

ON THE CHOICE OF BROOD MARES.

The following article, by an able contributor to the *Mark Lane Express*, may be read with profit by Canadian breeders:

THERE can be no doubt but that the breeding of horses of a superior description would amply repay those farmers who are possessed of the requisite knowledge; and whose farms present a suitable combination of light, productive, arable land, with pasture of good quality. The price of first-rate horses has advanced in a remarkable degree of late years and it is not likely to decline so long as the country enjoys an ordinary degree of prosperity. It is everywhere matter of complaint among buyers, that good horses never were so scarce as at the present moment; and the man who is possessed of a weight-carrying hunter, or a fine carriage horse, will, if inclined to sell them, not find himself long without a customer. Still, notwithstanding these inducements, the breeding of horses on a large scale is confined to a few districts, of which the principal are the East and part of the North Riding of Yorkshire, Lancashire, and part of Northumberland. On the Yorkshire Wolds it is a pleasant sight to see, field after field, with its half-score of handsome colts; some of them adapted for the chase, while others are destined for London carriage-horses. Though not so plentiful as I remember them some twenty years ago, especially the higher bred ones, they are still to be found in sufficient numbers to show that the farmer considers them a portion of his stock productive of profit, and consequently worthy of attention. Even there, however, breeders might with advantage propose to themselves a higher standard, and aim at producing hunters of the first class, which would surely remunerate them better than leggy and somewhat underbred coach-horses, which are every day less suited to the requirements of customers. One reason why hunters are not bred there so extensively as in former years, is, that farmers, either tempted by the high prices offered by foreigners, or under the pressure of agricultural distress, have, from time to time, parted with their best brood mares. Much is it to be lamented that either good mares or stallions should ever leave the country, they are nevertheless, abundance remaining from which to rear, with judicious management, a valuable breed of young horses. In the hopes of affording some encouragement to the extension of this important department of agriculture, I offer the following hints:—

One of the most important elements of success is the choice of brood mares. Never breed from a mare which is not well bred. By well bred, I do not mean having many crosses of blood; for many mares, nearly and even quite thoroughbred, are very undesirable animals to breed from. A well bred mare, in the true sense of the word, is one of which the progenitors, for many generations back have been carefully selected. In this respect Yorkshire breeders possess a considerable advantage over those who reside in districts where breeding is less extensively carried on. In the former country it is easy for a farmer, even of moderate means, to procure mares which are above the suspicion of being tainted with cart-blood. Owing to the abundance

of both thoroughbred and "nag"* stallions, a roadster mare is seldom or never put to a horse of an inferior stamp to herself. Thus, with little or no trouble or cost, a class of mares is in the hands of Yorkshire farmers, where elsewhere it would require much expense and research to gain. With but little of outward show to recommend them, they breed excellent hunters, when put to a suitable thoroughbred horse; whereas mares of similar appearance in other countries would only produce stock fit for harness—if, indeed, they were fit for anything. The reason is, that in the latter case the cart or other inferior crosses would reappear, and thus baffle the calculations of the breeders.

Perhaps mares, such as the Yorkshire farmers use, are on the whole, the safest for the agriculturist to breed from. Although not so high bred as some others, they are less expensive to purchase, and require less judgment in their choice than those of a more ambitious character. They possess one recommendation which the farmer should never lose sight of—I mean power. Let his object be to produce a colt, which, if it fails as a hunter, will be useful in harness; or if some accident unfit him for fast work, will at any rate take his share of work on the farm. I know no better test of success than this, viz: That the colt which loses a portion of its conventional value, should yet retain its real usefulness. Always make strong well-set-on forelegs a primary object. They should be placed forward, so as to be an efficient support to the animal; and the shoulder ought to stand backward, in order to allow the legs liberty of action; but it must be somewhat round and full, not thin and confined, which some persons conceive to be a *fine* shoulder. Never breed from either mare or stallion with a decidedly bad shoulder. An animal may dispense with almost every other point of excellence, and yet be of some value; but if he has a bad shoulder, it bears so thoroughly the stamp of worthlessness, that nothing else can make amends for this fundamental malformation. If your mare is tolerable in her shoulders, but not very good, endeavor to find a stallion which is particularly excellent in this respect. The forelegs and shoulders being right, action usually follows. But this being a very important point, do not take it for granted, but subject it to your strictest scrutiny. For my part, I almost think as highly of action in a horse, as Demosthenes did of it in reference to an orator; at any, not even the fabulous combination of beauty, breeding, temper, and shape would induce me to buy a horse which did not possess it.

The foot ought to be taken up straight, by a graceful bend of the knee, and set down again flat, without any deviation either outwards or inwards. The most common faults of action are a sort of shovelling movement forwards, with the knees almost straight, and a sideways motion, either outwards or inwards, with one or both feet. But it is quite possible for the knee to be too much bent, and the foot to be apparently pushed backwards when taken up instead of forwards, thus causing it to be set down too near the place whence it was raised. *Objection-*

*A "nag" is a roadster. He is less in size than a coach-horse, and better bred.