

**Ponies and Pony Breeding.**

(Continued from our Sept. Number).

THE SHETLAND PONY.

Sidney, in his admirable work entitled "The Book of the Horse," speaks as follows of the Shetland pony:—

Where a pony under 12 hands is required the Shetland breed is rarely excelled. In the Shetland Islands the soil and the climate make it impossible to breed a large animal of any kind, whether ox, sheep, or horse. There—as also in Devonshire and in Clydesdale—is a tradition that the native breeds were improved by stallions which escaped from the wrecks of the Spanish Armada. But there is not the slightest historical evidence of this cross, and it is much more likely that the Shetland is the descendant of the Norwegian pony, considering that the islands were long part of the Scandinavian kingdom. In districts and countries bordered by lands which will rear a full-sized horse, there is a constant temptation to the breeder to put his mares to large-sized sires. In the Shetlands there is not, and never has been, any such temptation; and, therefore, symmetry has not been neglected in favour of size. The breeds, however, have been very much influenced by the demands of the export trade. Lord Ashley's Acts, which came into operation about the year 1840, and forbade the use of boys as beasts of draught, created a demand for ponies small enough to draw coal-trucks on underground tramways. For the last thirty years they have been bred for that purpose rather than for riding or drawing pleasure-carriages. The "Druid" visited the Shetland Islands for the express purpose of adding a description of the ponies to his agricultural notes. He says: "Every one uses the ponies of the country. The Norwegian colors—dun, with black mane and tail, and a black stripe down the back—are in request; bays and blacks are most common, greys and chesnuts scarce. Piebalds are to be found but are not in favour with many native buyers, from an opinion that they partake of an Iceland cross, and are softer and slower than the true native Shetlander. The Icelanders average two hands higher than the Shetlanders. They are often imported in great numbers at Granton and Aberdeen. The best Shetlanders come from Unst. They are bred on a thin soil, studded with large red stones and kinds of rocks, amongst which one sees scores of ponies. Unst may be regarded as the heart of Shetland. If well kept, the ponies reach 44 inches (11 hands), but the average is 38 to 42 inches. Each cottar has generally a few ponies on the hill, which they catch, and offer to the dealers for sale in May and October. When the trade in ponies for the coal-pits was at its height five hundred were taken every year (not thirty mares amongst them), and about two hundred for general use, of all ages, from two to twelve years. These heavy sales, continued for some years, drained the Shetlands of aged ponies.

"In the Durham collieries Welsh ponies outnumber the Shetland. The Scotch have the lead in Northumberland, where larger ponies are required. The Scotch ponies, bred chiefly in Argyllshire, Mull, and Skye, and the western part of Ross-shire, average 12 hands 2 inches, the Iceland 12, the Welsh 11, and the Shetland 10.

"Some of the ponies have not seen the light

for fifteen years. In well-regulated pits they are kept in as good condition as hunters, with green food in summer, and a full allowance of oats, beans, and peas, crushed and mixed with hay, chaff, and bran. They suffer most from indigestion—viz., greedy feeding when hungry—scarcely ever from diseases of the lungs or eyes. The average work is twenty miles a day, half with empty tubs.

"The Druid (a stallion) headed the Shetland pony contingent. His mares are duns, browns, mealy-bay, and a piebald. Colonel Ralfour, the grandfather of the present proprietor, began pony-breeding at the beginning of the century. He improved the form. Where the colors did not come as the natives expected, they laid the blame on the black Orcadian waterkelpie, 'Sprunky,' who was, they say, the sire of the finest original or aboriginal ponies of the island. Three celebrated piebald sires and a grey are mentioned by the Druid. The stock are shifted from island to island as the grass suits. They require careful drafting to keep them down to 9 hands" (36 inches).

**A Fleece of Wool.**

Read Before the Dominion Sheep Breeders' Association by David McCrae, Guelph.

Wool is the most important of textile fibres. It was early used for clothing, is now a necessity in such a climate as ours, and in all parts of the world has been found the healthiest covering for mankind. Wool is a modified form of hair, distinguished by its slender, soft serrated structure. Just where animal fibre ceases to be hair and becomes wool is hard to say. One class merges into another and a regular gradation can be found from the soft silky Merino to the hard bristles of the wild boar. The serrated edges of wool gives it the property of clinging in yarn and felting in cloth. The serrations all lie one way from the root up. They can be readily noted by drawing a single fibre between the finger and thumb. One way it will slip smoothly, the other way it will feel quite rough. The finest Merino wools have 2,800 serrations per inch, with a diameter of 1-1800ths, Leicester about 1,800. The coarsest wools 500, with a diameter of 1-275ths of an inch. Fine wools are all wavy, those with the most serrations, being most finely waved in structure. In most wools the closer the staple and the more wavy the wool the more will it yield of the finer qualities. Loose, open fleeces yield more of coarser quality. Wools with a soft rich feel improve during the process of manufacture, whilst those with a hard bristly feel get coarser as they are worked. Wool varies in character according to the peculiar breed of sheep which yield it, and also with the nature of the soil, the food, shelter and climate. In wool of first-rate quality the fibres are fine, soft, elastic, sound, of good color and free from impurities. Combing wools require to be long instead of fine and soft, and for some purposes require to have a good lustre. Very little fine wool is grown in Ontario, combing and medium wools forming the bulk of the clip. Canadian combing wools are usually of a good length and with a strong elastic fibre, sound and good. There are, however, in some sections far too many cotted fleeces, and some with a disagreeable yellow bottom. Otherwise for a sound elastic fibre Ontario wools compare favorably with any other part of the world. In Manitoba and the Northwest some wools grown are brashy and tender and apt to be unsound in staple. In color our wools compare unfavorably with

British wools. The reason of this is not known to me. It may be the confinement in winter or the hot suns of summer, but the color is not in them. We are much worse in the matter of impurities. The big soft burrs in Canadian wool are a disgrace to the wool-grower and a source of much annoyance and loss to the manufacturer. They have to be clipped out singly or in bunches by hand. The same labor would have removed the weed before the damage was done. The best of farmers market their wool with a quantity of seeds, bits of straw, etc., about the neck of the fleece. Feeding, as many do with racks, it may be difficult to avoid this, but it is none the less a drawback in the value of the wool. Wool may either be shorn washed or unwashed. An increasing number of farmers are shearing their wool unwashed; considering that the greater weight of unwashed wool counterbalances the difference in price. The washing which a fleece receives on the sheep is not enough for the manufacturer and the work has to be done again. Most Canadian wools are washed before being clipped, but the great bulk of the world's clip is shorn unwashed. A skillful shearer will clip the fleece from a sheep in one unbroken sheet. In this condition the fleece is spread out on a table or sheet, tags and dirty locks removed and loose pieces put by themselves, the sides folded over and the fleece rolled up inside out, the neck twisted and put around to bind the whole. When opened on the sorters table the fleece will unroll, retaining its form which greatly helps the sorting. There are two or three qualities in every fleece. Most Canadians will give from four to six grades. All wool has to be graded into qualities before it is ready for manufacturing. Generally the best part of the fleece is from the shoulder and sides of the animal. Over the neck and back the staple is more irregular and has frequently seeds and impurities. The loin somewhat shorter in staple. The breech is often the coarsest and sometimes is hairy and kempy. Belly wool is usually short and dirty. The front of the throat, fine but short. Some farmers do not remove the dirty dung locks, which should always be removed. Others gather them and put them in a single good fleece. Any careful handler can quickly detect this without opening the fleece. Others roll up a cotted fleece with staple out, and if many be cotted roll all their clip in this way. Buyers are always suspicious of such wool and dealers ought only to buy at a reduction fleeces put up in this way. Wool clipped under a year old is known as "shorn lambs," very little of this is made in Canada. First clip, at 12 to 15 months, is known as "hogg" or "teg" wool, and for many purposes this is finer and more valuable than the bulk of the clip. British dealers keep it separate. Second and following clips are distinguished as "wether" or "ewe" fleeces. Usually in Canada all are marketed together.

Selling cattle by their live weight does not yet give satisfaction to buyers in some parts of England and Scotland, as it is an innovation that does not allow of the balance always in the buyer's favor.

Prof. Kedzie of the Michigan Agricultural College, before the State Dairy Convention, said, "The most economical general manure for the farm is stable manure. It is a complete manure, containing all the elements necessary for plant growth, and in the most available form. Special and commercial fertilizers may be used to supplement barn-yard manure, but they only hold a secondary position."