

ON THE LAND

MARKET REPORTS.

At Burnside last week there was a full yarding of sheep and a good yarding of cattle, prices for the former being easier than on the previous week. Fat Cattle.—A good yarding of 196 head, including several consignments of prime quality bullocks. Competition was good, prices being on a par with the preceding sale's rates. Prime heavy bullocks made from £19 to £23, medium £15 to £18, light and unfinished £11 to £14, prime heifers £13 to £15 12s 6d, medium £10 to £12 10s, light and aged £7 to £9. Fat Sheep.—A full yarding of 2756 head. There was a good proportion of prime wethers, these being easier by from 1s to 2s, while lighter sorts were back about 1s. Extra prime heavy wethers made from 28s 6d to 35s 9d, prime 23s 6d to 27s 6d, medium 19s to 22s 6d, light and unfinished 15s to 18s, extra prime heavy ewes made from 25s to 32s 6d, prime 18s to 22s 6d, medium 15s to 17s, light and unfinished 11s to 13s. Pigs.—A small yarding was offered, which met with good competition at increased values. Pigs suitable for killing advanced 4d per lb. Best baconers realised from 8½d to 9½d per lb, and best porkers from 9d to 9½d per lb.

At Addington market last week there was a small yarding of mutton, and an average one of beef and store sheep. Fat Sheep.—Consequent on the two local freezing works opening to deal with the surplus of fat sheep in Canterbury the entry showed a marked falling off, being little more than half the recent markets. Values as a result appreciated from 4s to 5s per head on the previous week's low rates. Extra prime wethers 26s to 35s, prime 20s 9d to 25s 3d, medium 17s 6d to 20s 3d, light and unfinished 15s to 17s 3d, extra prime ewes 23s 9d to 26s 6d, prime 17s 9d to 21s 3d, medium 15s to 17s 6d, light and unfinished 11s to 14s 9d, prime hoggets 15s 9d to 17s 10d, ordinary 12s 4d to 15s 6d. Fat Cattle.—A yarding of 396, mostly inferior quality. Prime beef sold at about the preceding week's values, but light beef was weaker. Extra prime bullocks £19 to £22, prime £14 15s to £18, medium £10 5s to £14 5s, light and unfinished £6 to £9 15s, extra prime heifers up to £14 7s 6d, prime £9 10s to £12 10s, ordinary £5 10s to £9 5s, extra prime cows up to £14 2s 6d, prime £9 to £12, inferior to ordinary £5 to £8. Vealers.—A fair demand. Runners up to £5 5s, medium vealers £2 17s 6d to £3 15s, small 15s to £2 12s 6d. Fat Pigs.—A medium yarding met moderately good competition, except for porkers, which eased slightly. Choppers £4 to £7 10s, light baconers £4 15s to £5 10s, heavy £6 to £6 15s, extra heavy up to £7 10s (average price per lb 8½d to 8¾d); light porkers £3 to £3 10s, heavy £3 15s to £4 10s (average price per lb 9½d to 10d).



PREPARING THE SEED BED FOR ROOT CROPS.

It is always an easy matter to work down and prepare a seed-bed for corn crops, as the tilth must indeed be bad to prevent the seedling plants from making their appearance (says a writer in *Farm, Field, and Fireside*). Where corn has been sown in a bad or unkind seed-bed it looks well enough in the leaf for two or even four weeks, but sooner or later the plants begin to look starved and stunted and finally the yield is poor. A good seed-bed for roots is essential, as without it the crop is doomed to failure. Each little seedling must enjoy itself, which it cannot possibly do unless it is deposited in a suitable growing medium.

There is nothing that gives more worry to the arable farmer than that of securing a good season on his heavy land. There are many heavy clay soils now being broken up, which no motor tractor can assist in the cultivation, and it is these soils that are going to give considerable trouble to those who are farming them unless they are fortunate enough to have on the same farm a much larger percentage of light to heavy land. Those who have farmed these stiff clays know the importance of ploughing them up before winter sets in, but, even so, they get very wet and sodden by spring, and the difficulty in obtaining a tilth is by no means small. It is often wished to give a good cultivation in preference to a second ploughing, as

when the clay is not far moved from the surface it is next to impossible not to turn some of it up again, and if this is done the spring winds, accompanied by sunshine, bake it as hard as bricks, and not even a clod crusher would break these lumps. If any system of rolling is attempted these hard pieces are only pressed deeper into the soft subsoil. Rain alone will soften them, but here, again, too much rain makes it impossible to get on the ground for the purpose of working it.

There are few people who fail to recognise the distinction between a heavy and a light soil. Not in regard to actual weight is this distinction to be observed, for, indeed, a so-called "light" sandy soil weighs more, bulk for bulk, than a "heavy" retentive clayey soil. It is in the texture of the soil that distinction is to be observed.

Perhaps the simplest method of ascertaining whether the soil is light or heavy is to walk over it. If of a dry, sandy, and porous character it will shift about underneath one's boots, but will not show any tendency to adhere to them. Neither, if the soil is moistened a little, will its particles adhere for any length of time.

Light, loamy soils are easy to cultivate, and all they require is proper manuring with such plant foods as will act both as fertilisers and retainers of soil moisture. Little difficulty will be experienced in working and cultivating such land. Mistakes are easily made in the case of heavy soils, for in these there is generally a large proportion of clay in composition. This gives rise to increased difficulties in cultivation, and the grower, especially if he is a small man without any opportunity of acquiring neighbouring land of a lighter character, will suffer unduly.

It seems a remarkable fact that a large proportion of this heavy land, chiefly situated in woodland districts, has come into the hands of small farmers—men who cannot afford to indulge in the better methods of cultivation. These small growers, it must be confessed, are sadly handicapped in having to depend on such land, for at the best of times they can rarely hope to get more than the expenses incurred in cultivation. It might be that they could find opportunity for renting an adjacent piece of ground of a light, gravelly, or even sandy character, and this is, indeed, possible in those counties where clay, loam, gravel, or chalk soils may be found within a quarter of a mile of each other. Such opportunities, however, are but rarely encountered. Heavy clayey soils are ruinous to cultivate alone. In the first place, one is at the mercy of the weather, whose every caprice may cause all land work to be suspended for an indefinite length of time. Heavy rains will quickly saturate them, and reduce the ground to a sticky, plastic mass, upon which no horse, or even man can walk; and this rupture in the ordinary procedure of the farm work does not tend towards good farming. Not only is the weather intermittent, and the men often compelled to find odd jobs with which to occupy their time, but horses "eat their heads off" in the stable.

Even there, however, they are doing far more good than if they were sent on to the land when rain has saturated it, for then their feet would knead the soil into a sticky mass, and at the same time render themselves liable to all kinds of strains. It is easy to imagine the injury likely to be incurred by a heavy Shire in such respects, inasmuch as we ourselves experience not a little difficulty in walking across such land.



"I hereby leave everything which I appear to possess to our Lord Jesus Christ, in the person of His poor.—St. Hugh.

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