

LIVE STOCK.

RECOLLECTIONS OF A SHEPHERD.
SOME TRICKS OF THE TRADE.

The common citation, "There are tricks in all trades but ours," is generally accompanied by a wink or a twinkle of the eye, but, of course, any references I shall make here to the practice of questionable artifices or stratagem in the fitting and showing of sheep at fairs apply mainly to the long ago, when there were fewer and less stringent rules for the guidance of exhibitors than now, and possibly showmen were less conscientious. Then there were no pedigree registers for sheep, and no record ear labels to indicate to what breed they belonged and to help keep a man honest, were he disposed to err. Leicesters were then the principal breed in the country, although, along in the later sixties, classes were provided for Cotswolds, Lincolns, and at least one of the Down breeds. The prevailing type of Leicesters in the early days was the blue-headed English variety, and, to my fancy, there is no handsomer or more breedily-looking class of stock than a first-class specimen of this breed, except it be a Jersey cow, which always appeals to me as the acme of animal beauty and elegance. But not content with nature's coloring, it became fashionable, as it sometimes does with ladies, to endeavor to add to nature's charms by adding to her coloring, which, in the case of the sheep, was done by clipping the hair off the head with flat-sided scissors, and applying a little button blue. And there was sometimes ground for suspicion that a Cotswold or a Lincoln had been so successfully treated by the tonsorial art as to pass muster in the Leicester class, with judges less discriminating, or, perhaps, less competent than we have in these days.

For a number of years there was at the Provincial Exhibitions a class for "Long-wools, not pure-bred Leicester or Cotswold," intended for cross-breeds, or for Lincolns, which up to that time had not been given a place in the prize-list, and here again there was sometimes suspicion that the shears were brought into requisition to modify the character of a Cotswold, and some shown as cross-breeds would probably have figured in the pure-bred class had the prospect been favorable to winning more money there. And I recall an amusing instance of an overambitious exhibitor being tripped up in the attempt to show a ram in this practically free-for-all class which had failed to get into the money in a former class in which he had been shown. I also remember another case where an old sinner, not satisfied with winning in one class, attempted to show the same sheep in another at the same show, having in the meantime used the shears to make some slight change in its appearance, but he was checked by a wide-awake young shepherd, and ordered out of the ring by the director in charge. And this reminds me of a similar shuffle attempted on me once, when I was acting as judge at an Eastern exhibition, where an exhibitor who had the class to himself, but had not enough sheep to go round, tried to pass the same animals in more than one section, and I had some difficulty in persuading him he had made a mistake. What perhaps made me a little less charitable in judging him was that a few hours before he had tried to ring in a little black Canadian heifer in a younger class which he had previously shown in a section for older animals.

It was along in the sixties that the abominable practice of stubble-shearing became generally fashionable and grew into a vice, sheep sometimes being shown carrying nearly eighteen months' growth of wool under an exhibition rule that called for not more than the product of eight months. Show sheep were fed fatter in those days than now; it was common to see clear peas in their feeding troughs all day in the pens at the fair, and the wonder is that more of them were not dead before the judgment day. Size counted for more then than now, and quality for less. The commonest question of wondering visitors at the fairs was, "What does he weigh?" And I fear the shepherds, in answering, did not always keep close to the truth, as it was a source of amusement to them to hear the various exclamations of astonishment following the announcement that an aged ram weighed 450 or 500 pounds, and a shearling barely a hundred pounds less. And when a long-wooled sheep, so fat as to approach these weights, was covered with some twenty pounds of wool, old and new, and this fleece, or combination of fleeces, was hand-picked to make it stand out well, giving the appearance of a table-back, it is little wonder that occasionally a visitor from New York State or New Jersey, on looking into the sheep pens, should be heard to exclaim, "By gum," "Jee-rusalem," or some other expression more nearly bordering on the profane. When we remember that expert judges were less numerous then than now, and that the awards were made by a jury of three, nominated for the Provincial Fair by directors each representing half a dozen or more counties, and sometimes

chosen with more reference to their political or social standing, or their family relationship, showing was even more of a lottery than it is at present. An amusing instance of the fitness of things used to be told by an old exhibitor of South-downs, who, while trimming his sheep at one of the big fairs, was accosted by a visitor with the question, "What breed do you call 'em?" "Smooty-faced beasties?" And before the conversation ended, the exhibitor learned that his querist was to be one of the judges of his class. When, as sometimes happened, one or two of the three judges was disposed to give more than the benefit of a doubt to the exhibitor from his own district, and especially if one of them was a Scotchman, there were such prolonged arguments and such stubborn resistances that the sheep, as well as the men who held them, showed in their general appearance that they had aged considerably during the examination. I always had some sympathy to spare for the exhibitor charged with showing in the yearling class a sheep with a two-year-old mouth, as I had more than once to face the same ordeal with one that had been precocious enough to put up four broad front teeth before the regulation time, but it remained for a twentieth-century exhibitor to be charged at a Provincial fair with practising dentistry, by clipping off and filing down the ivory, in order to pass its wearer in a younger class than that to which it properly belonged. And though ear labels and record numbers are certainly aids to honesty, for which, doubtless, many are truly grateful, I believe it was a twentieth-century case in which the purchaser of a bunch of record-labelled lambs discovered in the ear of one an ownership label that failed to correspond. This, of course, might be accounted for on the theory that "accidents will happen in the best regulated family," and it is doubtless safe to say that, on the whole, the sheepmen are as straight as any on the show circuit; indeed, I believe they claim a higher average of conscience than they concede to the pigmen, which is saying a good deal, and reminds me of the retort of the boy who was twitted for carrying a black eye: "Gosh," said he, "You ought to see the other fellow."

"SHEPHERD."

LIVE STOCK OF GREAT BRITAIN.

Robert Wallace, Professor of Agriculture and Rural Economy in the University of Edinburgh, has given us a truly monumental work in the fourth edition of his well-known treatise on "Farm Live Stock of Great Britain." The first edition was published in 1885. The one before us has been three years in course of preparation, has been more than doubled in size, and comparing it with the third edition in completeness of data and wealth of illustrations, of which there are over four hundred, we should say its value has been enhanced fourfold.

Though dedicated to the live-stock breeders of the United Kingdom, whose achievements in animal improvement have easily set and kept the pace for the rest of the world, and written chiefly in their interests, it will appeal strongly to breeders everywhere, and to none more than those of Canada and the United States. Besides covering all the breeds of horses, cattle, sheep and swine common to Great Britain and Ireland, it contains chapters on such classes as Holstein cattle and the American trotter, the aim being to make this work comprehensive within the limits of 750 splendidly-printed pages. No up-to-date stockman's library can be considered reasonably complete without a copy of such a work as this, not the least valuable of which are the practical chapters on feeding, dairying, treatment of disease, records of milking trials such as those at St. Louis, etc.

The opening chapters of the distinguished author in respect to agricultural education and the principles of breeding are most wholesome and

calculated to be of very great service at the present time.

The publishers, Oliver & Boyd, of Edinburgh, Scotland, are deserving of great credit for the admirable style in which the work has been executed. It is quoted at 16s. net in Great Britain, which would mean \$4.50 postage prepaid, if ordered through "The Farmer's Advocate" office.

PROPORTIONS OF THE SEXES IN LITTERS OF PIGS.

In response to requests, the Animal Husbandry Office of the Bureau of Animal Industry, U. S. Department of Agriculture, has recently collected information regarding the relative proportions of the two sexes of pigs at birth, with quite interesting results. This information is not to be obtained from the herdbooks, for the reason that, while the total number of pigs farrowed is usually given, the number of each sex is given only for the pigs raised.

Reports received from 82 breeders, located in 23 States and 2 Territories (Indian Territory and Oklahoma). Eight breeds were represented, as follows: Berkshire, Chester White, Duroc-Jersey, Hampshire, Large Yorkshire, Ohio Improved Chester, Poland-China, and Tamworth. In a few cases the record of litters of grade and mixed breeding was given; these are included in the results.

The number of sows whose litters were reported was 1,477. The number of boar pigs was 6,660; the number of sows, 6,625; and the total, 13,285. The average per sow was as follows: Boars, 4.51; sows, 4.48; total, 8.99. The figures are mainly for litters farrowed during 1906. In 49 cases second litters during the year were reported for the same sows, which somewhat raises the average per sow.

Boars are seen to be slightly more numerous than sows, but for all practical purposes the sexes may be regarded as equal in number at birth. The relative proportion was found to be 1,065 boars to 1,000 sows. Expressed in another way, the proportion is 100.53 boars to 100 sows, which, in lowest terms of whole figures, is 201 boars to 200 sows.

GEORGE M. ROMMEL,
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EFFECT OF CATTLE EMBARGO IN ARGENTINA.

Mr. Herbert Gibson, of Buenos Ayres, in a paper read at the International Sheep Breeders' Conference at Lincoln, England, the week of the Royal Show, said:

"The fact that the British ports remained closed to Argentine live stock, has been of positive benefit both to the sheep and cattle industries. The disappearance of the live-stock exporter created for a time a drop in the values of wethers and steers; and the profits obtained by the freezing industry, left with only local consumption as a competitor, encouraged those engaged in the industry to increase their plant and led to the construction of new freezing works. The freezing establishments of the Argentine are now capable of handling over 200,000 tons of meat per annum. The stimulus given to the trade has created competition, the quality of the carcass has improved and commanded a better price in the consuming markets, and breeders whose record local prices in the palmiest days of the live-stock export trade were 15s. for sheep and £8 for steers, now obtain up to 20s. for the former and up to £10 for the latter. Apart from the fact that Argentine stock-raisers had not lost but benefited by the closure of British ports, the country at large had gained through the capital invested in the building of plant for the freezing establishments. The labor employed in the works and the by-products and offal which remained at the Argentine end were elaborated for export."



Judging Lincoln Sheep at the Royal Show, 1907.