

THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE

AND HOME MAGAZINE

* AGRICULTURE, STOCK, DAIRY, POULTRY, HORTICULTURE, VETERINARY, HOME CIRCLE.*

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EDITORIAL.

The Tuberculin Test Plague.

The FARMER'S ADVOCATE has freely devoted much attention and space to the discussion of the subject of bovine tuberculosis, its origin, causes, prevention, and possible cure, giving special emphasis to the value of ventilation and a full supply of pure air and sunlight as an essential agency of prevention, the cheapest and best of the possible provisions against the insidious disease, which is largely a sequence of modern methods of stable construction, and is seldom contracted in open-air conditions. The tuberculin test as an agency for the diagnosis of the disease was, a few years ago, with much assurance proclaimed a discovery of great value, being, it was claimed, practically infallible in its operations, and coming with the almost universal endorsement of veterinary scientists, it was received by stock-raisers and the public generally with all the consideration due to a discovery of such vital importance. The earlier exhibitions of its efficiency as an agent for discovery were certainly such as to warrant much of the merit claimed for it, and in so far as that is concerned, we are not sure that when intelligently applied by careful and competent practitioners it has lost much ground in the estimation of unprejudiced witnesses, but in the hands of inexperienced and incompetent manipulators, and under unreasonable and irksome regulations its vagaries have brought it into such general disrepute that there are now comparatively few so simple as to do it reverence. It may yet have its place of usefulness when judiciously applied, especially in the case of city dairies, where sanitary conditions are not sufficiently observed; but its indiscriminate application to imported animals for breeding purposes has always appeared to us, in view of the uncertainty or very distant possibility of its contagious character, to be an unnecessary hardship to importers, and one which they have borne with a patience worthy of a better cause. It is surely an absurdity to suppose that practical men will pay large prices and all the added expenses of transportation for stock of which they have the least suspicion that they are unhealthy. There are well-authenticated cases of animals purchased for America being condemned on the tuberculin test in Britain, and after a few weeks re-tested and passed as sound. In our last issue reference was made to a case in which five high-class bulls purchased for the Argentine were tested by English veterinary surgeons and certified sound, but two of them being condemned by the Government veterinary at the Argentine port, on the same test, they were returned to England for slaughter, where a careful examination by a qualified veterinary failed to find any trace of disease. It is such instances as these that serve to bring the test into contempt, and when to this is added the opinion of breeders that in not a few instances the application of the test has had an injurious effect upon the health of animals, especially pregnant cows, subjected to it, there need be little wonder that importers are strongly disposed to declare war against regulations which hamper and harass enterprising men in the discharge of a business which tends to the public benefit as well as their own. In the State of Illinois, appeal has been made to the courts by cattle owners for protection against the squirt-gun of the vet. under cover of the law, and owing to contrary decisions by judges in different counties as to the legal right to enforce the test, the Governor of the State has wisely declared the regulations of the State Board of Health inoperative, pending the appeal to a higher court. This is probably but the beginning of a fight for freedom from official bondage, which will grow into larger proportions unless relief come soon in the form of more rational requirements. Importers

have loyally submitted to a ninety-days quarantine for the discovery of contagious diseases—a precaution which all agree is proper—but when cattle have to run the gauntlet of two tuberculin tests within four months, as many have when sold by Canadian importers to go to the United States, it is a severe strain upon the patience of the breeders, as well as upon the constitutions of the animals.

Canadian Prizes for British Schools.

One of the signs of the times is the greatly increased attention given by the Government of Canada to the development of this country as the greatest colony of the British Empire. The latest step taken by Lord Strathcona, Canadian High Commissioner in London, Eng., is the distribution of books on the subject of the Dominion to schools in the United Kingdom, and the presentation of a bronze medal for competition in each school which takes the subject up. The books themselves are valuable educational works, and quite interesting, one an atlas and the other a reading book which treats of the history and present condition of Canada. It is by E. R. Peacock, M. A., of Upper Canada College, Toronto, with an introduction by the Very Rev. G. M. Grant, LL. D., Principal of Queen's University, Kingston, and is beautifully printed and illustrated, and teeming with information conveyed in a clear and agreeable style. The little atlas is a gem of its kind, and contains seven teen excellent maps of other countries (the U. S. excluded), in addition to ten relating to Canada, accompanied by a geographical text of the most comprehensive and compendious character. Not only will the pupils but the teachers derive a great deal of information from these two valuable little school books, and the idea of offering a prize in each school for the best essay at Christmas is as ingenious as it is novel. The idea is an admirable one, and will not only afford the boys and girls of Britain accurate knowledge of this part of the Empire, but cement the ties existing between Canada and the motherland. The High Commissioner is to be congratulated upon the efforts he is making.

Retgression or Progress in Stock Breeding.

An experienced breeder, than whom we have had no more observant or outspoken a critic of the ups and downs of stock breeding in English-speaking lands during the past half century, gives our modern self-satisfaction a rude poke in the ribs. Calling up the FARMER'S ADVOCATE, he inquires are the best of our pure-bred cattle and sheep equal to what they were years ago? Did we not reach a pinnacle of achievement in Great Britain beyond which there has been no advance? Are we not actually slothfully retrogressing? Is it the tyranny of the herdbooks or of fashions in pedigree, or both, that tie men's hands and paralyze efforts at new achievements in breeding? These are questions in which there is food for reflection, and their consideration will probably lead most breeders to the confession that the standard of excellence attained in the case of the best and the average is far from satisfactory. This criticism does not apply equally in the case of all breeds. It surely does not to some of the dairy breeds of cattle, to some of the beef breeds, to most of the breeds of sheep and hogs, or to many of the breeds of horses, in all of which classes distinct improvement has been made in conforming to the utility type most suitable to the requirements of present-day markets; but it certainly does in the case of all those in the breeding of which pedigree fashions have unduly prevailed and line breeding

has been too largely followed, the tendency having been to breed exclusively, with too little regard to individual merit, from animals carrying the blood of certain families which for the time being are popular because of the record of one or more ancestors in showyard or test, or because of a whim of fickle fashion, founded, it may be, on even a less enduring basis than either of these.

He would be a bold critic who would openly attack the herdbooks which have gained so strong a hold in the realm of records, and charge them with being a cause of retrogression in the standard of the individual excellence of our stock, since the conviction that herdbooks are contemporary with and essential to permanent improvement is deep-rooted and generally acknowledged by breeders as a confession of faith if not as a creed.

And yet, is it not too true that the fanatical worship of pedigree is the rock which has wrecked many men financially, and been the means of undermining the constitutional structure of once grand and useful tribes of cattle? For this the herdbooks can only be held responsible in so far as they have placed before the eyes of breeders the printed page on which is more readily traced family relationships, which, if wisely and judiciously used and directed, might have produced magnificent results, but which, on the other hand, through a blind following of fads, have wrought ruin and disaster to many a reckless devotee.

And the pity of it is that so few are willing to learn and profit from their observations of the experience of those who have erred, and so many are apparently bound to prove the aphorism that history repeats itself, no matter what the consequences to the breed, so long as there is money in it for them in the meantime.

We have no quarrel with any breed or with any strain within the breed, so long as meritorious individuals are propagated and used for its improvement, but it is when inferior seed stock is used, simply because it is straight bred, in preference to such as have superior individual merit coupled with superior ancestry, that our patience gives out and we are led to protest.

The record of the showing is supposed to set the standard of excellence, and there pedigree is not considered, but each animal stands on its own merit. Does the record of the leading shows in Britain and America demonstrate that the animals straight-bred in popular lines win the highest honors? What of the champion Shorthorns at the Royal in this year of grace, and of the leading winners in Canada last year? Would they conform to the requirements of straight line breeding? We trow not. And what of the lineage of those which brought the highest prices at the recent record sale at Chicago, where men were looking for show animals? Were not the top-priced bulls and the highest-priced females motley mixtures of Booth and Bates and Scotch? But when winners are wanted, pedigree fads have to be dropped, for when seeking that sort men are in their right mind, which is more than can be said when they pay two prices for a pedigree with a scrub at the end of it.

The crying need of the present day in breeding circles is better sires and more of the better sort as the only hope of lifting some of the breeds from the slough into which they have sunk. We have too many tails and too few tops. The dead level of the average is too low. If this fact be due mainly to the bondage of fashions and fads, as it appears to be, where is the Moses that will lead us out of the wilderness of mediocrity? Shall he be a St. Duthie, or look we for another? The need is urgent, the occasion opportune; the man ought to be forthcoming, and the dawn of a new century will be a convenient milestone to mark a period of progress.