

In 1891 the number of sheep in Australia and New Zealand was 124,000,000; in 1902 it was only 74,000,000. In every sheep raising country, with the exception perhaps of Argentina, there has been a large decrease in the number of sheep. In Argentina in 1891 there was 50,000,000; in 1904 the number had increased to 76,000,000, a striking increase, but not nearly enough to offset the decrease in other countries.

But to come nearer home. As was pointed out recently by the director of census for the United States, not since 1840 have there been so few sheep in the eastern, middle, western and southern states as there are to-day. The sheepfold has to a large extent been replaced by the cowbarn, the dairy, the piggery and the poultry yard. Even in the far west the area upon which sheep can be pastured is narrowly restricted by natural and trade conditions, the cattlemen showing a marked indisposition to permit sheep to interfere with their business. So circumscribed are the conditions for sheep raising on these ranges, that wool experts do not look for any increase in the wool supply from this source, even if the price goes very much higher than it is today. Such is the condition of things in the United States today, a factor that is making for a revival in sheep husbandry on the farms of that country that promises to be substantial and of long standing.

But what of Canada? Has the sheep revival reached this country? The signs are not so marked perhaps as elsewhere, but nevertheless it is on the way and will be in full swing before very long. Conditions here are such that it is bound to come. There are fewer sheep in the country than there were a decade ago and the conditions of supply and demand are such that a better state of affairs must prevail ere long. Were Canada the only country where sheep-raising has fallen off the outlook would be less hopeful. But, when, with one or two exceptions, there are fewer flocks in every sheep country the world over than there were a few years back, the general effect must be such a revival of the industry as will mean increased profits for the flock-master.

With this bright outlook before us, we can with every confidence advise our readers to keep more sheep. In fact it has been our view for several years back that farmers were acting unwisely in not keeping more sheep. Even under the unfavorable conditions that have prevailed during the past few years sheep raising properly conducted could have been made profitable. And even if the cash return were not large, the ability of a good flock of sheep to keep down weeds would have justified their retention as part of the live stock of the farm. However, this may be, we think the farmer will profit by giving more attention to sheep husbandry, and by giving heed to the advice, "Keep more sheep."

#### Value of Rural Telephones

It requires little argument to prove the value of the rural telephone in any country district. Its usefulness to the farmer has been demonstrated over and over again, and yet in this country, at least, progress in establishing rural telephones is comparatively slow.

Not so to the south of the line. There the telephone is a growing and popular institution in rural sections, and has proven its value in numbers of instances. Here is a case in point: A drover the other day called upon a farmer about fifty miles from Chicago and made an offer for the cattle and pigs on hand to be delivered at once. The offer seemed a good one, but before closing the sale the farmer took advantage of the telephone in the house, called up a Chicago commission firm and found out that there was an advance in price, and was at the same time informed what a good offer would be at that moment. Within five minutes he closed the deal with the drover at prices which paid him \$300 more than the first offer. Here is another instance: Twenty-five men were engaged at a threshing. An important part of the machine broke. No similar part was at hand. Put the rural telephone was brought into use and a conversation secured with the manufacturer in a town a number of miles away. The train left this town in fifteen minutes, with the missing piece on board. In an hour and a half it had reached the nearest railway station, and in a very short space of time was in place on the machine and everybody at work again. If no telephone had been at hand, there would have been at least twenty-four hours' delay.

Hundreds of similar instances could be given, all going to show that the telephone is indispensable in the house of an up-to-date farmer. It brings him in touch with the outside world, and he does not feel that his vocation is one of isolation. The farm telephone is in use more in the evening than during any other part of the day. Then neighbor meets neighbor, discussing the crops and all matters of mutual interest. Housewives gossip of family affairs and a community of interest is had all over the country. In this way the rural telephone is of inestimable value to the farmer and those living in the country. Of the two we believe the rural telephone will do more for the farmer than rural mail delivery, but happy the farmer who can secure both. In Canada it may be some years before rural mail delivery can be secured, but the rural telephone can be secured any time. A dozen or two farmers clubbing together, a day or two putting up the poles and wire, the purchase of the phones, etc., and the thing is done with little loss of time or any large expenditure of money.

#### Why not Fruit Exchanges?

The apple trade so far this season has not been very profitable for the grower. Prices in the country have been low; in fact too low in many cases to insure a fair profit for the producer. The crop has turned out to be larger than was expected, with a large proportion of inferior fruit. This has been offered freely and has had a more or less depressing effect upon values on the local markets. But the outlook is more

hopeful. The English market has greatly improved during the past week or two, and now that the superior winter fruit is beginning to go forward will likely continue to improve.

In Ontario at least it would seem from this season's experience, that the fruit grower has not yet reached perfection in the picking, packing and marketing of his produce. Selling out the orchard in bulk to the apple packer is not conducive to the best returns and the highest standard of quality. The situation in our opinion could be greatly improved by the growers in a district co-operating and getting their fruit ready for shipment. The co-operative fruit growers' association is not an untried experiment in Canada. There are several organizations of this kind in Ontario and the number is increasing. Where properly managed they have given satisfaction.

In our opinion the operations of these associations, for the present at least, should not go further than picking, packing, branding and getting the output of the numbers ready for shipment and for sale to the highest bidder. To go beyond this would entail a responsibility and risk that can be best met by a private corporation or individual with business connection across the ocean. With the fruit in barrels or boxes at some central shipping point, and the quality guaranteed to be what the brand represents, there would be no lack of buyers for the product at profitable prices. Perhaps, in this connection, a series of fruit exchanges, where the buyer could meet the grower or his representative, would be of advantage. At these the fruit might be offered for sale on the call system, somewhat similar to the method followed at the dairy boards of trade, now important factors in disposing of our cheese output. In this way the grower would be able to get full market value for his product, the buyer would run less risk than he does now, and the business would be better regulated and on a more satisfactory basis. The subject is worthy of careful consideration by fruit men, and might with profit be discussed at the Fruit Growers' convention this week.

#### EDITORIAL NOTES

The railway commission has appointed a special committee, one member of which is the president of the Ontario Fruit Growers' Association, to visit United States points to find out what measures have been adopted across the border for the transportation of fruit. A special effort will be made to secure a suitable railway car for the safe carriage of fruit. The commission's action in this regard merits with the hearty approval of fruit growers.

At the Fruit, Flower and Honey Show which opens today at the Granite Rink, Church St., Toronto, there are exhibits of fruit from British Columbia, Quebec, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. In some respects these provinces are ahead of Ontario in fruit culture, especially in packing and shipping, in which British Columbia and Nova Scotia excel.