

being excellent, and the disposition to fatten on the smallest quantity of food unrivalled." He brought over a male and female of this breed, and he engrafted the stock on the Essex, and, it is said, on the Suffolk and Berkshire too, in so successful a manner that, as he said himself, "my herd can scarcely be distinguished from the pure blood." The improved Essex, which had great success at the agricultural shows, were produced by a further cross of Lord Western's Essex-Neapolitans on Essex sows, under the care of Mr. Fisher Hobbes who became an even more famous breeder of pigs than Lord Western himself; for, though all the improvements sprang from the Western herd, his lordship bred in-and-in to such a degree that his breed "gradually lost size, muscle, constitution, and consequently fecundity." After his lordship's death, Mr. Hobbes bought the best of the breeding sows at Western, and by their aid he continued to improve his own and the pigs of the country. Another branch of the breed is said to have been improved by a pair of black sows which Mr. Coates procured from Turkey about the year 1846; these were bred to a Chinese boar, and the progeny in turn had the fusion of Neapolitan blood; lastly, they were engrafted on good specimens of the old breed of the country, and so the breed has been built up.

Early maturity and excellent quality of flesh are the leading merits of the improved Essex, and, while they retain the symmetry of the Essex-Neapolitans, they have more size and vigour, a stronger constitution, and an increased fecundity. Their only defects are: a lack of hardness, that is probably owing to the climate in which they are bred; and a too great proneness to fatten, on account of which the fertility of the sows is judicious diet and plenty of exercise. For crossing with and improving inferior breeds, the Essex swine of to-day are very valuable, and in the United States, as well as in various countries of Europe, they have made their mark; while in our own country the Berkshires, the Devonshires, the Oxfords, and the Dorsets have derived many of their merits from Lord Western's Neapolitan importations, whose influence, commencing in Essex, is now seen in every parish in the midland and western counties where black pigs are found. The old Essex pigs had more or less white on them, but now they are invariably black; their heads are perhaps come as near being handsome as a pig's head possibly can; they are moderately fine in bone and short on the leg; the quarters are well-proportioned, and they are symmetrical withal. They attain great weights at an early age, and have a small percentage of offal. The engraving gives a good representation of an improved Essex sow.

*The Devon and Dorset Breeds.*—These two counties are now proud of their pigs, and with reason, for they have really excellent varieties of the porcine family. Whatever differences there may be between the pigs of the two counties are to be attributed to merely local influences, for both have derived their chief improvements from one and the same source—the improved Essex. Though the pigs of one county may be somewhat inferior to those of another, in the eye of an impartial judge, yet there is reason enough for each one thinking its own the best—the best, that is, for its own use. This, however, is merely a question of climate, and it is

reasonable to infer that the pigs that have been bred for generations in a given climate are the best for that climate, providing they have been improved equally with other pigs. The Devons and the Dorsets may not be so shapely as the Essex and Berkshires, yet have they much in common, so far as quality is concerned, and they are all of the same colour—black. As a rule, it may be taken for granted that we can take the old stock of a county, and so improve it by careful selection and judicious infusion of distant blood, that it will become as valuable for practical purposes as any wholly alien breeds could possibly be; yet this is a rule to which, as in the case of horned stock, there are possibly one or two exceptions. The Berkshires and Yorkshires among pigs, like the Shorthorns and Herefords among cattle and the Leicesters and Shropshires among sheep, are probably better stock than most others which they could possibly supplant; yet, at the same time, it would be better in the case of such pigs as the Devons and the Dorsets to seek to improve them by crossing rather than supplant them altogether, and especially so when we remember that cross-breeds are usually more vigorous than pure-breeds, and generally more profitable to feed for the butcher.

*The Shropshire Breed.*—This breed is not famous for symmetry or beauty of any kind; but it is a good practical sort, with no pretensions to fancy. The colour is various, but generally a dark red-and-black. These pigs are extensively sold in the markets of the adjoining counties; bred in Shropshire, they go in large numbers to be fattened in other counties. The Welsh pigs have much in common with the Shropshires, and are sent about the country for the same purpose.

The remaining sub-varieties of pigs in the British islands are mostly of a nondescript character, in each case more or less resembling the distinct breeds which have helped to improve them; and they are known less for any distinct merits or characteristics than by the name of the county to which they happen to belong. As in cattle and sheep, so in pigs, a great improvement in breeding has been brought about during the past half century, so that all our varieties are now much better than they formerly were, while between the best of them there is so little to choose on the score of usefulness that it becomes a mere matter of fancy which of them a farmer had better own. The Yorkshires, Berkshires, and Essex are held in high estimation in America, and in that country there is also a very good breed, called the Poland-China Hog. This breed is the result of a cross in which the Chinese blood figures prominently; we are not aware, however, that it possesses merits equal to those of the best English breeds.

*NEW JERSEY CROPS.*—The crop prospects of this State were seldom better and more promising at this season of the year. The weather has been singularly favorable during the most important growing season through which we have so far passed. From the opening of Spring until the first of July is the critical period to several crops. It is during this season that the small fruits, wheat and rye and oats, grass and hay,

and many other crops, are either made or marred. It too often happens that persistent drouths occur at this time, dwarfing, drying out, cutting short, or entirely ruining many of these crops. They have no opportunity, like corn and potatoes, to make up, in a more propitious later season, damage suffered from a spring or early summer drouth. This year the rains have been copious and the weather in every respect favorable. If a spring drouth had occurred this year similar to that of 1880, a hay famine would most likely have been the result. As it is the hay crop cannot be large, because the severe winter and last year's drouth killed so much of the plant. But the frequent rains will insure a fair crop. All other crops are looking remarkably well, and the outlook for the farmers of this State is very promising. Corn needs warmer weather, but it will most likely get enough of this later in the season. The country never presented a fresher, more beautiful and luxuriant appearance than at present. Vegetation of all kinds is growing with almost tropical richness, and it is a feast to the eye to behold the vigor and loveliness of nature's handiwork.

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