

The Breeder and Crazier.

The Essex Breed of Pigs.

We present our readers with an illustration of a pair of prize Essex swine, exhibited at the last Provincial Show, and owned by Mr. Thos. McCrae, of Guelph. Pigs are usually arranged under two classes,—the large and the small breeds; although there are some varieties that more properly occupy an intermediate position. The large breeds are, with few exceptions, proportionately coarse, but they are the most prolific, and generally have the most abundant supplies of milk. The small breeds are exceedingly numerous, but the Windsor, Lord Radnor's, the recently improved Berkshire, and Mr. Fisher Hobbs, or the modern improved Essex, are among the most esteemed. The difference between the large and small breeds admits of a clear explanation. The original English pig was large in size, coarse in character, and it acquired some special peculiarities in certain districts, according to its habits of life, and its means of gaining support. These varieties gradually distinguished the different local breeds. When improved in their

imals expending their food by active habits, they lay it upon their bodies in the form of fat. The intermixture of these distinct classes of pigs has effected a marked improvement. We have animals combining size, hardy constitutions, and a disposition for fattening; as well as other breeds, which, though more delicate in character than those which we have just referred to, are nevertheless more suited to our requirements, and more hardy than the pure Neapolitan and Chinese. The difference between our several breeds is caused by the proportion of each kind of blood in the animal's parentage. The larger and coarser the pig, the more fully does it prove that its parentage is of the old English blood, while the smaller and finer it is, the greater is the preponderance of Neapolitan or Chinese blood. We may have every intermediate stage of quality between the two extremes; but the same result becomes evident throughout. As the Neapolitan and Chinese blood gains the ascendancy, so it increases the aptitude for fattening, and gives early maturity, with a delicacy and smallness of size. On the other hand, in proportion as the old English blood prevails, so do the progeny take a longer time to fatten;

belly, full in the hind quarters, but light in the bone and offal. They feed remarkably quick, grow fast, and are of excellent quality of meat. The sows are good breeders, and bring litters from eight to twelve, but they have the character of being indifferent nurses."

Mr. Fisher Hobbs has for the last twenty years occupied the most distinguished position as an improver of the Essex pig. He has crossed with the Neapolitan and black Chinese, which, under great perseverance and judicious care, have ultimately produced a very marked improvement. Indeed, to such a pitch of excellence has Mr. Hobbs carried this breed, that it is now usually known under his own name, both in the county of Essex and elsewhere. It is distinguished by smallness of bone and head, beautiful proportions, with a strong tendency to fatten and early maturity, with flesh of fine fibre and excellent quality. The colour is almost invariably black, and the sow is noted for her prolificness and care of her young. With liberal feeding, these animals can usually be fully developed in fifteen or eighteen months, and they attain to good weights for a small breed; some reaching as high, with moderate feeding, as 60 or 70 stones

A PAIR OF ESSEX PIGS.



SECOND PRIZE-TAKERS IN THE SMALL BREED CLASS, AT THE PROVINCIAL EXHIBITION, HAMILTON, 1864.

character, it was effected by the introduction of foreign blood, and for this purpose the tender and delicate Neapolitan and Chinese pigs were well suited. Between these two extremes,—viz., the original large and coarse English hog, and the small Neapolitan and Chinese pigs,—all the English breeds may be arranged, according to their relative size and fineness. In the old English pig, the strong bristles and wiry hair were indicative of a strong constitution, capable of withstanding the roughest weather. Its general configuration of body, and its powers of locomotion adapted it for travelling far for food. These qualities were naturally associated with others that rendered the animal a good breeder, possessing great muscular power, firmness of flesh, and capacity for enduring both privation and fatigue. The Neapolitan and Chinese pigs, natives of warmer climates, have not the power of travelling far for their supplies of food. So far from being restless in their character, they are decidedly predisposed to a luxurious mode of life, in which their food is obtained with little trouble. In this absence of active exercise, there is no necessity for large lungs, consequently they are not fully developed. Instead, therefore, of the ani-

they come to a larger size, and are altogether stronger and coarser. These facts show that, in order to attain the best results, the object to be accomplished must guide us in selecting the most suitable kinds of pigs, and in directing their general management.

The Essex breed of the present day is very different, in size, appearance, and habits, to the original stock that prevailed forty years ago. The old Essex breed is described as "Up-eared, with long snarp heads; rouch-backed, carcasses flat, long, and generally high upon the leg, bone not large, colour white, or black and white, bare of hair, quick feeders but great consumers; and of an unquiet disposition." Lord Western is known as having many years ago effected a great improvement in the old stock, the progeny being designated the Essex half blacks, into which entered a large strain of Berkshire blood, and which soon obtained considerable notoriety. They are described by the author of the report on the agriculture of Essex, as "black and white, short-haired, thin-skinned, with smaller heads and ears than the Berkshire, but featured with inside hair, which is a distinctive mark of both; having short snabby noses, very fine bone, broad and deep in the

(8 lbs.), and young pigs of only five or six months old are frequently exhibited at the Smithfield fat cattle show, of extraordinary weight and fatness.

This breed has met with strong rivals in Lord Radnor's, the Suffolk, and particularly the small improved Berkshire, with which it has of late often exchanged places in first-class honours at the principal British exhibitions of live stock. The latter of late years has made very great progress both in Canada and the States, and it may be considered, perhaps, as the most approved variety of the small breeds. But the improved Essex is certainly winning its way on this side the Atlantic to public favour, and from the experience already had, it is deserving the attention and patronage of farmers who desire to raise animals possessing special qualities for domestic use. For the ordinary market, the larger breeds are no doubt the most profitable, but for family consumption, the smaller breeds are infinitely to be preferred, as the texture and flavour of their flesh are so much superior, and in the relative amount of food which they consume, and in the short time they attain to maturity, they unquestionably possess decided advantages.