

Hogs.

THE BERKSHIRE, ESSEX, CHESTER WHITES, AND SUFFOLKS.

The following article from the pen of Alexander Hyde will well repay farmers for the time given to the consideration of the important subject on which it treats. The favorite breed of hogs in Canada (in this vicinity, at least) is the Berkshire. A farmer who has tried the several breeds that are popular above all others, tells us that he has finally preferred to breed the Berkshires to any other variety. He had made a trial of the Suffolks as well as others, and he has found that for early maturity, and economy in feeding, there are none equal to it. It is, he says, the one that pays best, and is the very best for the farmer. He has been sixteen years engaged in feeding hogs as a part of his farm husbandry. Mr. Hyde writes as follows:—

The pig is one of the best abused animals we know. He is generally represented as a creature of dull perception, dirty habits, obtuse taste, and gross appetite. This representation does the pig great injustice. True, he is not specially docile, does sometimes wallow in the mire, and is remarkably voracious; but it is also true that little effort has been made to civilize the hog, so that his character has not been well developed. He is, however, not naturally unclean, and as for his voracity, it is the result of the perfection of his digestive organs. There is no cleaner, prettier, and more frolicsome animal than a young pig, and if when grown big and obese he sometimes chooses a mud-hole for his bed, he does this to cool himself and to ward off the attacks of flies, mosquitoes, and other insects. The hog knows as well as other folks what good living is, and if left free to follow his own instincts always chooses a clean bed of leaves or grass, and is very tidy in his general habits. Give a pig a house with three apartments in it, a bed-room, a dining-room, and a water closet, and our word for it he will appropriate these apartments to their respective uses, as exclusively, if not as exquisitely, as some biped housekeepers.

A pig is very much the animal that his master pleases to make him. If he is brought up in a six by eight sty, with no comforts or conveniences around him, compelled to eat, sleep, and wallow in mud and filth, he is a dirty animal of necessity, and if he is not attacked with cholera or consumption, no thanks to his owner. He certainly cannot thrive on such treatment. Many seem to suppose that a hog does not know what comfort is, but the fact is no animal appreciates it more. Eating and sleeping are the two great ends of the pig's existence, and it is only when good food and a comfortable sleeping place are furnished him that he enjoys life, and fills a big pork barrel at life's end.

No animal shows the advantage of thorough-bred culture more than the pig. We have often heard it remarked that hogs vary as the swill pails vary. Such has not been our observation. Blood tells in the hog just as plainly as in the horse. The wild boar which Cyrus hunted on the plains of Persia, and whose head formed the favorite dish of our rude Saxon ancestors, was a long-nosed, long-haired, long-legged, long-eared, gaunt-bellied, curved-backed animal, almost as fleet as a horse and fierce as a tiger. His long nose was developed on the "root hog or die" principle, his long, upright ears were the result of constant tension on the watch for enemies, in the pursuit or avoidance of whom his long legs served a useful purpose. He was too pugnacious to put on fat, and his food seemed to develop tusks and bristles rather than lard and bacon.

From this porcupinish wild hog, by judicious crossing and gentle culture, the various herds of our modern swine have been derived. It has taken centuries to eradicate the coarse nature of the old stock, and, in deed, it is not completely rooted out yet. We have some varieties of swine that are as uneasy in their pens as gray hounds would be, can get over a fence almost as easily, and are about as little inclined to cover their ribs with fat. The last half century has wrought a great change in all our domestic animals, and in none is the improvement more marked than in the improved breeds of swine. England has led the advance in "porkiculture," and the various improved breeds bear the names of the counties in which the advance has been most manifest, such as Yorkshire, Berkshire, Essex and Suffolk.

For the first start in the line of improvement, England was doubtless indebted to China. Pork has always been the favorite meat of the Celestials. Indeed the ox is considered in China as almost a sacred animal, and beef is a proscribed article of food, it being considered sacrilegious to eat the meat of the animal that does the work. Hence the

Chinese have paid great attention to the rearing and fattening of their swine, which are small-headed, short-necked, thin-skinned, with round, compact bodies placed on small, short legs, hair thin and soft, flesh delicate, disposition quiet, maturing early, and requiring comparatively little food to make much pork. These Chinese hogs were early brought to England, and although too delicate for a cold, damp climate, proved of great benefit in crossing, improving the coarse forms and restless disposition of the English breeds, and increasing the tendency to early maturity, and the easy laying on of fat. The wild hog was a long while maturing, produced only one litter of pigs yearly, and often lived to be thirty years old. The domesticated swine of England were seldom slaughtered till they were two years old; but since the improvements from the Chinese cross, pigs have been found to be good eating any time after they are four weeks old, and at eight months are better fitted for the shambles than they were at eighteen. This early maturity causes great gain to the feeder, and is of no less advantage to the consumer, for young pork is far more delicate than old. For home consumption we never want porkers that are over a year old. Those that have been twice wintered or summered may answer for the market, but not for the family.

But not to make our monograph on pigs too long, and to come more directly to the inquiry of our correspondent, who "wants the best porker who walks on four legs," we will say that there are four breeds which are now contending for the honor of being the best porkers in this country, the Berkshires, the Essex, the Chester Whites, and the Suffolks. Doctors disagree as to which is the best. It is with men's pigs as it is with their wives, each prefers his own. We have tried them all except the Essex, and decidedly give the preference to the Suffolks. We commenced with the Berkshires as long ago as 1840, when the Berkshire fever was at its height, and we must say we liked them. They were of fine forms, matured early, fattened easily, made splendid pork, especially for hams, but we were always disappointed in the weight of the dressed hogs. Their ribs stuck out so nearly horizontally from the back bone that they looked larger and fatter than they proved to be when dressed. The great objection to them, however, was their color. A black hog may be just as good as a white one, as a black man may be just as good as a white man, but there is a prejudice against black in man and beast that cannot easily be overcome. We raised pigs for sale mainly, and only incidentally for home consumption, and whoever does this must consult the demands of the market. The fever for Berkshires, one of the oldest and most thorough-bred breeds of England, has been intermittent in this country, and though now it seems to be on the rise again, we made up our minds that no black breed would be permanently popular, and with much reluctance gave up the Berkshires, and, of course, never tried the Essex.

We next tried the Chester Whites, a large, hearty, well proportioned, but not very fine animal, originating in Chester County, Penn., a great improvement on the common swine of the country, which has proved to be very popular, though it is hardly entitled to the merit of being thoroughbred. We bought a pair from a very honest and thorough breeder, but they were very unlike, and the progeny differed from each other about as the progeny of common swine differ. This, so far as we can learn, has been the experience of most breeders of Chester Whites. Paschall Morris, of Philadelphia, an extensive breeder of Chester Whites, says of them:—"They differ from each other quite as much as any known breed differs from another. We have often seen them, and the offspring of good animals—with long noses which would root up an acre of ground in a short time, slab-sided, long-legged, uneasy restless feeders, resembling somewhat the so-called race-horse breed at the South, that will keep up with a horse all day on ordinary travel, and that will go over a fence rather than take much trouble to go through it. They show more development of head than ham, and as many bristles as hair, &c."

Of course we did not continue to breed such an uncertain race of swine as the Chester Whites proved to be, and fell back on the Suffolks, obtaining a pair in the first place of the Prince Albert variety. Of this breed, Youatt says:—"On the whole there are no better breeds in the kingdom than the improved Suffolks." Rham says:—"Suffolk pigs are, perhaps, on the whole, the most popular breed in the kingdom. The carcasses command a considerable extra price over the common hogs of the country, partly on account of the

greater weight in proportion to the bone, and partly from the pork being of better quality and flavor."

The Suffolks are small in comparison with some of the mammoth Chester Whites, but we are satisfied from years of trial that they make more and better meat from the same amount of feed. Hon. John Wentworth, of Chicago, is probably the most extensive breeder of Suffolks in this country, as he had a herd of 300 on his "Summit Farm." This is his testimony. He has been in Congress, and ought to know whereof he affirms:—

"After trying carefully all the other breeds, we give the preference to the Suffolks, and we think all others will who try them as long and as impartially as we have. They make the most pork with the least food and with the least bone. They are the quietest hogs. Give them enough to eat and they will never leave the premises. They lie down and remain so until they want more food. They make the least offal of any hogs, and they root about the least, even when short of food. For crossing upon other hogs, they have decidedly the preference. Their cross upon the largest white sows make the best of Chester Whites. Their cross upon the largest black or speckled sows, make the best of Berkshires, Polands, Poland Chinas, and other dark colored breeds."

Breeding of Short-Horns.

Every year facilities are increasing for purchase and disposal of pure bred stock. Within the last few years sales have been established at convenient centres all over the country, and, with the exception of a few of the older breeders, who still sell at home, a large proportion of the young bulls now appear in these sale rings. Some people say they dislike buying at such sales, affirming, which is quite reasonable (?) that in the purchase of a bull the appearance of the sire and dam in a great measure regulates their choice. Still, reference can always be had to the pedigrees, and great care ought to be bestowed in the examination of these before purchasing. It does not follow, I hold, that because a bull has a long pedigree he is of necessity well bred. Pedigrees are to be met with including ten or twelve herd books or unnumbered bulls, and perhaps not one among the whole race of sires named could have appeared with credit in a show ring. It must always be borne in mind that like produces like to a certainty. Such likeness can be traced in the sires and dams for generations. Many disappointments are met with when after purchasing a grand show-yard bull, his stock comes of every type but the one expected. There are two things thoroughly inseparable in successful breeding—viz., good shape and good pedigree, and whatever the fashionable pedigree enthusiast may say, no other system can or will benefit the nation at large or the short-horns as a breed. I may have something to say on fashionable strains and their money value at another time, but it is enough for my present purpose to put pedigree and shape on equal footing; and say breed from well bred bulls with good shapes, whose progenitors have had the same qualifications inherent in their blood through judicious in and in breeding to a certain extent. Then, and then only can one know what to expect in a bull's stock. It must also be borne in mind that there is such a thing as two equally well bred animals not "nicking,"—well bred animals of two distinct strains, producing stock not at all like either parents; hence the truth of the saying of the late T. Bates, as to the difficulty of Short-horn breeding:—"I will find," said he, "three men able to be Prime Minister of England before I will find one man qualified to breed Short-horns." The importance of having really well-bred bulls, even in a herd of cross-bred cows, is every year becoming more evident. I heard an intelligent exhibitor of fat stock at the Southern shows remark:—"If one knows the beasts going to Smithfield, for instance, in the cross-bred classes from Aberdeen and Moray, he can tell almost to a certainty where the prizes in these classes will go." There is no doubt but the cross from Angus or Aberdeen cow has to do with this, but I go further, and assert that the use of such Short-horn bulls as many of the Aberdeenshire farmers put to their cows has been the main cause of the excellence of their cross-bred stocks. Fifty, sixty, and in some cases one hundred guineas have been given for bulls solely for breeding purposes. At some of the sales of young bulls prizes are offered for best calves to be sold, which no doubt encourages the breeders to use the best bulls as sires, so that their stock may compare favorably in the sale ring. If one takes a run through the different herds in England and Scotland, he cannot help being struck

with the small to be met with national paper "gentlemen" men" that can with the wealth as above the a Short-horn bre if breeding tho those who hav ed by the thou men," as I hav their common B. Agriculture

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[Address d the American Toronto.]

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