

Chatty Letter from the States.

[FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.]

The American Congress has before it several measures which are of more or less interest to the agricultural classes. The movement to create, in the Agricultural Department, a bureau of animal industry, is a good one, and it seems odd that some such move had not long before been made. It would seem that the aforesaid department had entirely neglected the animal industry of the States and devoted its attention to the distribution of seeds, cultivation of tea, etc. The men who are working for the consummation of the scheme here spoken of, however, have been incited by just one motive: that of getting England to raise her embargo against American cattle. In their zeal to accomplish this end, they seem to forget that there are any other important functions which an animal bureau should try to perform; such as looking out for the advancement of the other branches of live stock, and trying to prevent and suppress contagious diseases of all kinds for the sake of so doing, and not merely because of any action on the part of another country which is looked upon as a valuable market. There are a great many very good and earnest people who believe that the members of the so called Treasury Cattle Commission who get \$10 a day and expenses when on duty, have put the Government to a good deal of useless expense, and that several of them are working for the enormous appropriation asked of Congress, simply to be able to continue their junketings over the country at the expense of the Government. The principle of having such a commission organized, as it is, to look out for the health of the farm stock, is certainly wrong, because it is only fair and reasonable to presume that they will consume as much time as possible, whether anything is done or not.

It is a very nice theory that honest men, as most of the gentlemen composing the said commission are believed to be, will be conscientious in their operations, but it must be remembered that with one, or possibly two, exceptions, that there are no men on the commission who are fitted for the work; they know little or nothing about the diseases which they were appointed to eliminate. Such work should be done by Government employes who should receive regular salaries. Very much better service ought to be had for very much less money than they are getting.

There is, just now, an unusual scarcity of good to prime heavy cattle, and prices for such are keeping up fully 25c. to 75c. per 100 lbs. higher than during the corresponding time last year.

One week, recently, out of 42,000 cattle received at Chicago, there was not a train load of prime cattle. Indeed, there were very few that, in average weight, were heavier than 1350 lbs. The export cattle trade is unusually good for this season, but the highest priced cattle are being slaughtered in Chicago and sent to the Atlantic seaboard in refrigerators. Cattle dealers appear quite sanguine of good prices for good cattle during the next few months. However, the very prospect of good prices based on a scarcity of choice cattle, may conspire to make things appear to go by con-

traries. That is, there is a tolerably general belief that ripe cattle will be scarce, and, at the same time, there is a vast amount of soft corn in the country fit for nothing but feeding, and there certainly is no lack of young stock which might soon be put in good condition by feeding.

There is talk of "a corner" on Hereford cattle. A few breeders and dealers are gathering up all of the thoroughbred bulls they can buy and there is a strong prospect that prices for such stock will be unreasonably high in the spring.

The death of the veteran Hereford champion, W. H. Sotham, early last month, was not surprising, as he was getting very feeble. The Hereford men have lost a zealous champion. His son, Thos. F., is now associated in business as follows, with headquarters at Abilene, Kansas: Hunton & Sotham, breeders and importers of Herefords; and Whitfield & Sotham, western headquarters for "Whitfield" Canadian Shorthorns. The young man recently shipped 84 head of Shorthorns and Herefords to Abilene. While here he sold several head of fine young Hereford bulls at about \$300 each. One purchaser in a private conversation said that he had intended not to buy until spring, but was afraid that if he waited he would not be able to get stock and prices to suit anything like as well as now.

The Advantages of Maintaining Township Exhibitions.

BY A FARMER'S DAUGHTER.

It is sometimes asserted that we have too many Fairs. It is said that the great Exhibitions, like the Provincial and the Industrial (not to mention our County Fairs), serve every purpose for which a Fair is needed, and call forth an interest and do a work which it is impossible the smaller Fairs can do—that these latter have served their day and outlived their usefulness, and should now be dropped as an institution which the country has outgrown. With the first part of this assertion we willingly agree. We believe it would be hard to estimate the importance of the work our great Fairs are doing, as an educational influence. But when it is said that our Township Fairs, because of their narrower range and smaller field, should be allowed to become a thing of the past, we beg to enter an emphatic protest. A pine torch may, upon occasion, do a work which the sun is powerless to accomplish; and a small Exhibition, in its own sphere, may exert an influence scarcely less powerful than a great one. In the first place, our large Exhibitions, great as are the numbers they attract, often fail to reach the men by whom their stimulus is most needed. The narrow in mind or in means, the unprogressive, the men who would reduce life to an unending round of mechanical toil (and that class is by no means extinct), if living at any distance, make their visits to our great Exhibitions few and far between. It is a very curious specimen of a farmer, however, who does not attend his Township Fair.

Not the least important of the benefits he gains there is that he meets his neighbors. One of the greatest evils of farm life is the isolation which is too often thought inseparable from it. We hope the class who are seldom at home will not count us as adhering to it, when we

say that the man who is *always* at home, always in harness, will become as hopelessly dull and dispirited as the proverbial old horse in a treadmill, or a prisoner whose world is bounded by the four walls of his cell—not the less, but the more so, that the cell, in this case, is of his own building, and that he himself carries the key. Any gathering, then, for an honorable purpose, which will draw together men who often live too much alone, is a public benefit; and such a gathering is the Township Fair. Among its more specific benefits may be mentioned the opportunity it affords to farmers of comparing views on many points of interest. The animals brought forward, the implements, the products of the field or of the household, are all discussed, their merits or demerits fully enumerated, and the means by which excellence is secured are freely ventilated. He must be dull of brain, indeed, who does not carry away some idea which will be of future benefit. But the comparison of ideas, suggested by the various exhibits, does not exhaust the advantages of their exhibition. A no less important end is secured by the presence of the exhibits themselves. Men wish to know *where to find* good cattle, good grain, good articles of any kind, and the Fair supplies the means without resorting to the wasteful and laborious method of going from door to door. The amount of seed grain secured, cattle bought and sold, implements bespoken for trial and afterwards bought, not to mention innumerable smaller articles, is every year very great. Then the gain to the exhibitors is far from being small. We do not refer to the money value of the prizes—these at a small Fair are not often very considerable—but to the training in good methods of work secured by the effort to win. People who intend to compete for a prize are likely to study carefully the conditions of success; and though excellence, like virtue, is its own reward, yet, as human nature exists the desire to excel forms a powerful motive to well-doing, in connection with Fairs, as well as in every other department of effort; and though that motive may be far from the highest, it unquestionably is a powerful one, and we have to deal with human nature as it is, rather than as it *ought* to be. Often the improvement begun from a desire to be first, will be continued from an appreciation of the superior results secured. But it may be said that the benefits enumerated are not peculiar to Township Fairs; that they result from well-managed Fairs of all sizes, and cannot be claimed as the special property of the small one. Very true. But the special end secured by the Township Fair is that it brings these advantages, in a greater or less degree, to every part of the country. The most effectual way to accomplish any important work upon a large scale, whether in area or otherwise, is to subdivide it; and a township furnishes a district convenient in size for this purpose. Its area is usually large enough to secure for its Fair a more than nominal competition, while it is small enough to be within easy reach of all residing in it, as well as to offer encouragement to competitors who would be afraid to enter the lists on a larger field. In the newer districts and in places remote from railroads, the Township Fair is the only one the majority of the people attend, even the County Fair being thinly represented from these quarters.

Let us, then, retain our Township Fairs. The time *may* come when they will not be needed, but that time is still in the future; and while we seek at once to absorb and to reflect the light shed by the great Exhibitions, let us not despise the beams of our own little rushlight—the Township Fair.