disposing of them at a reasonable margin of profit. The smaller breeders who have not advertised their stock are finding customers among the more prominent breeders who have made extensive disposals and are looking for replenishing stock, but these in turn are offering only for the best, and generally that is the kind that is changing hands. As a consequence, it is largely of the best of our stock that is leaving the country, for, in the main, it is from the United States that the demand for our breeding stock comes. And the shortness of breeding cattle in that country is so very great that it must of necessity take years to recruit sufficiently to supply the requirements.

The obvious lesson for Canadian farmers, in view of these facts, would seem to be to increase their stock of cattle by raising more calves, improving the breed and quality by the use of pure-bred males of the best type, and feeding the young animals generously so as to bring them to early maturity and fit them for the highest prices in the market. Good sires are far too scarce in almost every section of the country, and there is little excuse for this fact, as pure-bred bulls of the beef breeds can even now be bought at a price which they will almost certainly bring in the market for beef at the end of a two or three years term of service, to say nothing of the increased value of their offspring as compared with common stock. In many sections where the services of superior sires may be had for a reasonable fee it is regrettable that so few farmers avail themselves of their use, as by this neglect they prejudice their own interests and the reputation and prosperity of the country.

These remarks apply equally to all classes of stock in the country at the present time, as the great demand for horses, sheep and hogs, as well as for cattle, and the well-known scarcity in all these lines, abundantly show. The present condition of the live-stock industry calls for serious consideration and a pronounced forward movement for increase and improvement, as it is undoubtedly the sheet anchor of successful farming in Canada and the most important of all our industries.

### The War with Weeds.

Constant vigilance is the price of freedom from the penalty that surely follows in the wake of neglected weeds. They are a perennial and always an aggressive enemy, and the cost of conquering them increases with their age in days. The proverbial statement that everything in life has its compensations would seem to find confirmation in the fact that in the cultivation of crops the labor required and employed in the destruction of weeds in many instances tends to improvement of the growth and development of the crop and of its final yield. This is especially true of all hoed crops, and we are inclined to the opinion that some day in the future, when cultivation reaches its climax, most of the crops of the farm will be to a greater or less extent hoed crops. If the stirring of the land around the roots of cereal plants, as well as of root crops and corn, by the admission of air and the conservation of moisture in the soil, hastens and strengthens their growth, the question whether its application more generally would not produce satisfactory results would seem to be worthy of consideration. The beneficial and more general use of the horse-power weeder and of the harrow upon cereal crops during the early stages of their growth point in the direction of an extension of the principle in this country, and the hoeing of the wheat crops, both by hand and horse power, has long been practiced in England, where cultivation has received the closest attention. In passing through some of the best agricultural districts of this country, about the only eyesore upon the landscape is the profusion of blossoms of weeds seen on some

farms, weeds that are known to be prejudicial to the crops and are bound to increase as the years go by, unless prompt and vigorous methods for their destruction are adopted. Their presence, it is but fair to state, is not in all cases an evidence of careless or bad farming, as they are sometimes found on generally well managed farms and in robust crops of grain, and the explanation is that they came in impure grass seeds purchased, where detection is difficult, or in a change of seed grain where their presence was not suspected, and in such cases it may be taken for granted that no one is more pained by their presence than the farmer who has unconsciously been victimized, and finds himself faced by a troublesome pest which may require years of labor and vigilance to eradicate.

The weeds which on Ontario farms are most disagreeably noticeable, on account of their showy colors, are ox-eye daisy and wild mustard, both of which are exceedingly troublesome and difficult to destroy, owing to the oily nature of their seeds, which retain their vitality long, and though buried for years, germinate when brought to the surface. The former is perhaps the more dangerous of the two, since it draws heavily upon the moisture and strength of the soil and is hard to pull out, and because it ripens on meadow and pasture lands and its seeds are spread in the hay and manure, and possess great vitality. Perhaps the most effectual remedy is to plow down early in June and sow a crop of rape in rows, to be cultivated with care, and followed by a crop of corn or roots.

Wild mustard, when not too strongly in possession of the land, may in time be conquered by hand pulling, or by fallowing or the repeated cultivation of hoed crops. The practicability of destroying this weed by spraying with a solution of copper sulphate (bluestone) or of sulphate of iron of approved strength, without injuriously affecting the grain crops or young clover plants, seems to have been satisfactorily demonstrated, both in Great Britain and at Canadian experiment stations, but it is probable that the labor and the expense of the necessary outfit will prove too great to warrant its general adoption. A practical farmer in an English exchange recently gave the result of his experience of spraying and also of harrowing portions of the grain crops in the same field for the destruction of charlock (wild mustard). While spraying with the solution apparently killed nearly all the mustard, the grain went off in color to a brown tinge for a week, when it recovered and a considerable proportion of the charlock afterward recovered and blossomed, while the harrowing destroyed the great majority of the weed plants and greatly improved the grain. This experiment serves to confirm the theory of beneficial effects from the use of the harrow and the weeder while the grain is growing, and we are persuaded that by this means mustard and many other weeds may be so materially weeded out of a grain crop that a little labor by way of hand pulling will effectually stamp out the pest in a few years.

We need scarcely add, since it goes without saying, that prevention is better than cure, and those who have escaped the plague, as well as those who have fallen victims to it, will be impressed with the necessity of care in the purchase or exchange of seed, of seeing that it is free from weed seeds. This is not in all cases an easy or a simple matter to decide, but it is worth while to use all the means within reach to satisfy oneself on this point, in view of the possible consequences of sowing impure seed.

Refreshing showers have fallen in most sections of Ontario in the last two weeks, and all spring crops are looking well. Hay, though very good in some sections, will on the whole be rather a light crop. There are many excellent fields of fall wheat in most districts, but a considerable proportion will not be more than two-thirds of a good crop.