

How Shall We Improve Our Horses?

BY A. WILSON.

It may not be out of place for me, in this age of progression and great competition, to pass a few remarks on one of the most important branches of agriculture. Every one is aware of the very dull market there is for the large majority of horses that are bred in this country, and it is almost impossible for anyone to conjecture what will be the results if a still further continuance of the present methods are carried on in raising nondescript animals. No doubt the States was the great dumping ground for a large portion of the low bred horses raised here. Two obstacles have come in the way which have completely shut that market against this class. First of all, the Western States are raising such a quantity of horses, which are being shipped into the large cities and sold by auction at prices that would stagger the most of the farmers here. Good-looking working horses, all in fine condition, weighing from ten hundred to sixteen hundred pounds, are selling daily at prices from \$50 to \$100 each. The next obstacle was the McKinley bill, which many consider the greatest awakener we have ever had in this country. In many ways trade has been changing while we have been asleep. In this age of easy and quick travelling many have gone to Europe, and are now adopting the styles and fashions of European countries. Fast trotters were formerly wanted, but now stylish horses with high knee action are most in demand. Horses of this class are at present being imported from Great Britain, where fabulous prices are being paid for them. To meet the demand which is at our very door and elsewhere, highly bred sires must be used, such as the English Coach, the Hackney and the Thoroughbred; the qualities of each I will here treat separately. The

ENGLISH COACH HORSE

is one of the most impressive sires. They have been bred for two points (style and color) for centuries. The results are wonderful when highly bred stallions of this type are mated with light legged driving mares from the first cross. I have seen the very best results if the offspring of this cross are again bred to coach stallions. The result will be most satisfactory. Light legged horses are much easier bred than draught horses, because in the former it is type, quality and action, while in the latter it is size and weight. It can be seen how much easier it is to breed for type, quality and action in the one, than size and weight in the other with the same mares. It will also be seen how careful everyone should be in mating their mares to gain the best results, and keep to one line and breeding.

THE HACKNEY.

In the general acceptance of the word, is a horse superior to all others for riding or driving purposes. The continental countries of Europe place great confidence in this breed. The French Government agent, when writing to the royal commission on horse breeding in Great Britain in 1873, says that he placed the greatest reliance on the English Hackney, for they had been the source of the great improvement in the horses that have been produced in France. I don't suppose there is a breed of horses in the world possessed of the same ambition, action and courage. History tells us they have been held in the very highest esteem for centuries. Lawrence writes of horses having been sold of this stamp, four hundred years ago, at prices from £70 to £80. The Hackney, although not bred for color like the Coach horse, has been bred for type, strength and action—they show that fine, wedgy confirmation which is so essential in horses for riding and driving in four-in-hands and lighter vehicles, such as the mail phaeton, T cart, victoria and dog cart. They go with that fine elastic step which make them so suitable for driving in crowded parks, and for this purpose are much sought after. It matters not whether they are driven four miles or fourteen miles an hour they always keep up that beautiful showy action, and it can be seen from time to time, in matches that have taken place in England, the wonderful speed, strength and

endurance they possess for carrying heavy weight and trotting long distances. There are many instances of them having trotted 17 to 20 miles within the hour, carrying 15 stones, and it is on record where one trotted 24 miles in one hour. Almost every sporting gentleman in England keeps hacks of this stamp for riding to cover while their hunters have been sent on hours before them to the place of meet, and in many instances I have seen them carry their masters across country in fine style when their hunters failed to get there in time. In mating highly bred stallions of this breed to nice wedgy roadster mares it is wonderful how they blend together and produce a horse of very fine confirmation—in fact horses bred in this way from the very best Hackney sires are superior to most of the stallions that are being imported. It seems strange that the farmers in this country will persist in supporting overgrown stallions, both of the Hackney and Coach horse breeds, in preference to the highly finished horse of a less size. It must be understood there are culls in every breed of animals, it does not matter of what breed they are, and if sires of a low standard are imported they should not be patronized, and very soon a better class will come, and those who wish to import the best will be encouraged to do so. How many times have we seen stallions of a very high class driven out of this country by the want of support. I could name numbers of them which have gone to the States and made a great name. If they had received the support they merited they would have been here yet, and been a great boon to the country at large.

THE THOROUGHBRED

is of the highest breeding of any of the horse kind, and individually is the most impressive sire. They have never been bred for type, but for speed at the gallop the same as the roadster here for speed at the trot, and it can be seen in districts here where thoroughbreds have been travelling of different confirmations, how they impress their gets with their own particular form. Anyone who has witnessed large classes of them brought out at some of the leading shows will notice this. Although some are great race horses themselves and getters of race horses, that is no criterion when crossed with common mares. Now a thoroughbred, to be a successful sire to cross with common mares, should be of good size and of a thick, wedgy shape, with thick, deep quarters, short back, well sprung ribs, shoulders well laid back, and all who know what it is to ride on horse back know the difference between straight shoulders and sloping shoulders. A horse with the former moves the body every time he steps and shakes his rider, and is not safe to ride, but the one with the sloping shoulders moves with a fine elastic step and is a pleasure to ride, and invariably has a certain amount of knee action. If this were only studied a very little and put into practice, what a fine class of hunters of great value could be raised here. Stallions of this breed can be mated to a rougher class of mares than would be suited for either the Coach horse or the Hackney, and with the rougher class of mares the grading process of a higher standard would become much quicker and more profitable.

THE DRAUGHT HORSES

are of many breeds, the Clydesdales, Shires, Suffolks, Percherons, Belgians and Danish. Of all the breeds the Clydesdales and the Shires are the most in favor, and probably the Clydesdale come first, although in some parts of the States the Shires are coming to the front, and in many instances I hear more of them because of their solid color, it being not so characteristic in the Shire as in the Clydesdale to have so much white markings. But whatever breed is used it should always be the aim of everyone raising draught horses to get as much size and weight as possible on short legs, with good feet and pasterns, which is most essential in draught horses for city work. There is one very important matter I would like to mention here which may be wholly unknown to many, but is attracting the attention of many horsemen to this country, that is, the climatic of the different horses shipped into Great Britain. The Canadian horse stands first on the list—they will go into

their work almost the day they land. The German and French horses take one year. Horses from the U. S. A. six months. It will be seen from this what a valuable country this is for raising stock, if good use were made of it. There are large railway firms and others in Great Britain who would buy Canadian draught horses in preference to any other if they could get them suitable. There were Canadian horses shipped into France last summer, and the few that were suitable have given the greatest of satisfaction. The great fault of our horses is the want of type and quality. In a country like this everyone who is breeding stock should earnestly endeavor to raise the very best and make them attractive to buyers. In the meantime it is purely accidental if a marketable horse is raised by the present methods. Many will say, how can we procure such stallions to breed from? My answer is, do as the South Dumfries and Paris districts have done, where the system has been one of the greatest successes. Form associations such as they have done, with a set of rules governing the society. There is no fear but success will attend all such efforts.

Sheep a Profitable Stock for the Canadian Farmer.

BY JAMES RUSSELL, RICHMOND HILL.

A great many of the farmers of Ontario have given up raising sheep, and claim it does not pay to raise them, but take an average farm of 100 acres of good land and it will carry a flock of twenty ewes under good management, and the profits will run from \$100 to \$200 per year from wool and mutton. Ten acres of clover and peas will with a few roots be all that is required for their winter feed, and there is a gain in growing these crops, as peas and clover enrich the soil and relieve the necessity of growing so much barley at the present low price, (with no prospect of improvement for coming years, it being a crop which tends to impoverish the soil and makes a very small return in manure). There are many different opinions as to what kind of sheep are most profitable to raise. This I believe should be regulated by the quality of the soil. The Cotswolds some years ago were awarded the medal at Toronto Industrial against all breeds for the best pair of fat sheep for exportation, which was won by ewes weighing 345 pounds each. Again recently at the London Provincial show the Cotswolds were awarded first prize against all others, although it seems to me a mistake—the competition of one breed against another. The Dominion Sheep Breeders' Association could make a change in this particular satisfactory to all interested. The real value of Cotswolds is in crossing on other breeds or on grade flocks. Mr. Russell, Swanwick, Manager of the Agricultural College Farm at Cirencester, Gloucestershire, England, showed me a flock of sheep, two of every kind in Great Britain, which he had collected together that he might compare their feeding qualities. He remarked at the time that a great many of their Cotswold rams were used in England to cross on Down ewes, to improve their feeding quality, and no doubt the mutton sells for Down mutton on the English markets. The gain in using Cotswold rams in Canada is to get size for shipping purposes, as we all know it is the weight that brings the profit. I can only give my own experience in breeding Leicesters, Lincolns, Cotswolds and Shropshires. A few years ago I fed in one pen two pairs of first prize Cotswold ewes at the English Royal, and one pair of Shropshire ewes, first prize winners at the H. S. Show in Scotland; raised pure-bred lambs from them all, and find the Cotswold will produce the heaviest lambs, and in shearings again I find the Cotswold will shear about three pounds to two of the Shrops. Canada has only been a resting place for the Cotswolds on their way to the west, even as far as Colorado. The wool dealers injured the reputation of the Cotswolds, as they fancied every coarse fleece was a Cotswold when not one in five hundred was from pure blooded Cotswold sheep. The demand for Cotswolds in the west at present cannot be supplied. This goes far to show no other breed will replace them.