Save the Farmer from his Friends.

The very striking decline here shown must be read in conjunction with the figures already given of the decline in the amount of English beef offered at Smithfield—a drop from 122,642 tons in 1903 to 86,407 tons in 1906. Putting the figures together the huge change that has been wrought by the operations of the trust will be seen. Curiously enough, it is the measures vehemently advocated and strenuously upheld by the politicians and others who claim to be the farmer's friends that have enabled the trust to get its hold upon the markets, and at the same time have brought about a decline in the amount of stock raised in this country. Side by side with the evidence that the British and Irish farmer is reducing his herds is the fact that the consumption of beef in England is on the increase. Precautions that were taken against disease have placed the English breeder at the mercy of Chicago.

Another effect of the operations of the trust in this country must be sought in the trades dependent upon the by-products of the meat trade. America has not only a Meat Trust, it has a Leather Trust; and a great proportion of the hides of American animals killed in this country are shipped back to the United States raw to be there converted into leather. There is in consequence a great dearth of hides here for tanning, while the trade in tallow and in the utilisation of the many by-products has suffered seriously. With the rapid advance in methods of chilling meat, the trust is sending us more carcases and fewer live animals, with the consequence that the difficulty of obtaining hides and skins and offals is ever growing. Tallow, which was £1 2s. 3d. per hundredweight in 1904, is £1 15s. 9d. in 1907, and there is not a housewife who does not feel the pinch of that fact in the increased bills for articles that are largely composed of tallow or fats.

[*Daily Chronicle*, 6th December, 1907.]

MEAT TRADE MENACE.—AMERICAN HOLD IN THE LONDON MARKET.—ANXIETY ABOUT SUPPLIES.

The operations of the large American meat syndicates in English markets are exciting great interest in the trade, and are of no less interest to the consumer, whose food-supplies may be seriously affected by their movements; but information which has been received seems to show that these developments stop far short of the point of monopoly. Indeed, they are attributable rather to the fierce competition between the chief American corporations than to any working agreement between them.

The Swift Company, for instance, is in opposition to the Morris Company, which has made an agreement with the Manchester Corporation to import not fewer than 25,000 cattle every year by way of the Ship Canal to improved lairages to be provided there; and this has led the members of the trade in the north of England to fear that operations on a trust scale are contemplated.

The Swift Company some time ago acquired the La Plata Company, and has now four shops in Smithfield, for which large sums have been paid. One of their shops the Swift Company acquired for £16,000, another for 12,000, and a third for £10,500. The Morris Company has three shops; Armour's have one, but this is a very large place; and the Hammond Company, another American syndicate, has two. Cudahy's, on the other hand, stopped shipments some time ago.

This, however, is sufficient to indicate that the Americans have acquired a considerable hold in the London market, and they are endeavouring to extend it. The majority of the cattle which cross the Atlantic are landed at Birkenhead, and the railway company transports the carcases after slaughter at a special rate to London; so that the Morris Company's developments in Manchester may have a special bearing on competition in that quarter.

The growth in the magnitude of these operations is, of course, adverse to the interests of the home trade; and the change which has come over market conditions is significant. Some years ago most of the meat in Smithfield was sold on commission, and it was to the interest of the commission agent to keep up the supply. The interest of a large syndicate would be to restrict the supply, so that it could manipulate prices to suit its own ends, and it is this danger which is cropping up under the "shop" system, and is causing anxiety to those who are still independent of any ring.

The diminution of the home supply and of cattle imported from Ireland is significant. In 1902 the number of fat cattle entering the markets of England and Wales was 1,010,115; last year it was only 790,345; and in the same period the number of fat and store cattle brought over from Ireland fell from 863,446 to 713,991. But the number of live cattle and of chilled carcases imported has continued to increase, and we are now dependent for some 80 per cent. of our meat-supply on North and South America.

The Swift Company have carried their operations into Argentina, and this is believed to be the beginning of a big movement, which will embrace not only dealings in live cattle there, but also in beef and in mutton. The competition of the American companies, with the existing signs of extension in this country, is sufficient to convey a further menace to the home trade and to the consumer, who is affected by every manipulation of the cost of commodities.

MEMORANDUM from the HIGH COMMISSIONER to the Hon. the PREMIER.

Westminster Chambers, 13 Victoria Street, London, S.W., 28th November, 1908.

I HAVE the honour to forward herewith a report by Mr. H. C. Cameron, Produce Commissioner, on the distribution of lamb and mutton in this country, with special reference to the development of the distribution of River Plate mutton by American meat companies that have hitherto devoted their attention solely to chilled beef from the United States. It is anticipated that the result of this competition may affect somewhat seriously the market for New Zealand mutton in this country.

W. P. REEVES.