

THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE & HOME MAGAZINE

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THE DOMINION.

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Restoring the Records.

Mr. Henry Wade, Secretary Agriculture and Arts Association, Toronto, writes us that he desires breeders to send in female pedigree certificates for the Clydesdale Stud Book from 1886 to 2106, inclusive, as the manuscript was destroyed in the fire. The swine breeders are asked to send in all their certificates registered during 1894 and 1895, and they will be returned as soon as copied.

Regina Fair.

We learn that the contracts are let for the erection of the buildings for this great Territorial Exhibition, and that arrangements are rapidly being made for the carrying out of the project. At present the date of opening is fixed for July 29th, but as this will leave an awkward gap of a week between this and the closing of the Winnipeg Industrial, it is earnestly to be hoped that for the welfare of both fairs, these dates will yet be rearranged so as to overcome this difficulty.

A Few Mistakes of Shorthorn Breeders.

[A paper prepared for the Dominion Shorthorn Breeders' Association, by A. W. Smith, Maple Lodge, Ont.]

It is probably too emphatic to say that a man has made a mistake, when other people are willing to endorse what he has done, and follow in the same line or repeat with enlargements the actions with which I may find fault. But there are a few things which many Shorthorn breeders do which I think are mistakes, and wish to suggest the possibility of the correctness of my idea to the breeders assembled. I will mention only three.

It appears to me that a mistake is often made with regard to color. Shorthorn breeders, like other human beings, are liable to go to extremes. A few years ago the fashion was for red. At the beginning of that phase of fashion, a beautiful, rich cherry red was the color par excellence—and what a pity breeders were not satisfied with a large percentage of that color—but according to the nature of the breed, a roan would come occasionally and often, so they must be darker, until many verged on the dark brindle of some of the old woods or native cattle.

Now, a revolution has taken place, and I am sorry to know some of our most prominent breeders are willing to advertise that they like white so well they intend breeding from bulls of that color (but of that I think there is very little danger). And they would, indeed, succeed in making the white as fashionable nonsense as was the dark red a few years ago, were it not for the deep-rooted prejudice against white cattle prevailing among the farmers of our country. And this prejudice is not without some foundation. It is generally believed that white cattle are not so hardy as those of a darker color; that they do not stand roughing so well; that they are more affected by vermin—not more liable to have them, but showing the effects of them worse.

And I believe those holding this opinion to have some good grounds for their belief. I do not believe that the color of the hair, be it white or red, is directly the cause of this weakness, for white may be as hardy as red, and we find the same fault, namely, weakness in standing hardships or pests, in the other colors; but it is the white, thin, papery-skinned animal that fails when exposed; and what farmers have found out is, that there are a larger number or greater percentage of white cattle have that peculiar kind of skin than of the darker colors. Shorthorn breeders are possibly making a mistake in trying to make the general farmers, who comprise our markets, believe that white is a color much to be desired, when many years' experience have proved the contrary.

It is true a great many white animals have been successful in the show-ring, but this only proves that pampering and forcing and constant care and attentions of the very best kind will successfully combat even a thin, papery-white skin, which very often encloses a weak constitution.

Next, I would like to call attention to the pedigree fallacy. There is no more firm believer in the great value to an animal, otherwise good, of a line of good ancestors, than myself. I would insist upon having it, but at the same time I have always been surprised at the shortsightedness or utter blindness of shrewd business men, endowed with the full complement of common sense, fancying that all the good qualities of Shorthorns were bound up in one particular tribe of the breed, and notwithstanding the object lessons we have had of the disastrous consequences in the past, breeders narrowing themselves down to few families of the breed, and considering that every atom of their success depended upon excluding all other blood from their herds. We find some of those who should be our best breeders following the fad in even narrower lines, only in another direction. I refer to the using of Scotch blood to the exclusion of all other. Mr. Gibson, in a paper on Cruickshank Shorthorns, about two years ago, unveiled a very disagreeable fact when he pointed out that the steers of our country are not as good now as a few years ago, because of the use of too many Scotch bulls. And it is undoubtedly a fact. We have lost the weight; we have lost the stylish appearance that enhances the value of the beast in the eye of almost any buyer (unconsciously in some, perhaps), even if the animal be only a steer or a butcher's beast. And these qualities we have lost to a great extent where a number of crosses of unadulterated Scotch-bred bulls are on the grade cows of the farmers.

Nor is there any saving in the cost of production, for the little steer generally carries as large a paunch and capacity for food as the heavier one. This difficulty may be overcome by blending the Scotch and English blood, and the Scotch cattle may be as much improved by an infusion of English blood as have been the English stamps by the Scotch cross. Some years ago, when the Cruickshank herd was at its zenith, they were simply grand cattle, and those of them introduced into herds differently bred did wonderful good, and the Scotch cattle of to-day undoubtedly do great good in certain herds, or when used on the English or old-fashioned type. In fact, it may be said they have been the salvation of the breed. But before Mr. Cruickshank had begun to reap the evil effects of believing that he had all the good in the Shorthorn race in his own herd, and allowed no infusion of fresh blood, his cattle were grand in themselves—such animals as Royal Barmpton, a show bull of the first order himself, and as a sire, famous, had he never sired another than Barmpton Hero; but the dam of Royal Barmpton was a choicely bred Bates cow. We have other very celebrated Scotch bulls as sires

to-day, but their celebrity has generally come through crossing on cows with a large percentage of English blood, or through their sons when so used.

The third mistake I would like to point out, and which I have no doubt is the most important of the three, is that of allowing the grand milking qualities of Shorthorns to disappear to a very large extent in great numbers of the breed. This has been effected through many causes, but particularly through the extreme carelessness of those breeders in whose hands were the largest herds of the breed. Probably it was found desirable to have the herd in very high flesh, then the cows would be dried off when in milk two or three months, and the calves either raised artificially or nurses provided. This custom continued for three or four generations and milking qualities of the best order would be almost ruined. Then the dairy interests of the country were in very poor condition, and the prices of the products were correspondingly low, consequently the incentive was lacking which is always the strongest, namely, profit. But this matter is all changed now, and dairying qualities of a high order in a cow are at a premium, and the dairy interest is very largely in the hands of the general farmer of the country, and those gentlemen have found out long ago that the Shorthorns are the best general purpose cows; that is, either the pure-bred or the cows with a large percentage of that blood, that they will readily fatten, when dry, up to a heavy weight of good beef, and their produce is nearer the butchers' ideal beef type than any other breed; that there is a greater weight for the same feed than in any other breed that can compete with them in the dairy, and also when competing very favorably with the special dairy breed in the dairy, they at the same time have improved largely in weight. The Shorthorns are naturally grand dairy cows; this quality was one established with the breed, and all the strength of atavism is at hand for the assistance of the breeder who is endeavoring to re-establish this grand quality in his herd. And I do not believe the ability to give a large quantity of milk or butter is confined, as some suppose, to any particular tribe of the breed. It has been claimed by some that the Bates cattle have a monopoly of good milking qualities. This I do not think is borne out by facts. No doubt in what is called the old-fashioned Shorthorns were found a large percentage of grand milkers, but at the present time, when care is taken to foster the milk production, from any of the different tribes can be developed good milkers; in fact, we never used a more successful sire of beef milkers in our own herd than Marquis of Lorne, bred by Mr. W. S. Marr, Aberdeenshire. The Shorthorn has a larger field to occupy than any of the other breeds, and by judiciousness of the breeders can hold it with ease. The Shorthorns are the favored breed of the general farmer, because they are hardy, because they are large and good feeders, and excel in the dairy. These qualities have given Shorthorns a prominence no other breed has attained. Therefore, is it not a great mistake for us to undervalue these qualities and neglect the provisions necessary to retain them, and to loose them from our herds and give other breeds a chance to encroach successfully upon our territory.

No Pleuro in Canada—Another Challenge.

The Dominion Minister of Agriculture has just prepared a report to the Governor-General-in-Council on the papers referred to him on the subject of the scheduling of Canadian cattle by the British Board of Agriculture. Following is a summary of the whole matter:—

(1) That a disease which appeared from lesions in the lungs to have a particular type alleged by the Board of Agriculture to be pleuro-pneumonia, has been found in the case of about a dozen animals out of 93,860 slaughtered at the port of landing since the fall of 1892; and, it may be added, out of a total of 1,393,589 meat cattle shipped from Canada since 1890.

(2) That the persistent and reiterated demand by the Board of Agriculture of the Canadian Government to furnish further information of such disease, based on expert examination of lungs after slaughter of animals, cannot be complied with for the reason that such disease cannot be found in Canada, notwithstanding diligent and repeated veterinary search, this fact leading to the confident belief that it does not exist in Canada, and to the conclusion that it is absolutely impossible to furnish the Board with any further information in relation to it by the discovery of cases in Canada.

(3) That the lesions stated to have been found in the lungs of animals after landing in England or Scotland—after having been carried in some cases from the Northwest plains of Canada—near the base of the Rocky Mountains—a distance of between two and three thousand miles to the sea port, subject during such carriage to the detention arising out of waiting for railway connections, the animals being sometimes confined for several days in stock yards before embarkation, and necessarily packed in close compartments on ship board, where sometimes, despite the utmost care under the regulations, they are in some weathers subject to insufficient ventilation and other forms of hardship—it being only after the animals have endured such trials that the lesions in question can be discovered. It follows, therefore, that further elucidation arising from expert inquiry, as asked for by the Board, can only be obtained in the United Kingdom.

(4) That such disease, moreover, being found in animals having constitutions impaired by age or hardship from confinement in travelling, the form manifested has, for these reasons, been called by veterinary experts in Canada, "transit-pneumonia."

(5) The inference of the Board that such disease, being bacterial or germ, must, therefore, have been contracted in Canada before embarkation, is not supported by evidence; on the contrary there is nothing to show that it might not be contracted in the conditions and time of transit stated.

(6) That the weight of expert evidence, as appears in the proceedings of the Board, determines such lesions to be of very recent origin, that is, within the period occupied by the transit.

(7) That there is nothing in the present discoveries of bacteriological science to establish an inference of the Board and their officers that a bacterial or germ disease may not be developed during a transit such as described.