

Ayrshires as Butchers' Beasts.

(Continued from September Number, Page 273.)

Mr. Buchanan in his article on Ayrshire cattle, published by J. P. Sheldon in his work entitled "Dairy Farming," says:—It was no uncommon thing in Scotland, at the time referred to in the last article, for breeders of Ayrshires to systematically under-feed their young heifer calves and yearlings in order to get the points developed which were then in most request, and this could not be continued without weakening and injuring the constitutions of the animals to some extent. Many people, seeing the stunted appearance of these half-starved Ayrshires, naturally concluded that, whatever their value might be for milk, they would never do for butchers' beasts. But this foolish and hurtful fashion has happily passed away, and with it the prejudice against Ayrshires as fattening beasts is fast disappearing also, as feeders have opportunities of testing the breed alongside of others.

Mr. William M'Laren, Herrington Hill, Sunderland, who has for a number of years fattened cattle extensively, says in a letter dated 26th April, 1878:—"I bought four Ayrshire calves in June and July, 1876, from Mr. J. M'Laren, Red House, Sunderland. They were very small and poor-looking, and, indeed, hardly seemed worth rearing at all, but we let them run about with the others, and gave them very little milk or attention; however, they seemed to freshen up wonderfully last summer, except one, which was lame nearly all summer—caused by 'foul' in the foot. They were put into boxes at Martinmas, and got good feeding, and I sold three of them in March at 10s. 3d. per stone of 14 lbs.; they weighed 47, 47, and 43 stones respectively. The one which was lame I have still, and he is now about as good as the others were when they were sold. They were very little to look at, and probably would not have sold for more than 40 stones in a market (they were all bullocks, and as nice as heifers), but I sold them by weight, as I knew they generally weighed much more than any one would call them." Mr. M'Laren gives a number of other instances of Ayrshires which he has fed, and for which he realised very satisfactory prices, and he concludes by saying, "I wish I could buy more of them to feed; if I have an opportunity I shall not miss it."

Those four calves were out of cows I had sold to Mr. J. M'Laren in the beginning of March 1876—cows which were all in calf to an Ayrshire bull, so that the calves were certainly pure Ayrshires. Mr. J. M'Laren sends his new milk into Sunderland, and probably those four bullock calves got very little of it during the two months, or so he kept them before selling—hence their small size; but when sold fat they could not have been above two years old, and yet the two best ones realized over £24 each, and the other, sold at the same time, over £22.

From these statistics in fattening Ayrshires we may conclude that there is not nearly so great a difference in the fattening qualities of the different breeds of cattle as is generally supposed; and when we speak of the lean, lanky, ill-shaped bullocks of sixty years ago, and contrast them with the handsome Shortforn or Hereford which is prime fat at two years of age, we ought to remember that the breeding and treatment of the two animals have been as different as their appearance, and that the fat and handsome young animal we so admire has probably cost more to his owner during the last year of his life than

the other cost his owner during the whole of the four or five years during which he found his food in the fields, with perhaps the addition of a little hay or straw during a severe storm, or if kept in a yard in winter, with no other food but straw.

When estimating the value of any breed of cows for the dairy, we naturally look first to the quantity of milk they yield, but we ought also to take into consideration their aptitude to fatten; and if the Ayrshires were as unsuitable as some people think them for the stall, it might well be doubted whether men farming prime land should keep them, notwithstanding their admitted merits as milch cattle. Several farmers in and about this neighborhood keep pure-bred Ayrshire cows for the dairy. On these they use a pure Shorthorn or Hereford bull, thus increasing the value of the calves as butchers' animals.

Having a dairy, and selling the milk to a dairyman, my calves are reared on as little milk as possible, and soon sent away to find their food in the fields, where they get a small allowance of cake for a few months; after then they get no more cake at all, but about the 1st of November, when they are a little over 2½ years old, they are put into boxes and fattened with roots, meal, and a little hay. For a number of years I have sold nearly all of my own rearing of cattle to a butcher by weight, and in 1877 the average weight of these bullocks was 778 lbs. each, or nearly seven cwt. The first one was killed on the 10th January, the last on April 4th, and their ages would be, on an average, about thirty-four months. These figures were commented on by several persons, and one gentleman thought the cross-breds, the offspring of an Ayrshire cow and Shorthorn bull, would not fetch the highest price of beef per pound. This drew a reply from Mr. Morris, the butcher to whom I have referred, in which he said, "I may say that I consider the cross admirably adapted for the trade (particularly now, as customers have become so fastidious as to what they eat); they have an abundance of good flesh, without the large quantity of fat common to Shorthorns and some other breeds, and are light in the bone." Further on he continued:—"Let half a dozen half-breds be bought, with the same number of pure-breds (Shorthorns), and fed together, I think the result would dispel a little prejudice that exists as to the merits of this cross." Mr. Morris had previously said, in reply to a question from me, as to whether he considered the cross-bred Ayrshires as good butchers' beasts as the Shorthorns, "They are better beasts, both for the butcher and the consumer;" and as he has bought nearly all my winter fed beasts of this breed for the last four years, his opinion is entitled to respect, especially as he is a farmer himself, and fattens a number of good beasts.

In 1878 my cross-bred bullocks weighed from a little over six to nine cwt., each killed between February 13th and end of April, fed in the usual way, ages about thirty-five months on an average. I have no trouble in getting the top price per pound for them. For years they have paid me better than the larger cattle which I have bought in, and I have no doubt that a cross with a Hereford bull would yield equally satisfactory results.

WHAT CANADIAN BREEDERS THINK OF AYRSHIRES.

BY W. C. EDWARDS, M. P., ROCKLAND, ONT.

I have your enquiry as to Ayrshires, and beg to answer your questions as follows:

We have had a herd of 20 to 40 Ayrshires for the past three years.

We are also breeders of Shorthorns, and while they are our favorites, yet we think the Ayrshires a good and profitable stock, and better adapted to some localities and to some farmers, than the Shorthorns. We cannot speak authoritatively of how they would compare with other breeds, as we have had no personal experience with any but the two breeds above named.

Up to the present the Ayrshires have proved more profitable to us than the Shorthorns, the reason being that, on account of the low prices of beef, we have had a very poor demand for Shorthorn bulls, while, on account of the boom in dairy products, we have had a good demand for our Ayrshire bulls. We are not in a position to give comparative values based on the beef and dairy products of the two kinds of stock alone.

Our opinion is that the Ayrshires are best adapted to such parts of the country as are specially adapted for dairy purposes, say in hilly regions where there are tracts of rough pasturage.

We find the Ayrshires particularly healthy, and we believe them to be hardy, but we do not believe in testing the hardy qualities of any kind of cattle. All breeds of cattle can stand our summers, and their care and treatment should be such, from October until May, as not to test how hardy they are, for if it is done it is only at the expense of a depreciated value of the animal, no matter what the breed may be. At some time some breeds may endure hardship better than others, and it is our opinion that the Ayrshires would survive such bad treatment perhaps better than any other of the milking breeds.

We are not the partisans of any breed of cattle. We believe that each of the breeds have their good qualities and adaptabilities. We have chosen to be breeders of Shorthorns and Ayrshires because, in our view, these breeds are as well, or better, adapted to this portion of the country than any other breeds. We have a diversity of character of country in the Ottawa and St. Lawrence regions, and if we were giving advice based on our own observation, we would advise a farmer who has a fairly level farm, with good heavy soil and good grass land, to keep thoroughbred Shorthorn bulls at the head of his herd and breed Shorthorn grades. On the other hand, a farmer having a rough and hilly farm, light soil, and more or less stony, we should advise such to keep thoroughbred Ayrshire bulls at the head of his herd and breed Ayrshire grades. The result to the farmer in each case is sure to be successful if he only takes that care of his stock that he ought to take. In the hands of farmers who are educated properly to the care and treatment of their stock, and who take a pride in their animals, such will make a success of any of the breeds, while the result is sure to be the opposite in the hands of such farmers as neither know or care how their cattle are treated. The great question to solve, in our opinion, is not one of breed, but to get our farmers educated up to the proper care and treatment of their stock.

MR. J. A. JAMES' EXPERIENCE.

I reply to your paper enquiring in regard to my herd of Ayrshire cows and to their production, &c., I shall endeavour to answer you as shortly as possible.

The Ayrshire cows, as a rule, are good feeders,