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AMONG THE BRITISH DAIRY FARMERS.

A sort of working holiday is what the British dairy farmer gives himself when he attends his annual association meetings. He wisely combines pleasant holiday excursions with excellent working conferences. While he works he travels, while he travels he feasts, while he feasts he grumbles, and one cannot easily say which he enjoys most. But the Englishman does enjoy himself, even when he has to face with problems that are worthy of wisest heads and bravest hearts. The smart saying that the Englishman takes even his pleasures sadly, may not be full libel, but he certainly has a way, sometimes, of taking a deal of solid enjoyment out of good solid work.

BY FIRST VISIT TO ENGLAND

was a rare experience in simultaneous lesson-learning and pleasure-taking, and it afforded a rare opportunity for the study of English dairymen, which, in spite of the strong-headed type, is too many-sided to be understood at a glance or delineated summarily. There is, of course, great opportunity to elaborate the striking first impressions of a country so remarkable as England, but the limits of space, and the probable temper of my readers, demand that I keep within more prosaic lines. The first point of interest to Canadian dairymen, brought out by the discussions of the British dairymen, was the probability that

FUTURE PRICES OF DAIRY GOODS WILL BE LOW.

It has been on habit, on this side of the water, to assume that the only question of obtaining a foothold in the British market for our butter product is the question of quality. We have been saying all along that all we have to do to make our butter production profitable is to suit the quality of our make to the liking of the British consumer. No doubt that this requirement is the first and most imperative need of our butter industry, but it does not depreciate its importance to say that it is not the whole need. The teachings of the conference suggested another and important problem, the existence of which was later confirmed by a careful enquiry into the state of the English market—the great market of the world. It was

THE PROBLEM OF CHEAP PRODUCTION.

Prof. Long stated at the conference last May that, except in favored cases, good butter was not worth more than 20 cents a pound, and in some districts less. This may be said to be pretty nearly the bottom price for best butter in England in any season, but the price may rule at about this figure for months. I take it that Prof. Long referred to the prices received by the farmer, practically wholesale prices. As to retail prices, I saw no good butter in the shops at a lower price than 22 cents, and the commoner price was 24 cents. I saw displayed in some of the shops during the summer, butter ranging at prices as high as 24 to 30 cents, retail, but these appeared to be the top prices of the season for the finest goods. The bulk of butter sold, doubtless, for from 20 to 24 cts. I think these prices would fully justify Prof. Long's statement. A trade circular now before me, dated July 31st, 1888, gives further confirmation. This circular quotes for "butter landed," a range of prices from lowest Swedish, French or Dutch, at 17 cents, to highest Danish, Swedish, and "Creameries" at 23 cents. The above may give an idea of the summer prices which we may obtain for butter in England, if we can place it in the market, in the fresh condition which characterizes all the butter eaten there in the summer season. Now, these prices, when allowance is made for transportation charges, will not strike the Canadian farmer as enough better than home prices to be very promising of profit. It is true that I am speaking only of the summer season, when the large bulk of fresh made butter depresses the market to its lowest figure; but nothing that I could see gave much encouragement to hope for very high prices, as a rule, at any season in the years to come. There are, indeed,

CAUSES WORKING AGAINST HIGH PRICES.

Said a Bristol buyer: "If fine creamery can be sold for 92 to 98 shillings (about 20 to 21 cents) for summer's make, and for 102 to 108 shillings (about 22 to 23 cents) for fall make, it can be sold here. When it goes to 116 shillings (about 25 cents), it makes it difficult to handle, and it gets blocked out of the market by margarine and cheaper brands of butter." Reference is here made, of course, to wholesale prices. The point is that while a limited quantity of butter may reach high prices, the bulk of the butter made must be sold at a price within the means of the average consumer, otherwise the consumption itself will be checked by the use of a substitute. The opinion quoted doubtless furnishes as encouraging an outlook as can be reasonably hoped for, since

THE COMPETITION WE ARE LIKELY TO MEET in the near future is likely to dull rather than to sharpen the edges even of the low prices which have ruled in the near past.

Let it be remembered, too, that even the prospective moderate prices will be possible only for a fine quality. For inferior goods, he would be an optimist indeed who would hope in the future for any price good enough to pay for making butter.

With this not too rose-colored prospect before us,

WILL IT PAY US TO SEND BUTTER TO ENGLAND?

While I was abroad, this very practical query often thrust itself upon me most doubtfully, and sometimes the answer seemed doubtful. I even heard the opinion confidently expressed by others that it is unlikely that we shall again be able to send butter to the English market profitably. The reasons given, however, for this dark view were not to myself conclusive. Notwithstanding a somewhat unpromising outlook, there were a few weighty considerations which lead me to take a somewhat hopeful view of the situation. There are really only two serious barriers in the way of our finding in England

A POSSIBLE AND PROFITABLE MARKET FOR BUTTER.

These barriers are, first, the imperative demand for a higher quality than characterized our shipments these late years; and, second, this fact, just referred to, of probable low prices in the future. Assuming, for the moment, that we shall yet succeed in improving the quality, let us now deal only with the other difficulty—that of which we have just been writing, low prices.

To encourage shipment of produce abroad, the foreign prices need to be enough higher than home prices to afford a trade margin. Now, our own market offers for butter, for home consumption, prices very nearly as high as what we have just seen have been ruling in England. Some of our dairymen where I am now writing (Eastern Townships) find in Montreal at this moment (October) an easy market for the first-class butter which they make, at 20 cents, for Canadian tables. It is not easy to see how shippers can risk buying this butter at this price for the English market. This, of course, is salt butter, packed in tubs. Take print butter. Brome county farmers have been enjoying a market in Montreal for fine print butter, at a price even so high as 35 cents. The price has fallen somewhat, but I believe it is 30 cents even yet. From this it would appear that our home prices for best butter run so closely upon the low prices ruling abroad that the margin for profit would not appear to be encouraging to shippers.

Yet, in spite of the above facts, there are reasons for the hopeful view which I am taking. First,

THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE QUALITY of all our butter will necessarily have a tendency to lower the price of our best. The present prices of our best butter are higher because of the fact that comparatively little

of our whole make is good enough to compete with the best. When the beautiful butter of Brome county sold for 35 cents was because there was a stiff demand for it there was available. The high price stimulated production, and soon the supply was more adequate to the demand, when the price fell to 30 cents. It is quite likely that butter been choice, the high price of 35 cents would not have been possible; and as the general make will improve, the price for the best will weaken. This fact is not so unimportant as it might seem at first sight. A lower quality of the best, may mean a better average price for the whole. To illustrate: A 100 lb. package of butter, because there are in every package equal to it, will bring 18 cents per pound. The improvement in the quality of the whole lot which would bring down the price of the single package to 18 cents, would also bring up the price of the nine packages, perhaps from 15 cents to 18 cents. If each package weighed 50 lbs., the aggregate return in the first case would be \$7.50; in the second case \$9.00, making a gain by improvement in quality of \$1.50, on the whole ten packages, or an average gain of \$2.25 on each package. This would obviously be

A FAR BETTER STATE OF THINGS in the common interest.

Second—While between foreign prices for good butter and the prices of our best butter here, there is little margin, there is enough, in all conscience, between foreign prices and the prices here for our lower grades of butter. When our best butter commands 20 to 25 cents per pound, there will be found poorer qualities of butter, selling as low as 12 to 15 cents! A foreign market would need to need only 18 cents for this butter, to give the producer far better returns with an abundant trade margin. Therefore, because of the home demand for our best butter the English market does not afford a tempting market for it, we might profitably ship our lower-priced butter, if only its quality were good enough to warrant the trade in doing so. Let it be remembered that I am dealing with the question of price only, as affecting a possible future trade, not with that of quality. Of course the future trade here claimed to be possible inasmuch that the quality of the lower grades of our make be much improved, which means, as we shall see, that we improve our methods of manufacture, packing, shipping, etc., phases of the subject to be treated in subsequent letters. And here we may well pause to reflect on the quantities of "store butter" that has been sold even as low as ten or twelve cents, which might have been sold for eighteen cents and upwards, if only it had been made and packed in a way to command sale in the English market!

Third—Bearing upon this question is the probability, or, rather, certainty, that from now on

PRICES OF ALL PRODUCE WILL BE LOW.

Multipled production and stiff competition are slowly but surely bringing down prices of all farm produce. We may as well sell butter as anything else at a low price. Indeed, when we consider the general economic advantages of butter production, we may be led to prefer to produce butter at low prices, to producing low-priced wheat or beef, or even cheese. The following extract from Prof. Robertson, of Guelph, will show some of the economic advantages of cheese-making, as proved by actual results, and those of butter-making are even greater. "Dairy farming, notably in connection with the establishment of cheese factories, has saved whole districts from the fate of possibly becoming unproductive. It has largely increased the productive capacity of exhausted lands and added to their yearly earning power. Many counties have been made wealthy by the increase in the fertility of semi-exhausted soils. Were this annual return from this extra earning power capitalized at 6 per cent, it would represent over thirty million dollars." Let it be understood that the production of butter is urged as advantageous not to supplant that of cheese, but rather to supplement it.

Again, while low prices will be general, it is a question if butter will not hold up more stiffly than almost any other farm product, since many other products demand for successful manufacture less intelligence and skill. In one of the papers read at the conference (by Mr. Smith) it was stated that "dairy products had fallen in value less than any other commodity."

Fourth—Prices for butter can hardly be permanently too low in England to allow us to compete with the British and European producer. Against intelligence and enterprise we are out to be able to bring like qualities, and with new-world vigor. Against distance to market and perhaps dearer labor we have here

CHEAPER LANDS AND LOWER RENTS.

The inventions of modern genius have a tendency to annihilate distances. The crowded condition of the old world has a tendency to increase the cost and rents of land, taxes, etc. If we cannot make a fair profit out of prices at which the European will continue to produce, it will doubtless because we employ faulty methods. I heard because we employ faulty methods, and the "profitless" prices of the day, and even much evidence that prices are already nearly as low as the European producer can comfortably live upon.

I may again quote Prof. Robertson, than whom there is no better authority on this subject, on the future prices of cheese: "The prospect for high prices for cheese years to come is not very bright. Perhaps an average of eight cents per lb. may be all we can expect. At any rate, our farmers should try to produce milk cheap enough to be able to sell at that price at a profit. We can produce cheese at as low a cost as any country; and if severe competition comes we will not be the first forced out of the markets."

To sum up the matter, we may be hopeful of a possible foreign market; but so long as in the competition ahead of us, and so long as such a market a profitable one, it will be necessary for us, besides learning to make a superior quality of product, to steady the

SCIENCE OF CHEAP PRODUCTION.
 W. H. LYNCH.
 Danville, Que., Dec. 8th, 1888.

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