

## Phases of Western Sheep Husbandry.

BY J. M'CAIG.

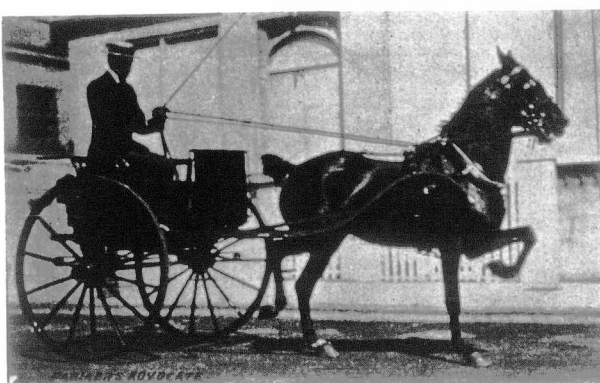
There are some reasons to think that the sheep breeders of Eastern Canada are not deriving as much profit from their business as they naturally should. Sheep-raising in the West offers a wide contrast to sheep-raising in the East. In the West, where animals have to range over long distances each day, often under hard conditions and in very large numbers, there is a plain tendency to deterioration in size. In the East, on the other hand, the number of animals kept by an individual breeder is small, the feeding arrangements and quality and variety of food are as favorable as the art of man and the fertile cultivated areas can make them. The result is that the Eastern sheep possesses much greater size, sappiness and rotundity of carcass than the Western.

Though there is this wide difference in these opposite ends of the Dominion, sheep-keeping in the East and sheep-keeping in the West are closely interdependent. They are complementary. The foundation stuff—that is, the she stuff—of the Western ranges is necessarily Merino. Sheep for range purposes could not be obtained as cheaply or as easily from the East as they could from over the line, and the heavy English breeds, so distinctly the product of intensive treatment, could not be safely set down into range conditions and thrive. The Merino, on the other hand, is by nature the best range sheep grown. It thrives well in large bands, can travel long distances daily, and can stand hard conditions. The straight Merino, however, is not suited to our business. Owing to the large increase in mutton consumption, the English breeds have made a considerable invasion on the territory of the Merino. The supply of medium and coarse wools has become relatively large and the price has consequently fallen. The price of wools of all grades has likewise fallen to such an extent that all over America wool can be regarded as only a by-product. It is especially the case, too, that in the more northerly latitudes meat production ranks above wool production. It is generally conceded that moderate warmth is favorable to the production of fine wool, while, contrariwise, a considerable degree of cold induces vigorous appetite, gross and heavy feeding, and, consequently, high flesh-forming properties. Besides this, the American duty lowers the price of our wool. So there are both circumstantial and natural reasons why sheep-husbandry in Canada should lean strongly to the mutton side. In spite of all that may be said by fanciers of the Merino, or indeed by fanciers of any other breed, about its being the best sheep for all purposes living, Merino mutton is not the best mutton; hence, sheep-breeding in the West is the process of transformation of the Merino ewe stock into stuff of better mutton qualities. It is this necessary transformation that opens up the profitable field for the breeder of males of the English breeds. Suitable males cannot be grown under range conditions, and these are imported to the Territories from Ontario and Manitoba. As this has been the general practice since sheep-ranching began in the West, it seems almost unnecessary to refer to these conditions or to emphasize their necessity and suitability.

Special circumstances make it desirable to stir up Eastern breeders. The wool market is not particularly bad over the line at present, and sheep business generally is prospering; but low prices of wool about shearing time made a lot of the fellows who banked mostly on wool anxious to sell. The attractions of the Canadian Northwest as a bountiful grazing country set some of them looking for markets over here, with the result that several bands were contracted for and delivered to Maple Creek and other parts of the Territories. In Southern Alberta itself between thirty and forty thousand sheep were brought in by one capitalist. The chief point of interest and importance is that these importations were not limited to ewe stuff, but included several bunches of rams. These rams were in most cases Rambouillets, which, of course, possess the best fleshing qualities of any of the Merino families, but are yet distinctly wool sheep. There were, however, some straight Delaines, quite small in carcass and so yolk in fleece as to be unsuited to stand the occasional cold dips of our climate. These rams have been brought in partly because they can be bought cheap and partly because it was desired to increase the returns from the fleeces of the range sheep by giving additional weight to the fleece. As our market for wool is not too good, and it would be still only grade wool, and as there is practically no classification of wools in the Canadian market, it is difficult to see how the introduction of these rams is going to be a benefit even on the wool side, while on the mutton side they must be a distinct injury. Much adroit talking and writing has assisted in the introduction of these sheep. Our mutton market is a good one to date and is worth taking care of, and for this reason we should dip liberally into Eastern flocks to maintain and improve these mutton qualities.

It is not to be presumed, however, that the use of rams of the English breeds with simply a

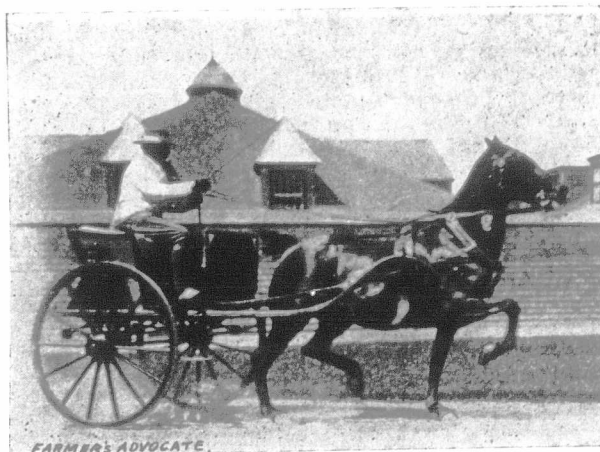
beginning of Merino she stuff, with continuous weeding of the weakest, solves the problem of breeding for the rancher. The first cross with almost any two breeds of sheep is generally satisfactory. The product of the Oxford or Shrop. male with the Merino ewe gives a fine, strong sheep of good size and that yields a fleece bearing a good weight, from the influence of the Merino mother. The character of the fleece, however, is an external or framework feature of sheep econ-



AMERICAN TROTTER-BRED STALLION "CONVERTED" TO HEAVY HARNESS.

omy that is principally determined by the ram. Fleece properties are a matter of breeding, principally, and when the second pure-bred mutton ram is crossed with the half-bred ewe of the first cross, the weight and character of the fleece are assimilated to those of the ram—that is, the fleece becomes lighter from the smaller secretion of yolk of the English breeds, and it likewise becomes opener or less dense. While this assimilation of the flock to mutton standard is going on, it is found, too, that the weight of carcass is decreasing. It is quite to be expected that the moulding of the highly-cultured English sheep to range conditions leads to very rapid and distinct deterioration, and a third or fourth cross—that is, a seven-eighth of fifteen-sixteenth mutton grade—is not the same shearer or weigher that the sappy sire is. Besides this, the sheep that has become so closely approximate to the mutton type in a number of characteristics is not as good range sheep as the original she stuff or even as the first cross ewes. The valuable ranging habits of the Merino have been eliminated by frequent weakening and diluting of the Merino blood. There is no doubt but that the Merino is the best sheep in the world for running in large bunches. Its instincts are strongly gregarious from the beginning and its habits and character are fixed by two thousand years of breeding in a straight line. This property of being a good herd sheep was forcibly brought to the writer's notice while following a little drive of six hundred ewes. They were generally about a seven-eighths Merino grade, but there were a few well-marked individuals, on the other hand, that were perhaps three-quarters Shrop. or Oxford, and these were always trailing or straying wide of the bunch.

To sum up, the Merino has properties that the rancher needs, and the English breeds have other properties that are equally indispensable. We want the good herding qualities of the Merino and the capacity to stand scant and sometimes hard conditions, but we also want the fleshing qualities of the English breeds, so that it seems as though sheep-ranching means continuous cross-breeding. Now, crossing successfully is a rather limited game. The first cross is good: there



E. D. JORDAN'S HACKNEY, "LORD TOM NODDY."

seems to be an energy in the offspring, from the novelty, so to speak, of a somewhat contrasted coupling; but after the first cross, the good of cross-breeding is not so evident, and indiscriminate mixing generally leads to the perpetuation of bad rather than good qualities. It is a dangerous experiment in unskilled hands.

In connection with the discussion of the subject of the use of wool as against mutton rams, it is interesting to remember what is generally thought to be the respective influence of the male and female in determining the character of the

offspring. The external features and generally the size are thought to be contributed by the male, while the nervous organization and disposition are contributed by the female. In this view we have the strongest argument for the mutton ram as against the wool ram. The mutton ram gives to the offspring his size and weight, while the disposition, at least (we shall say, to be definite, the herding habit) in the first cross, is conferred by the mother, so the first cross for many reasons should be a good one. If, on the other hand, the Merino ram is used, he confers indeed by his prepotency his yolk fleece and larger shearing surface, his flat, slabby sides and his want of rotundity and capacity to keep a nice fleshy top. These properties may be stated more boldly than probably the Rambouillet deserves, but the stronger contrast will make plain the essential differences in the two methods. It seems, then, that the range she stuff must be kept supplied at the bottom of the scale and that the Merino cannot be safely eliminated nor a range breed of mutton blood made to order in three or four years.

About the ram trade. It is safe to say that if the facilities were a little better, more Eastern rams would be bought at good or even high prices than are now bought in the Territories. The express companies could stand some interviewing too. There is absolutely no chance to send a sheep by express from Ontario to the N.-W. Territories. It costs about ten dollars a hundred from Ontario to Alberta, and even a ram lamb at six or eight months old would not ship under two hundred pounds, which would make the cost twenty dollars. The arrangements of the Live Stock Associations, by which cars are made up from individual shipments and the cost equitably divided, are good, but the shipments are not made at times that can possibly be suitable to everybody. Express is a good way to ship individual sheep of good type. It is safe and quick and can be used any time. It would be a good matter for the commissioners to take up or for the Sheep Breeders' Association to deal with.

## Profitable Pork Production.

If you will allow me, I will explain some points in my article on pork production, in your Jan. 15th issue, which Mr. F. Van De Bogart, in your Feb. 15th, seems to experience some difficulty in swallowing as hard facts.

First, I may say Mr. Van De Bogart seems to be in the habit of rushing to exceedingly hasty conclusions. So far from being a "capper for a pork-packing factory," I am a farmer's son, have spent the whole of my working life on the farm, have been managing 100 acres for the last two years, and am not connected in any way with any packing house or butcher in Canada.

Now for his objections. He says my estimate of \$1.50 for sow's keep is swallowed up in oats. Well, as the sow ate 5½ bushels, and oats here averaged 27c., that statement is exactly correct. The clover chaff I admit I overlooked, but Mr. Van De Bogart greatly overestimates the sow's appetite. A pailful and a half per day was all I could get her to eat, and a tightly-filled pailful weighs about 1½ lbs. Therefore, the cost of clover, at \$6 per ton, was about 70c. As to the time spent in feeding, I think it was fully repaid by the manure, which Mr. Van De Bogart will kindly observe I did not reckon either. The small amount of sweet milk fed was only what was left of one cow's milk after feeding her calf and supplying the house, and would otherwise have been wasted.

Now, I will not pretend that I have ever counted what it cost me per bushel to raise mangels. I reckoned them at the valuation given by Mr. W. J. Whaley, of Dereham Centre, Ont., in the Farmers' Institute Report for 1899-1900, page 94. That five cents per bushel is an exceedingly liberal valuation is proved by the experiments conducted at Ottawa, given in the Experimental Farm Report for 1900, page 87. There is given a detailed statement of the labor, etc., expended on a crop of mangels which cost when stored, 2.88 cents per bushel. This crop yielded 1,000 bushels per acre, and mine only 700 bushels, but I did not spend nearly as much labor upon them.

Mr. Van De Bogart wishes to know how I got my brood sow. Well, to be quite frank with him, I bought her. I paid \$9 for her after she had weaned her first litter, and as I could have sold her for \$12 to \$15 any time since, I don't think much need be said about her cost. However, if he wishes to be very particular, the interest on \$9, at 10 per cent., for 6 months is 45 cents, which would increase cost of pigs 4½ cents apiece.

Now, be it far from me to question the truth of Mr. Van De Bogart's statement that he cannot raise pigs at less than 5 cents per pound, but if he really wishes to know how it is done, let him look up the Experimental Farm Report for 1900, pages 92 and 95, and the Farmers' Institute Report for 1899-1900, page 97, and he will read how they can produce a pound of pork at a cost ranging from 1.8 cents to 2.6 cents. May he profit thereby.

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