

Issued
Each Week

FARM AND DAIRY & RURAL HOME

Only \$1.00
a Year

FORMERLY THE CANADIAN DAIRYMAN AND FARMING WORLD

Vol. XXVIII.

FOR WEEK ENDING MARCH 25, 1909.

No. 12

THE VALUE OF PEDIGREE

Xeno. W. Putnam, Crawford Co., Penn.

The purpose of recording an animal is not so much in proof of its purity of blood, but to render it easy for the owner or intending purchaser to see just what he owns or is purchasing.

SOME one has said that the more we know about a thing the more certainly we value it; that we dislike or undervalue only that with which we are unfamiliar. While the statement seems sweeping, it will answer for one purpose, for it is a noticeable fact that the man who is the most disposed to cast discredit upon pedigree in breeding stock is the one who least appreciates the use for which it is intended.

When a man pays a good price for an animal because it is registered and then ignores the pedigree with perhaps the scoffing remark that "a good animal carries its pedigree upon its back," he shows himself to be pedigree foolish and has done more by his act than by his words to bring discredit upon the subject he pretends to despise.

Pedigree is of value only as it proves something worth proving, and the purpose of recording an animal is not, as some appear to think, in proof of its purity of blood, but to render it easy for the owner or intending purchaser to see just what he owns or is purchasing; whether this pure blood he is getting is likely, in the light of past experience, to prove more valuable than that of some scrub running in his neighbor's pasture. Surely the man who pays for this knowledge and then scorns to use it is the pedigree crank.

REGISTERED SCRUBS.

There are registered scrubs in all herds, so far as individual merit goes. The question is, what are their productive powers likely to be. To the ignorant the pedigree proves nothing but blood purity; the individual animal possibly, the breeding value of the animal itself or, more likely, the feeding skill of its owner. The man who is well informed on pedigrees would guess from the one back of his intended purchase that it came from a long line of deficient cattle and that, in spite of its excellent feed-bin trim, he had better let it alone as a breeder; or, he may see that, although the animal has been unskillfully handled and therefore looks deficient in itself, it carries back of it for generations the blood of prize-winners that cannot help exerting an influence superior to that given by one generation of poor feeding.

THE USE OF PEDIGREE

Laying aside, for the time being, all question of individual quality, the first and greatest use of pedigree is, not as a guarantee of pure blood, but one of past achievement from which to reckon future probability. A fine individual, always an attraction to the most skilled of breeders, may nevertheless be largely an accident, the product of good feeding rather than good breeding and the merit may stop with the animal itself. True, it may continue, but the continuation of an accident or of feeding skill cannot be depended upon as a breeding principle. The descendants are

more than likely to revert, at least in part, to the characteristics of a well established ancestry. Herein comes the great value of pedigree, not to create value but to determine value by determining the breeding value of the line that has created and fixed its characteristics on the line if not upon the individual. The man who is pedigree wise sees at a glance whether the line of merit, he may look to for any instance of back breeding, is brief or whether it is of sufficient extension to cover any reasonably probable case. The pedigree itself does not produce individual merit or quality in future generations but a long continued line of individual breeding merit does and it is the pedigree which tells the intelligent breeder whether he is getting that sort of a lineage or not.

INDIVIDUAL MERIT.

Individual merit is always desirable and should be insisted upon so long as there are plenty of

Praise for Farm and Dairy

I wish to call attention publicly to the utility and necessity of every farmer having such a periodical as Farm and Dairy, coming to his home. I am very much pleased with Farm and Dairy. The matter in it is all, just what every farmer should know.—Rev. Father Fitzpatrick, Peterboro Co., Ont.

animals possessing both individual and blood merit to select from. But where the pedigree is found to be deficient it is well to study the question, from whence does this individual merit spring? Is it a product of the feed-bin? If so, it is likely to be transmitted to future generations or end with the individual in which it began? The wise purchase of a breeding animal includes not only what it is but what it is likely to produce, a speculative quality to some extent, but one which pedigree has done much in reducing from a speculation to an exact science.

Outside of the merits we propose to introduce into the herd through our purchase, an animal has no value excepting at its actual weight at beef prices. The breeding value to the herd must after all be determined almost wholly from the pedigree. That not only tells us the quality of past members of the line but it also shows us whether the individuality of the animal we are about to purchase is of a fixed type or an experiment. Sometimes we see that the individual is only a happy freak in a universally disappointing line. True, in such a case, the freak might be continued in the future and liberal feeding together with judicious mating might in time establish a uniform and fairly staple herd. The question arises, would the individual merit balance the genera-

tions of uncertainty to follow? Might we not better seek our beginning from some line wherein individual merit had already been established and fixed as a type? All these are questions of judgment and questions that require the liberal study of pedigree to help us settle.

THE COLOR FAD

People who doubt the bearing of pedigree upon the future of their herd have only to consult the records of any so-called "fashionable fad" like that of color with the Shorthorns. Though originally of one stock, the reds and roans have in some instances been so industriously cultivated by individual breeders that many a yocoman is heard stoutly contending that the red shorthorn is a superior breed of cattle to the roans, or vice versa. As a matter of fact the color fad has many times been followed out until a strain of cattle were produced so uniformly red or "grey" that they have been mistaken for distinct breeds, the pedigree in either case showing by their uniformity the prevailing color of the line quite as plainly as the cattle themselves showed it. If it tells this story in color, why not in form, in merit?

There are still other values to pedigree. A herd or flock, though highly valuable in themselves, possess some characteristic defect, some weak point that it is desirable to eliminate. It may be a droop behind the shoulders, slight in the beginning, but intensified as the generations pass, until the fault becomes a serious criticism. How shall it be remedied? Through the bull.

IT GIVES CHARACTERISTICS OF MANY.

The introduction of a bull that is perfect or even rather intensely developed at the point where the rest of the herd are weak is one thing; that of introducing one which will produce offspring uniformly free from the defect is often quite another. Again the pedigree will help us out by giving us the characteristics, not of one generation but of many. If the very defect we wish to overcome is noticeable in most of the bull's ancestry, although absent in himself, there is reason to fear that the characteristics of the individual will be overcome by the ancestry of the line to which he belongs. If the ancestry is good in this respect we may feel confident that the characteristic is so fixed in his line that it will pretty surely pass to his descendants.

If merit is value in the herd, uniformity is not without its value also and the herd or shipment of cattle which are all about the same weight, similar in build and even in flesh and finish will, other things being equal, bring more on the market than some motley lot representing all grades and about all sizes.

OVERCOME FAULT THROUGH BULL.

With a foundation herd of cows, ever so well selected on their own form, but from widely different lines of breeding, will come a great variety of produce. The short-legged chunk will be there; the long-boned giant, with about all the intervening grades. Perhaps a better use of pedigree in the selection of the cows would have resulted in a herd possessing more uniform characteristics. Now we must overcome the fault through the bull.