

Popular Breeds of Hogs.

ALL our varieties of swine have descended from the wild hog, a creature as different from his pork and bacon-producing progeny as can well be imagined. The wild boar is everything almost that a pig raised for meat and profit should not be:—unprofitable, of slow growth, thick-skinned, deficient in loin and ham, coarse in hair, large-boned, and as for his flesh, it has been well said, it is "much praised, but rarely eaten." In texture and flavour the flesh of the wild hog is as different from that of the domesticated animal as can well be imagined. Much attention has been directed of late years to the improvement of every species of farm stock, and in no direction has progress been more marked or success more triumphant than in that of the domestic hog. By judicious crossing and careful breeding a complete revolution has been brought about in the appearance, quality, and even habits, of this animal. The old English hog, generally yellow-white in colour, sometimes spotted with black: a coarse and ugly brute, though hardy, prolific and sometimes with high feeding reaching a great weight, has been almost extinguished in the old country, and now every county has its favourite breed which is cherished with high favour, and exhibited with just pride. Great emulation exists even among British labourers, in the production of the finest specimens of the porcine race. In some localities, there are periodical pig-shows at which prizes are given for pigs belonging to working men, with rules that exclude shop-keepers and small tradesmen, as well as the entire body of farmers, both proprietor and tenant. The West Riding of Yorkshire is the theatre of the keenest competitions for pig-rearing fame, and a pig-show in that region is said to be a spectacle well worth going far to see. A row of hogs of fine build, in first rate condition, as white as soap and water can make them stretched on beds of clean straw, awaiting inspection and award, and often puzzling the judges how to decide the question of superiority, while the respective owners and their friends and neighbours hold animated discussion and wait the issue in eager suspense, altogether makes up a scene of no little interest, while the practical results have been most beneficial in various ways. Not only has a very general improvement of this species of stock been brought about but many weavers, wool-combers, and artisans keep a good pig in the sty, who would otherwise have been at the expense of keeping a fighting or rabbit-coursing dog, or mayhap a lot of game fowl for cock-pit purposes. Good fitches of home-fed bacon and large well-cured hams adorn the cottage walls and supply the family table with many a relishing meal. Money is saved to buy fine young sows with a pedigree, and those who cannot do this will save up their guinea for the use of a prize boar for their common sow, and gradually work up her progeny to a high pitch of excellence.

We should like to see more of this spirit manifesting itself among the farmers of Canada. We have referred to the case of the British peasantry whose earnings are extremely small in the great majority of instances, to show what can be done even in straitened circumstances, where there is a spirit of improvement and emulation at work. Many of our farmers plead poverty as a reason why they cannot buy improved animals for breeding purposes. This may, in many cases, apply so far as the larger descrip-

tions of stock are concerned; but it is within the power of every industrious farmer to improve his breed of pigs if he will. There is plenty of choice stock within reach at moderate prices, and we know of several enterprising pig-breeders who complain that they meet with very little encouragement in this branch of agricultural enterprise, so limited is the demand for improved hogs. After importing valua-



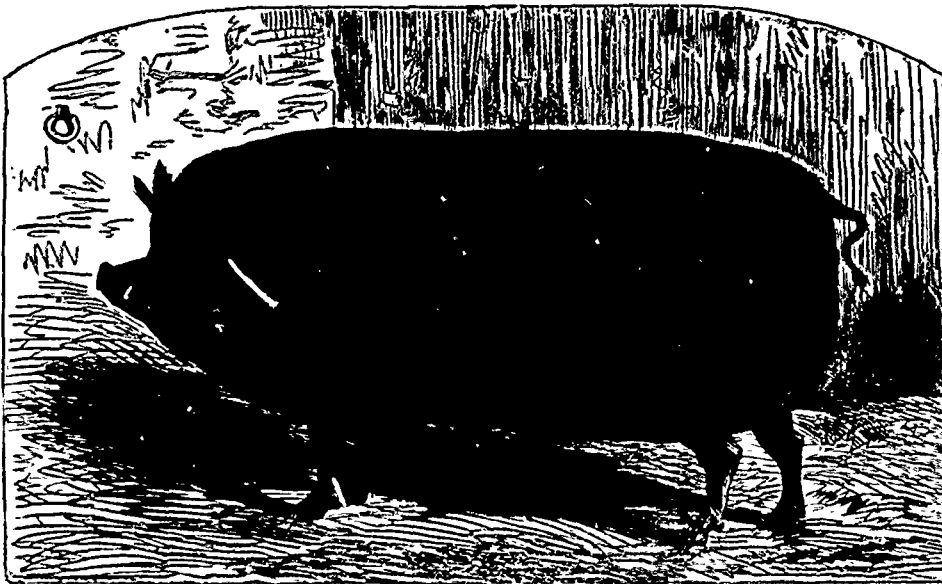
ble animals at great expense, their neighbours will drive their sows a considerable distance to be served by a wretchedly coarse boar at half a dollar, rather than give a couple of dollars or so, for a service to be had at their own door, that would treble the value of a single litter besides laying a foundation for the permanent improvement of their herd of swine. Meantime what wretched caricatures of the genus "Sus" do we often meet with, wandering the highways, breaking down fences and always managing to intrude themselves just where they are not wanted. We present above a cut which every candid reader must acknowledge to be a faithful likeness of the animal he has often met in his travels up and down the country.

We are ashamed to say that this must be adduced as the first on the list of popular breeds of hogs. It is popular in the sense of being widely diffused, just as we speak of popular errors and popular delusions, of both which, by the way, this "critter" is an example. We must suppose moreover, that this breed is popular in the sense of being generally esteemed,—else why is it so prevalent? As for its name, it is variously known as "land-pike," "racer," "alligator hog," "shingle pig," and—must we say it,—in some sections of the American Stock Market these pigs are styled "Canadian runts." This notable animal, sporting so many aliases, will consume an almost endless amount of corn or peas, and afford little else but gristle in return. His racing propensities are very unfriendly to pork-making. He was never

degeneracy he exhibits from the model pig of the creation which his Maker pronounced "good," and which was included in the truthful declaration, "He hath made everything beautiful in his time." This brute may be seen in perfection by any California-bound traveller as he crosses the Isthmus of Panama, and if he must exist anywhere, let him be doomed to poke his horrid nose for ever into the slimy mud of a tropical swamp and inhale its reeking malaria!

We turn with a sense of relief from the mongrel, worthless animal just described, and would now call attention to some breeds that are deservedly popular among intelligent and experienced breeders of farm stock. We confine ourselves to such varieties as have been tested in this country, and can be readily had by all who wish to become possessed of them. It may be as well to state here that pigs are divided by farmers and butchers into three classes, viz.: large, medium or middle, and small, which are represented by something like the following weights: Large breed, from 600 to 1,000 lbs.; middle breed, from 400 to 500 lbs.; and small breed, from 200 to 300. There are improved varieties in all these classes that may be selected according to the taste and circumstances of the breeder. Our next illustration represents a handsome and fat specimen of the Improved Essex breed.

This variety is one of the best of the small breeds, and justly celebrated as producing pork and hams of the first quality for fashionable markets. It is very valuable as a cross for giving quality and maturity to pigs of a coarser kind. The original Essex pig was a very different animal from his improved progeny. The late Lord Western made the first improvement by the introduction of Neapolitan blood, and the celebrated Mr. Fisher Hobbs followed up his lordship's good beginning, until the present excellencies of the breed became established and recognized. Ever since 1840, when a boar and sow bred by Mr. Hobbs carried off the first prize in their respective classes, the Improved Essex breed has taken a high position in the estimation of all competent judges. Early maturity and an excellent quality of marbled meat are the chief merits of this breed. With age they attain considerable weight, and often make 500 lbs. at two years old. But they are most profitable fatted at half that age or less, when they readily make porkers of 200 to 300 lbs. The chief defect of this breed is an excessive aptitude to fatten, which, unless counteracted by exercise, retards the growth of the young pigs, and diminishes the fertility of the breeding sows. Indeed, an Essex sow cannot be depended on for a large litter unless she is in low condition. A prejudice has in some quarters arisen against them from ignorance of this fact. This breed is quite hardy in this country, standing the winter well, and may doubtless be considered at the head of the small breeds. The Suffolks, a well-known white variety, are preferred by some to the Essex, chiefly, perhaps, from the colour. This is, however, wholly a matter of taste, since the Essex, when scalded and cleaned, is as white as any other hog. These two breeds are about the same size, and have many characteristics in common, but our impression is that the Essex is the more



fatted except at a dead loss, and has done more to bring the pork-trade down and discourage the farmers from raising pigs for market, than he ever did towards feeding the hungry or increasing the returns from productive industry. Truly as sin itself, what a

hardy as well as the more profitable. The chief breeders of Essex hogs in this country are Daniel Tye, of Wilmot, J. Cowan, M. P. F. for Waterloo, Thomas McCrae, of Guelph, and Henry J. Boulton, of Humberford.