



An English sheep shearing contest

Our English Letter

Wheat Sowing and Plowing—What is a Filly?—New Breeds of Sheep—The World's Wool—Items.

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Farmers have been busy of late getting in their wheat, and the rains of October put the ground in excellent condition for drilling the seed. The methods of preparing ground for wheat are almost as numerous as the days of the year, and they vary to suit the conditions of the soil in different localities. Amid all the changes that have come over agriculture, as centuries have rolled away, the plow remains as it ever was, the implement essential for reproduction of grain and other crops. In make and detail the plow of to-day differs from the plow of the Bible, but the principle is the same, as well as the object of use.

We are told that petrol or steam will take the place of horseflesh to supply motive power for the plow, but the change will not take place just yet, and in the meantime we follow the old order of things. I well remember what a local sensation the steam cultivator caused when it first appeared in my district, but it has never got anything like a monopoly. The presence of steam tackle is common enough at this season, and the plow is excellent for working neglected land and deepening cultivation, but it does not take the place of the horse-drawn contrivance.

Stock have been doing well during the past month, the fields being especially green and full of keep for the time of the year. What is still more pleasing is that during the past fortnight there has been a generally brighter tone prevailing in the markets of the country, both for dressed beef and that on the leg. It is also satisfactory to note that all qualities have experienced a better demand, and that the improvement is not confined to one class.

WHAT IS A FILLY?

A case in which an interesting story and question was raised, was decided last month in the Arbroath Sheriff court by Sheriff Lee. The point at issue was really the question as to when a filly becomes a mare, and the facts of the case were: In July, one George Bean sent to Mr. Kydd, secretary of the Angus Agricultural Association, an entry form for the show for his three-year-old Queen Marcella, and also an entry form for her foal. Mr. Kydd, on the ground that she was no longer a

filly, seeing she had had a foal, entered her in the brood mare class, and in this he was upheld by the association.

Against this action Mr. Bean protested, and brought the facts before the courts. The main defence was that an animal which was in foal or had had a foal, has, ipso facto, ceased to be a filly, although she may not have reached the age or state of maternity, with which, in the ordinary case, her existence as a filly is understood to end, and she takes her place as a full grown mare.

The sheriff found as a result of the evidence that this was the popular conception, but he pointed out the strength of Mr. Bean's case lay in the proved practice of many showyards to open the filly classes to all female horses which were qualified in respect of age or maturity, independent of whether they had become brood mare or not. A three-year-old by her motherhood gained no advantage over three-year-olds which remained fillies, while her immaturity in other respects is a serious handicap if she has to show in a class open to mares of any age. The sheriff held that it had been proved that although Queen Marcella was not a filly in June last, she was a mare duly qualified for exhibition and competition in the filly classes of many, if not of all, the showyards of Scotland. The Angus Association, however, occupied a position of isolation on this point, and it had been their policy and practice to exclude young mares with foals from the filly classes.

In the circumstances the sheriff found for the defendants, but he could not withhold some sympathy from the plaintiff, who had apparently considerable support in his view that the association's decision was bad and unwarranted by any of its rules. He thought that the defendants, under the circumstances, should bear a part of the cost, and although the plaintiff was liable for expenses, he modified this, and only allowed the defendants £5 5s.

The above decision, of course, is not binding in England, and applies to Scotland only. It would be interesting to know what would be the result, probably the English judge would endorse the Arbroath sheriff's opinion. To my idea, there is no

question about the fact that if a mare has had or is in foal, she has ceased to be a filly. In other words, a filly must be a maiden.

NEW BREDS OF SHEEP.

Derbyshire has contributed the latest addition to our already extensive list of registered breeds of sheep. An increased appreciation of the beneficial influences of registration, has been the means of rescuing from comparative obscurity varieties of the bovine race which may possibly be deserving of wider support than they have hitherto received. It has long been a matter of surprise that this country could advantageously maintain such a large number of distinctive breeds of live stock and of sheep in particular. There are some who contend that the number might be considerably reduced without any injury being done to any part of the kingdom, and that the management of breeding flocks would be in consequence simplified. Those thoroughly conversant with the varying climatic and physical conditions of even our small country are fully cognizant of the influence of the weather and soils upon the prosperity of our flocks, firmly adhere to this view that there is no superfluity in the number of varieties.

Possibly a few of the less known breeds could have been dispensed with without causing loss to their supporters, but so long as there is any considerable number of farmers in a locality who find that their interests are best served by a particular type of animal, there is no good reason why they should be expected or compelled to substitute another. There is no doubt that the prosperity of this country in the matter of live stock owes much to the multiplicity of the various breeds. Rich as the United Kingdom is in the varieties of live stock, there are still a good many yet unknown outside their particular districts. Take, for instance, the Kerry Hill breed of North Wales, or the still more recent example of the Griston breed of Derbyshire, which has only just been raised to the dignity of a registered variety. Probably these local breeds are less distinctive in origin and blood than may be supposed from their recognition as separate varieties, yet the fact that they reveal distinguishing characteristics is sufficient to occupy a place among the registered breeds of the country.

The new breed, "Griston," which has its headquarters amongst the peaks and dales of Derby, has a striking resemblance to several other upland species, and is, indeed, not very dissimilar in type to the Kerry Hill breed referred to, and which has been so extremely valuable for the production of cross-bred lambs when mated with the neighboring Shropshire. Whether or not the Griston breed will be found equally suitable for crossing purposes is not generally known, but probably it is already in high favor in the surrounding districts for the production of commercial sheep.

THE WORLD'S WOOL.

Lecturing recently on the wool growing countries of the world, Mr. S. B. Hollings referred to the great shrinkage of sheep stocks everywhere. Throughout the manufacturing world there is a consensus of opinion that we were never nearer the sheep's back than now. Although we are faced with a record Australian clip, still, the needs of European and American manufacturers demand it. The present high prices are but an