

HORSES.

The Selection of Sires.

The prevailing high prices of horses makes horse-breeding a lucrative and pleasant department of mixed farming, but a little more care and careful consideration would make it much more profitable. If the average farmer who breeds one or more mares would pay the same attention to the science of breeding that he does to other departments, or even that he does to breeding other classes of stock, he would find it to his financial advantage. We might ask the question, "Why is it that, in this old Province, where horses have been bred for so many years, we see so few pure-breds, or even good grades in horses; while, in cattle, sheep, swine and poultry almost every farmer has pure-breds, or, at least, high grades?"

The answer is not hard to find. It is simply from the fact that the breeders have produced horses in a haphazard sort of way, while he has paid intelligent attention to the production of the other classes. There is no reason why the farmer should not grade up his horses, and, after a few generations, produce animals eligible for registration, even though he cannot afford, or does not care to pay the price for pure-bred females to start with. The fact that a female is registered or eligible for registration makes her more valuable, both as a breeder and on the market, than another whose individuality is equally good, but which cannot be registered. The trouble has been, and still is, there is too much crossing of breeds, too much admixture of blood. The breeder looks too much to the near future (if he gives the matter any reasonable consideration at all), considering solely the immediate result of the cross, rather than taking into consideration probable future generations. We will briefly consider the production of heavy horses, no doubt the most profitable class for the average breeder (who has no special fondness for the lighter classes) to produce. Of course, if the prospective breeder has one or more pure-bred mares, or those with one or more crosses of any breed, there should be no question about the selection of the breed of sire to which they should be bred. But, if his prospective dam or dams be simply mares of considerable size, of no particular breeding or characteristics, that should indicate the class of sire that should be selected. With simply good mares of sufficient size to produce agricultural or draft horses, if properly mated, the question naturally arises, "How shall I cross them?" He should consider this question carefully. He will, no doubt, consider his own inclinations, the favorite breed of horses in his locality, and the market. He should look further ahead than the immediate result, considering the probability of the offspring, if it be a female, being bred when old enough, her progeny being bred, etc. Of course, it should be understood that all male animals of such breeding should be castrated, and none but pure-breds (and, if possible, those with long pedigrees) should be used as sires. Having decided the breed of sire with which he will cross his mares, he should select the very best individual procurable at a reasonable stud fee. We say "a reasonable stud fee," but, of course, a few dollars is practically of little moment when it means the difference between patronizing a good sire or a poor one. Existing conditions or local conditions may have an influence in the selection. A good individual of the breed favored may not be procurable, and in such a case a good sire of another breed should

be selected, rather than to patronize an inferior horse of the desired breed. The selection of a sire should not be influenced by any personal matter or friendship. Horse-breeding should be looked upon as a business proposition, and no man is justified in patronizing a sire that does not suit him, simply because he wants to do a "good turn" to his friend who owns or controls the horse. Having once selected the breed, he should stick to it, and in a few generations the females he produces will register, after which he will be able to produce pure-breds. The motto of the breeder should be, "Stick to Type and Breed," avoid composite breeding or the mixture of bloods. The first cross, when animals of different breeds are mated, may be very satisfactory, but the progeny, while a very fine individual, has lost the marked individuality of both breeds, is to a great extent minus the prepotency she should possess, and, if she be bred, it is impossible to foretell with any reasonable certainty what the progeny will be. The writer recently had occasion to judge a class of agricultural horses in which there were some high-class teams, but no pure-breds. The contest for first and second places narrowed down to two teams, one pair of mares of the Clydesdale type, each having three crosses of Clydesdale blood; and a pair of grays, produced by crossing a Clydesdale mare with a Percheron stallion. The grays were an excellent team, in high condition, while the bays were also a good team, but not in such good condition. After due consideration, first place was given to the grays. The fact that the grays won was cited by some interested parties as an argument for crossing the breeds, but we think differently. While we considered the grays the better agricultural team, we do not consider them nearly as valuable for breeding purposes, because the crossing of the bloods produced animals that, though high-class individuals, lack the distinctive characteristics of either breed, hence have not sufficient prepotency to reproduce satisfactorily, and, if bred to a sire of either breed, would in all probability prove a disappointment. This unfortunate mixing of blood has been the worst phase of horse-breeding in this country. While such crossing may, as in the case cited, give good results in either light or heavy horses, so far as the immediate results are concerned, for future breeding it cannot but prove disastrous, and mongrelize our horses. Even where careful attention is given to breeding, and good fillies produced, there is too great a tendency for the breeder to sell the fillies and continue to breed their dams, from the fact that he has too many horses, he is breeding for the market, and will sell the animals for which he can get the longest price. When a mare with one or more crosses of any particular breed is mated with a good sire of that breed, it is reasonable to expect the offspring to be a better individual than her dam. If she be intelligently mated, her offspring should be still better, and so on. Under these conditions, it requires little thought to convince the breeder that it will pay him to keep the filly for breeding purposes, and sell the old mare, even at a much less price.

The same system should be followed in breeding light horses that has been discussed in breeding the heavier classes. For instance, the product of a Thoroughbred mare by a Hackney stallion, or vice versa, is usually a high-class animal that will either ride or drive with satisfaction, an animal that will probably be worth as much or, in some cases, more, money than a pure-bred of either class. Hence, the immediate results are all that could be looked for, and, for utility purposes, no mistake has been made; but if this

a man who writes about the farm constantly is perfectly qualified to run one—perhaps. A man who writes about a poor-house is qualified to operate one very successfully. A man who writes about a manufacturing industry knows better how to manage it than the men whose money and livelihood are at stake!

"The Farmer's Advocate" model farm, of course, will be a great place on which to experiment for the benefit of the community at large, and if the 'Advocate's' ideas are sound, there is nothing like proving them in practice, to the satisfaction of all concerned. If the ideas do not pan out properly, well, the 'Advocate' will find it out more quickly than anyone else, and will shut up. So, looked at from various angles, it ought to help improve the 'Advocate,' by providing the gold of actual experience, instead of the gilt of theorizing."

This is pretty good, and we publish it without reply. He laughs best who laughs last. We prefer to defer our laugh until we have sawed some wood. It will not be our first cord, either. We trust the Editor of the Review will be able to visit London soon and see the farm. The more people who see it in its present condition, the better we shall be pleased.

Harbinger of Vegetables and Flowers.

"And in spite of it all I saw signs of spring," said a visitor who came into the office while one of the worst storms of the winter was raging. "As I came along the street I saw a farmer's wife climbing into a sleigh with a seed catalogue in her hand." After thinking it over, we have decided that that was about the finest sign of spring we ever heard of. It meant that when spring comes to one farm its coming will be worth while. The farmer's wife will have her seeds selected, and will be ready to start her flower and vegetable gardens. Possibly the children, and, perhaps, the farmer himself, will have their favorites picked out, and will be ready to start in on what Bill Nye called "The great game of making garden things look like their portraits in the seed catalogues."

There are few things on the farm that give more delight and comfort than a good garden. We leave it to the doctors to explain how much it means to the general health of the family to have good vegetables on the table at all seasons of the year, and anyone who is in the habit of eating three meals a day can be trusted to tell how enjoyable they are. From the first greens of spring to the vegetables that are pitted for winter use, they are all both wholesome and delightful. And the amount of care the garden needs is trifling compared with the satisfaction it gives. If it is put in good ground that has been well fertilized, it can be attended to in odd moments. Of course, it must receive attention at special times, and the weeds must be discouraged, but even if it required some of the most valuable time on the farm it would still pay to have it. It may be true that Ontario "was cleared on salt-pork and potatoes," but there is no need of having the land worked on the same bill-of-fare.

Then there is the flower garden. There is nothing that does so much to make a farmhouse look like a home—a place that it will be unnecessary to coax the children not to leave—as plenty of trees, vines and grass, and, if it can be properly attended to, a bright flower garden. It need not be laid out on the old-fashioned plan—indeed, these are not much recommended nowadays—but may rather take the form of a perennial border, which is easy to attend, and therefore not so likely to become unsightly through neglect. It may be supplemented by a few choice annuals and house plants. The vegetable garden may cater delicately to the needs of the body, but is it not written in the Koran, "If I had but one loaf of bread I would sell half of it and buy hyacinths, for beauty is food for the soul." The time to plan the garden and learn just what must be done to make it a success is in the winter, when people have a little leisure. There will still be many long evenings that could not be better employed between now and the time to begin planting. Let the signs of spring increase.

The Dominion Millers' Association have expressed themselves by resolution as opposed to reciprocity. It is rumored that many millers do not fear reciprocity, but would prefer extension of trade within the Empire.



Farm Teams, Kelso, Scotland.