

The Danger Point in Milking Shorthorns.

"Who would run, that is moderately wise,
A certain danger for a doubtful prize?"

It has been said that absent danger appears much greater than it really is, and that the nearer the thing feared the less the fear felt. This may or may not be true of the subject about to be discussed. The word "discussed" is used advisedly as this article is not to be read and digested as advice.

"Advice is seldom welcome; and those who want it the most, always like it the least."

Therefore, it is not the intention to incorporate any "advice" in this discussion.

The milking Shorthorn has had a rapid rise to fame until at the present time almost any Shorthorn cow which has had a calf, whether she nursed it or whether she was hand-milked is heralded as "a great milker," and the smooth, even, thick, low-down, blocky cow, with little else than four teats to show her milking propensities stands side by side with the slightly more unstanding, longer, narrower, peaked-shouldered, and wedge-shaped breed sister, swinging a capacious udder at the end of long and tortuous milk veins and giving every indication of specializing in the dairy end of her business as a cow, and both are called "heavy milkers." Five years ago, yes, three years ago, the wedge-shaped cow would have sold in Canada for little if any above grade-cow value; to-day thanks to R.O.P. agitation she may double the price of her thick, fat sister even though the latter may be owned by someone bold enough to call her a "heavy producer," and no one seems to marvel at the changed condition. Three years ago a Shorthorn was all beef; to-day her beef does not seem to matter, it is milk that makes sales and she gives milk in large quantities. Danger is imminent. The grand old breed must not suffer disastrous division. Breeders must

"Keep together here, lest running thither,
We unawares run into danger's mouth."

Two dangers present themselves and they may be so close that they are not feared or they may be so far remote that they have never been seriously impressed upon lovers of what they believe to be the best that is in the bovine race. What would happen to the breed if all straight beef-type Shorthorns, many females of which will scarcely give enough milk to feed their calves, were sold as heavy milkers sending disappointment and discouragement to thousands of seekers after the dual-purpose cow? What would be the result if all Shorthorns were bred and fed and pushed to the limit of high milk records regardless of beef development? Are the nettles of danger not in evidence and ready to harmfully prick the Shorthorn, and is it not about time breeders made an effort to pluck the flower, safety? All Shorthorns are not milking Shorthorns and milking Shorthorns are on dangerous ground when forced to give anywhere from 12,000 to 15,000 pounds of milk.

The folly of switching at one throw from beef to milk is plain. There are types and strains of Shorthorn cattle, which, after generations of top-crossing, would not produce good milkers. What nonsense to dwell upon the milking proclivities of cows which are very light milkers as

many of the extreme beef type are. What foolishness, as far as the future of the breed is concerned, to sell cows supposed to have records when these same cows have never been hand-milked and would kick any person out of the stall, who attempted to milk them in a pail, and kick at them after they were out. Hundreds of people are looking for milking Shorthorns, and selling them non-milkers will very soon hurt the business and the breed.

And why all these agitations and over-drawn claims anyway? There is still a place for the extreme beef type. The outlook for beef raising was never more rosy from the standpoint of prices. The beef Shorthorn is as good a cattle proposition as walks on four legs. It is unfair to the breed to forget the value of its beef or to drown this in over-estimation of the milk given. The future of beef is assured, and the Shorthorn, in a race for more milk, must not be out-distanced by other breeds in the one class in which it stands supreme, beef. Offering all kinds of Shorthorns as "milking Shorthorns" is a danger point already reached and both the milking and the beef strains are sure to suffer if the practice is persisted in.

A graver danger threatens, however. Exponents of the specialized dairy breeds are prone to snigger at the comparatively small records of milking Shorthorns when lined up with some of their 20,000-lb. milk machines. They claim that the dual-purpose Shorthorn is a myth and that meat and milk in the same animal is an impossible goal. Notwithstanding the strong statements of specialized dairymen and the railings of dairy papers there has come into being a dual-purpose cow capable of giving from six thousand to nine thousand pounds of milk in one lactation period and at the same time producing a calf, which, properly fed, is ready to take his place at or near the top of any market for beef, veal and baby beef to the fattened and finished two- or three-year-old. True many Shorthorn cows give more milk than 6,000 or 9,000 lbs. and herein is the greatest danger. Critics, opponents of the dual-purpose idea have always maintained that a cow must either be a dairy cow or a beef cow and that there is no, what they call, half-way point to mark the dual-purpose status. A heavy-milking Shorthorn to them is a dairy cow, and a light milker a beef cow. Are they to be vindicated in such a contention? If the owners of dual-purpose Shorthorns are not careful they will find that specialized dairymen are not far wrong when they say, "Your 15,000-lb. Shorthorn is just as thin and wedge-shaped and just as pronounced in dairy type as is my 15,000-lb. Holstein or Ayrshire."

The question which is now arising in the minds of some successful breeders is, "Can a cow which is forced to the limit in production (say 12,000 to 15,000 lbs. of milk) remain a dual-purpose cow or will she slip into the dairy class? This is the big question. This is wherein lies the greatest element of danger in the milking Shorthorn business in Canada. Little was it thought when definite steps were taken at the annual meeting of the Dominion Shorthorn Breeder's Association in Toronto in February, 1913, that before the end of 1914 milk would be the prime consideration in Shorthorn cattle in this country and the most talked-of single point in connection with the breed's make-up. Our demonstrators have bought them; good feeders and poor feeders have purchased liberally; all are sure they have them and the one goal is milk at any cost and who can produce the most per cow.

It has developed into a regular horse-race contest against time, to establish milking Shorthorn herds that will reproduce milkers. As with the dairy cattle breeders the craze for high records has gripped Shorthorn men and is holding in its relentless grasp almost every breeder who has a cow entered in the Record of Performance. The grip tightens as time goes on and the race becomes closer. By extra milkings and by careful and more frequent feeding a few extra pounds of milk per day are squeezed out of the capacious udder which has developed under the supreme effort until it would do justice to a high-record Holstein. While all this is going on, gradually, and often unobserved by the owner, the meat slips from the ribs of the cow; she goes down in flesh and takes on the matronly, but pointed, appearance of the extreme-type dairy cow. She is wide behind and narrow in front, and as a beef animal her stock in trade is much below par. Still the process continues and the owner, wishing to indelibly stamp her progeny with the milk-producing sign, breeds the cow to a narrow, rough, coarse, ill-formed bull because this bull is out of a high-record cow and has behind him, on both sides of his pedigree, animals noted as milk producers. The progeny, if this is carried on generation after generation, and if there is anything in the law that like begets like, must needs be milkers; but what of the beef end of the dual-purpose standard? Will it not have been sacrificed on the altar of overdone milk production? How many generations will it take to make a 15,000-lb. dairy producer out of a 7,000-lb. dual-purpose cow by extra pushing for high records? And then where is the dual-purpose cow and where is the beef end of the game coming in? This is the end that the dairy critics foresee for Shorthorns, only they belittle the cow as a milker and do not credit her with latent possibilities capable of being developed up to the point of 12,000 to 15,000 lbs. of milk per year. There is such a thing as getting too much milk from a dual-purpose cow. Milk is made at the expense of meat. This must never be lost sight of and meat is generally put on at the expense of milk. The happy medium is the dual-purpose cow.

The question arises then—How much milk per cow should a herd of big, thick milking Shorthorn cows give on an average? Who can answer? A great deal depends upon the cows and their feeder, but does this sound reasonable,—Big cows weighing from 1,400 to 1,600 pounds each or heavier, and carrying a fair amount of flesh as well as showing the type capable of producing calves which could be easily fattened to top-notch finished beef, may be considered very satisfactory and suitable dual-purpose cows if they practically maintain their condition and produce from 6,000 to 9,000 lbs. of milk per lactation period of anything under eleven months? Perhaps 9,000 lbs. is a little high. It is a good herd that can be made average 7,000 lbs. per cow. It must be remembered that the average production of the dairy cows of Canada, dairy breeds and heavy milkers included, is only between 3,000 and 4,000 lbs. per cow, per annum. Dual-purpose cows then, as a herd, might be considered good producers if they average less than 7,000 lbs. each. As a dual-purpose proposition the herd averaging 7,000 lbs. per cow and raising big, healthy, fairly thick, meaty heifers, bulls and steers seems a safer proposition than the herd of phenomenally high milk producers but the progenitors of narrow, skinny, weak-constituted calves. Some of the plainest bulls to be found



Fig. 4—Rothamsted Laboratories, 1914.



Fig. 5—The Pot Culture Station.

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