

### R. A. S. Kilburn Meeting, 1879.

Some of our readers may regard it as a waste of time, to consider what other nations are doing in the agricultural line. The idea is purely provincial. The two great faults to be observed in all colonies, ancient and modern, Latin and Teutonic, are credulity and incredulity in the wrong places. I propose in this article to give some idea of the animals, British and Foreign, exhibited at the R. A. S. meeting at Kilburn, last year, that my readers may see how earnest the managers, stewards, and judges, of the Society are; and how desirable it is that our expositions should be conducted in as fair, unprejudiced, and disinterested a manner: satisfied, as I am that, in nine cases out of twelve, it would be more conducive to the interests of the province that shows should not be held at all, than that prizes should be assigned, as they too often are, to bulls of mixed blood, rams with protuberant horns, cows with one, sometimes with two, quarters defective, and pigs with every fault possible to the race.

Those who arrange the list of prizes, too, are amenable to the rod. Of what permanent use can it be to give six or seven premiums to six or seven animals of an utterly inferior type, to please the crowd? I would rather not please the crowd. I conceive that it is a sign of the very weakest judgment to conceive, that present popularity is likely to lead to future usefulness. Are our farmers for ever to be treated like little babies in a nursery, or like children at a convent school, whose mothers will go home discontented, unless their pets receive, merited or not, some decoration? Throughout the whole of the competitions of our great English societies, there will never be found more than three prizes in a class. A reserve number, it is true, is assigned to a fourth animal, in case the first, second, or third prize should be forfeited on account of some defect. Look again at the honesty of purpose in the disqualification of sheep for unfair shearing, of pigs for being over age. What did Lord Chesham tell his head shepherd, when, on his return from his first exhibition, he found that his best ram had been turned out of the pen on account of the impossible length of his wool? "If this happens again, you go!" How different from the whisper I have often heard going round among the judges—Oh! we must give *this* a prize; it is the best cow, or bull, of Mr.—as the case might have been. Judges, at our county shows, as a rule, are men of the neighbourhood, intimately acquainted with all the stock of the country, and not too well skilled, by travel and experience, in the points of excellence distinctive of each separate breed of cattle, sheep, or pigs.

The most interesting section of the Kilburn show was, doubtless, the Dairyshed, equally divided between the English and foreign exhibitors; and not without reason was its working watched by numerous observers. Dairy farming is in an peculiar state, just at present, in Britain. Upon the working of this industry depends, in great measure, the future prosperity of the richest portion of the soil, and the entire welfare of Ireland. If Normandy and Denmark are to continue to drive out the butters of Derbyshire and Cork from the great London markets, farewell to the quiet happiness of ten thousand homes of the quietest and most contented race of farmers in Europe. Already the landlord of the principal hotel in Derby is obliged to send to Normandy for the two hundred pounds of butter consumed per week in his establishment, not being able to find in the market of his home-town any quantity fit to be put on the table of his guests. What said a tradesman, only the other day, in opening a firkin of Irish butter and a box of French butter to show to a customer? "Look, Sir, the first has to be scraped, and trimmed all round, before it is fit to send out, whereas the French rolls can be despatched to your house at once, without any trouble!" It is not the superiority

of the grass, that gives our neighbours the advantage. Derbyshire can show as good, if not better, pastures than the best grazings of the Val d'Aube.

It is simply the perfect manipulation, the exquisite cleanliness, the good taste in packing, that characterizes the French dairymen, which gives them the preference, all other things being equal. The greater part of the French butter that is exported is not finished in the producer's house. The churning being completed, it is sent off, at once, to the wholesale dealer, he knows his market, and arranges the article accordingly. The different lots are not thrown, higgledy-piggledy, into any convenient half-washed tub, but each quality is carefully separated, compared with the others, and mixed only with those that, from taste, colour, and odour, seem to suit it. Heavy mechanical power is employed to extract the last drop of buttermilk from the mass; the proper proportion of carefully selected salt is added, and the most fascinating packages are arranged, to allow the eye to enjoy its own satisfaction, as well as its Brethren, the nose, and the tongue.

The Germans, of whose section Herr Ahlborn was the chief, do not wash their butter. It is removed from the churn by the aid of a wooden scoop, placed in a wooden tray or trough to allow the butter-milk to drain from it, and is then worked on the butter worker for the purpose of abstracting the remainder of the butter-milk. Herr Ahlborn explains the theory to be that the butter suffers in quality through being washed in water. Here, I beg to differ from him. The Danes and the Normans always wash their butter, and better cannot be made. I proceed to describe the method in use on the best farms in the N. W. of France, whence the finest specimens of dairy produce find their way to the fastidious tables of Paris and London.

Those of my readers who have seen my account of the mode pursued in arranging the "Devonshire butter" will, perhaps, remember that, when the butter comes it is in grains. Well, the Normandy butter is worked on the same principle. The churn is filled up with cream to a certain point. At that point is a hole, stopped by a spigot: the moment the churner hears the change of sound which indicates that the butter is beginning to come, he draws out the spigot, having previously allowed the churn (a barrel shaped one) to rest at a proper level; if, on the spigot, can be found a grain of butter, though it be no bigger than a pin's head, he immediately drains off the butter-milk through a sieve, as carefully as may be, pours a quantity of cold water into the churn, and turning it two or three times, he again drains off the water; and this is repeated six or seven times, until the water runs off perfectly clear: the butter is never allowed to gather in the butter-milk, but in cold water alone.

Unfortunately, the dread of the various cattle-diseases, and the bother of the quarantine, kept most of the foreign cattle at home. But the display of horses from the Continent was large and good. M. Edmond de Ville, alone, entered twenty-eight animals of various sorts. M. Paul Tiberghien, of Belgium, sent a grey cart mare, "Sultana," which was undoubtedly a wonderful acquisition to the show. Her trot was so good, that many a Norfolk cob might have been proud of it, and the judges say that, "her lightness and activity recalled the performance of a former wonder of the prize-ring, Mr. Briery's "Sensation," a magnificent cart-mare, which, measuring nearly 17 hands, trotted with the neatness and agility of a pony.

The most striking of the French exhibits were the Percherons and the Boulonnais. The former, once so well known in the good old diligence times, when the pleasing titles of *Voleur*, *Brigand*, *Tête de cochon*, were so lavishly applied to the quarrelsome stallions by the postillions, are no