

# THE CANADIAN BREEDER

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### THE HORSE SUPPLY OF GREAT BRITAIN.

If the average Canadian farmer could read one-half the complaints which come from England regarding the deficiency of the horse supply, it ought not to be difficult to convince him that it would be worth his while to take some pains to raise good horses for the English market rather than to continue breeding mongrels not worth shipping two hundred miles from home.

As has been pointed out again and again, Canada appears to possess certain conditions of climate or soil, or both, particularly favorable to the breeding and rearing of horses remarkably sound as to legs, wind, and general constitution. It is not necessary just here to enter into the alleged causes of this superiority which Canadian-bred horses are known to possess; it is enough to know that they possess it, and that with sound wind, legs, and constitution upon which to begin, our breeders are not making that progress that might be expected of them.

The whole difficulty is found in two evils, "cheap stallions," and "utterly purposeless and thoroughly unsystematic breeding." Good mares are often bred to worthless and wholly unsuitable stallions simply because the owner of the mare has no very definite idea as to the kind of foal she ought to produce. Farmers have a general notion that they must breed for size and substance, evidently thinking that if the foals pos-

sess these qualifications all other excellences will come as a matter of course. Of course it is unnecessary to say that while height and weight combined with high condition will often cover up serious faults in a horse which would quickly be discovered in the case of a smaller animal in moderate condition, they are characteristics which cannot take the place of faultless conformation, quality, and courage.

We have said again and again to the Canadian farmer, "breed to thoroughbred stallions of size and substance," but still the thoroughbreds are neglected as compared with the big Clydesdales, though the latter meet with only scattering instances where the mare is big enough to be a suitable mate for the stallion.

To illustrate how thoroughly open the market is to the breeder of hunters, it may be well to make an extract from a letter written by Mr. Albert Clayton, of Sherborne, England, to the *London Live Stock Journal*:-

"The breeding of half-bred horses—not of hunters only, but of all sorts—ought to be, as it formerly was, a national industry. It has, I fear, been so neglected and mismanaged of late years that it has gone beyond the powers of private enterprise to resuscitate it and place it on a firm and satisfactory footing. This is another reason why I am in favor of the State stepping forward to assist in re-establishing the business. It is positively humiliating to have to acknowledge that we cannot supply our own wants in the matter of horse-flesh, and that we must depend on our colonies in the event of a war for the needful chargers for our cavalry. Why have we fallen so low? Because, forsooth, the State has never interfered with private enterprise. The result of this has been that poverty and cupidity combined have drained this country to such an extent that the half-bred horse of size and power adapted for general utility purposes is fast dying out. The poor Arab is wiser than we are—half-barbarian, ignorant, and avaricious, as he is supposed to be—in the matter of horse-breeding, for nothing will induce him to part with his mares. We have been called a horse-loving nation, and it has been said that a horse is an Englishman's pride, his most coveted and cherished possession. Is this the case now, when we are compelled to admit that we know not how to mount our soldiers, or to supply our every-day wants with suitable animals? Let us boast no more, then, but set to work with a will to regain, if not too late, our supremacy in the matter of horse-flesh. Let us frankly own that we have been beaten at our own game—acknowledge that the Germans and Austrians have been cleverer than we have been; and let us not be above pocketing our pride and following their example, and profiting by their experience. Do not let us forget that 'pride cometh before a fall.' It was hoped, and predicted, that horse shows would stimulate horse-breeding, and that our horses would be improved thereby. This, alas! has not been the case. The practical result of horse shows is 'hunters that know nothing of hunting, hacks that never have been hacked, roadsters that have never

performed a journey, and harness horses that never travel except in the show-ring!' These are not my words, but they so adequately and clearly express what I have long felt and seen that I cannot do better than quote them. But it may be asked, Cannot the breeding of half-bred horses be reduced to more of a certainty, and made to pay? I say yes, but not as it is now pursued. There seems to be no valid reason why horses should not be bred, and improved, as successfully as cattle, sheep, pigs, poultry, dogs, &c. When a Shorthorn breeder desires to breed, what does he do? Does he not select the very best bull and cow he can for the purpose, and when he has succeeded in commencing a herd does he not retain for breeding purposes the choicest and most perfect of his animals of both sexes? He does not say: 'There is a bull or a cow, no good trying to sell him or her, I will keep them on for breeding.' Yet this is exactly what is done by breeders of half-bred horses. They unhesitatingly sell and part with all their best—i.e., most saleable and marketable—mares, and breed from what they cannot get rid of, when too old or too infirm for use. Is it surprising, then, that the result is disappointment and loss?"

Mr. Clayton closes his letter with the following sensible suggestions:-

"A mule does not seem a very promising subject to begin improving; but look at what Mr. Sutherland has achieved. How is it hounds have so greatly improved, whilst the horses which follow them have deteriorated? Simply because the former have been carefully bred—the soundest stock only used—whilst the latter have been bred anyhow. Selection, then, is the breeder's watch-word. He must, in the first instance, know what he would like to produce, and he must then endeavor to find sire and dam of the type required. Bone and blood are what he should aim at, coupled with size, action, and soundness. A cardinal maxim in all breeding is that 'like begets like.' To be successful in breeding this must ever be borne in mind, nor should it be forgotten that defects either in sire or dam are almost sure to be transmitted. It therefore behoves the breeder to eschew especially faulty animals as parents. Hereditary unsoundness, as well as defects in conformation, temper, and action, is fatal to successful breeding of half-bred horses. Dealers will tell you that small—i.e., undersized—light-weight horses are already too plentiful, and that there is no money in them. The demand for powerful, short-legged horses, combining blood, bone, size—i.e., attitude and action—is increasing, and cannot be supplied. The breeder's object should, then, be to meet this want. Provided that the sire selected is suitable in all other respects, it does not matter, in my opinion, that he is not quite clean-bred, or that he has never won a race. Our object is to breed horses of general utility to supply a pressing want; not to produce a lot of flashy, speedy animals useless for any purpose. Two of the best hunter sires in England at this moment