

THE BREEDING OF HORSES IN NOVA SCOTIA.

Nova Scotia is a country endowed with many advantages for the breeding of horses, more especially the part either in or adjacent to the valley of the Annapolis. It is a country that should produce fine horses and in large quantities and be able to more than supply the home market and be then able to export a large number of horses to the great natural markets lying alongside, namely: Boston and New York. When I refer to horses I mean more particularly carriage horses, for which there is an ever increasing demand and an ever increasing market in such places as New York. One might say that the carriage horse pure and simple, has only been in demand in New York for the last few years, and this demand, as the wealth of the country increases and its tastes become more civilized, is bound to increase and therefore, we in Nova Scotia, having the natural advantages in order to meet and take advantage of this demand, ought to do something satisfactory to enable us to be fully prepared to reap a rich and certain harvest in spite of the increased duties on horses.

The breeding of horses in Nova Scotia at the present time is, in my mind, in a dreadful and deplorable condition. As I said, I confine myself to carriage horses and fully recognize the great strides that have been made in the breeding of heavy draught horses, which we can easily see in Halifax in the improved condition of the truck horses to what they were a few years ago. But as regards carriage horses, I think we can safely put the reason of the poor class of ordinary horses in Nova Scotia down to three causes. First, the second rate trotting stallions that travel the country; second, the ages to which farmers keep their mares before breeding from them, and third, the almost semi-starvation of the mare in foal during the winter and of the colt during the first two winters of its life.

Let us take the first cause. Trotting is all very well in its way, but ability to trot a mile in under three minutes under artificial circumstances is not everything. It would be all right if the average trotting sire at present in this country had anything to recommend him besides this so called speed, as a rule he has not, the very look of him condemns him at once, he is a poor shape in every detail and if it was not for the fact that he can get over the ground in a given time, he would not find favour in the eyes of the farmer at all. But this fact blinds the farmers and they can not see the importance of other points but this. They all have hopes of breeding a colt greater than his sire, for whom they may be able to demand and get a fabulous sum. I am not running down trotting, for I consider it an excellent thing at its proper time and in its proper place, but as well think of breeding a Derby winner from a Clydesdale mare as a Maud S. out of an ordinary barn door farm horse. Therefore, I say that trotting is ruining the breed of horses in Nova Scotia. Let the farmers put their silly idea of speed out of their heads and let them plant in their heads some thoughts of bone, muscle, form, limbs and such like when they choose a sire. Let us take the next cause, the age of the dam. The average farmer works his mare till she has no more work left in her and then he says unto himself I will raise a colt from her, mind I say the average farmer, there are many who do not do this and justly receive their reward in better stock and higher prices. Perhaps the mare is fourteen to twenty years old and this is no exaggeration, and he expects to raise from her a colt that will be worth a fabulous sum of money and beat the record of a Palo Alta. Fancy a poor hard worked broken down mare after twelve or fifteen years constant and incessant work on a farm with insufficient feed, fancy her taking up the cares of maternity at that date. It is absurd, it is more than absurd, it is wrong, for it floods the market with a poor miserable stock of horses of little or no use to any one. Let our farmers use some common sense in this matter, let them see the advantages of a young dam and then let them act on them and their reward will, if good luck be their's, be great.

The third cause is a difficult one to meet, for our farmers are poor, with few exceptions, and hardly able to afford to feed their

stock as they ought to be fed. But if they pursued a different system and were more energetic, and more thoughtful, I am sure some means could be found to meet this difficulty. Another cause which I have not mentioned, is that of putting two-year-olds and three-year-olds to hard work in order "to earn their food." It is not at all a rare thing to see in our country districts a three-year-old doing hard farm work. Such a thing is short sighted in the extreme. Can we find a remedy for some of these evils? For the first we certainly can. Instead of the weedy, lanky, ewe-necked trotting horse let us have some strong, compact, well set up "Hackney" sire introduced into this country. A horse that will get carriage horses of the stamp required and demanded for the United States market to say nothing of our own.

The breeding and fostering of the "Hackney" has been brought into great prominence in England lately by Mr. Burdett-Coutts, who has studied the Brookfield Stud Farm. He has lately issued a book on the subject, which is full of interest to the intelligent horseman and farmer. The best known importers of the "Hackney" in America are Mr. Fairfax, Dr. Webb and other breeders, Mr. Bloodgood and Mr. Cassatt, all these gentlemen have now established large stock farms on which they breed little else but this useful variety of horse. Let us take a description of one who is perhaps the finest Hackney in the world.

Candidate, by Benchmark-Poll II., is a rich colored dark chestnut horse, looking taller than he is, about 15.3. His head is beautiful, his shoulders perfect. He also owns a grand middle piece, for his back is very level and his hind ribs deep, his quarters are excellent and he stands on good short flat legs, which show eight and one half inches of bone below the knee. He has an undeniable gift of going, his action is perfect, his track action being without a fault. He is peculiarly adapted to give size and substance to foals he gets from light mares. There are many such as him even in Mr. Burdett-Coutts' farm.

People seem to be of the opinion that "Hackneys" are small horses, they are not necessarily so. Witness Dr. Webb's (of New York) Courier who is over sixteen hands. One of the finest Hackney stallions in America, is Mr. Prescott Lawrence's "Fashion," he is perhaps the finest specimen on this side of the water, and his get have nearly all his superb characteristics, in fact, this is a peculiarity of the Hackney. Now, what I wish to show is, that this is the kind of horse we want to breed from in this country and this is the kind of breeding that ought to be encouraged. A Hackney is the most perfect carriage horse combining, as he does, shape, speed and strength, and moreover he is exceedingly handy. If stallions of this kind were imported into Nova Scotia we would soon have a breed of horses that would command any price on the New York market. Therefore, the government of this province ought to import two first class Hackney stallions and place them at the disposal of the farmers, of course for a small nominal figure in order to just pay expenses. If this was done it would be money well laid out and well spent, for it would return a hundred fold and instead of the poor miserable looking specimens of equine breeding that we see now-a-days, we would have fine strong, strapping carriage horses that would be able to bring \$300 or \$400 in the New York market any day of the year, and the miserable trotting sire would retire to his nominal and respectful place. M. G.

DEALER IN CURIOSITIES: "Here's a skeleton of Milton's pet cat."

Collector: "I don't want one so large. What's this small one?"

Dealer in Curiosities: "That's a skeleton of the same cat when it was a kitten."

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