

Nature's Diary.

A. B. Klugh, M.A.

At this season of the year, when a crust is formed over the deep snow and a light fall of snow covers this crust, we are able to study tracks better than at any other time. The study of the trails left by our wild animals is extremely fascinating, and from it one can learn a great deal about the habits of the various species which is revealed in no other way.



Fig. 1—Tracks of Varying Hare leaping easily.

A very common track in any part of the country, where any bush remains, is that of the Varying Hare. Fig. 1 shows the track of this species as it is left by the animal hopping along in a leisurely manner. In Fig. 2 we have the tracks left by a Varying Hare going at top speed, when it covers from nine to ten feet at a bound. It will be noticed in both of these figures that the tracks of the hind feet are in front of those of the fore feet. This reversing of the relative positions of the feet has led many people to follow a Hare trail backwards under the impression that the

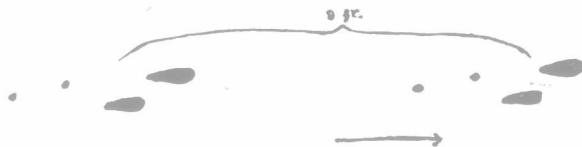


Fig. 2—Tracks of Varying Hare speeding.

front feet should leave their tracks ahead of those of the hind feet. Fig. 3 showing the Hare in action, illustrates how the tracks are made. The only tracks which may be mistaken for those of the Varying Hare are the tracks of the Cotton-tail. When these two tracks are compared it is seen that those of the Cotton-tail are a good deal smaller than those of the Hare, particularly the impressions of the hind feet.

If we follow up the trail of the Varying Hare we should be able to read the story of the animal's wanderings. Here it has been leaping quietly along, now in the middle of this open space it has suddenly length-



Fig. 3—Varying Hare in action.

ened out its stride and has made straight for a clump of bushes. When we enter the clump we see where it crouched down and remained motionless. We can now read that it was frightened either by a man or a bird of prey. If the cause of its sudden spurt had been a fox or weasel it would not have paused in this first clump but have gone right through and on at top speed. Here it has emerged from the bushes, again hopping leisurely, showing that the danger was past. Here it has paused to browse off the low bough of Cedar, here it has eaten some bark from this Dog-wood bush. Here in a bunch of tall grass it has rested. But its rest has been violently

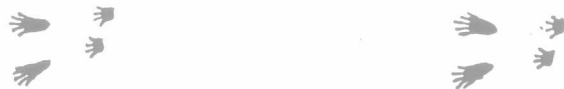


Fig. 4—Tracks of Red Squirrel.

disturbed, as it went out of the grass in flying leaps. Its disturber has left its name written in the snow—a fox which has winded the Hare, stalked it until within leaping distance, and sprung. But it has sprung a fraction of a second late, and landed not on the Hare but on the spot where the Hare was. The fox has not pursued, and we see that after going at full speed for some distance the Hare has paused, sat down facing its back-tracks, and then gone off at its usual quiet gait. So we follow on, piecing the story together.



Fig. 5—Tracks of Deer Mouse.

In Fig. 4 we have some tracks which are very common wherever there are any trees—those of the Red Squirrel. It will be noticed that here again the hind feet over-reach the front ones as the animal leaps along, also that while there are marks of five toes on the tracks of the hind feet there are only four on those of the front feet. This latter fact is due to the rudimentary condition of the thumb in the Squirrels, it being reduced to a mere knob.

mentary condition of the thumb in the Squirrels, it being reduced to a mere knob.

Another very common track is shown in Fig. 5—that of the Deer Mouse. Again the impressions of the hind feet are in front, and the trail of the long tail shows between the paired tracks of the feet. These little mammals make a delicate tracery of trails in the woods and at the borders of fields. Sometimes we find the tracks of the field Mouse, but not very often, as these animals tunnel beneath the snow, and if the tracks appear from a tunnel they very soon disappear down another.

THE HORSE.

Breeding, Fitting and Showing Clydesdales.

In the live stock industry there is no more fascinating or profitable occupation than the breeding and showing of high-class Clydesdales. There are three ways to start a breeding stud but the success of the work rests entirely with the skill, ability, energy, thoroughness and studious habits of the man or men engaged in the undertaking. One way to commence operations is to buy the very best show animals, a very costly way and it is doubtful if the most successful and profitable results are obtained especially for the large amount of capital invested. Although the chances are great to obtain a good foal when two excellent individuals are mated, and usually like begets like, yet the breeder can never be sure, as they may breed back to some inferior ancestor or evolve a new type altogether.

Another way to make a start in breeding pure-bred Clydesdales is just to buy a cheap mare and use the cheapest and handiest stallion and trust to luck to get a good colt once in a while. This class of breeder usually has his expectations amply fulfilled as he does not expect much and sometimes, although rarely, he is very agreeably surprised and gets a real good foal, as nature sometimes works this way and the unexpected happens.

The third class of breeder is the man who has a real liking for a good horse and who has made his own particular breed his life's study, the man who has virtually grown up in the Clydesdale breeding business, has taken every advantage of studying pedigrees and lines of blood, of acquiring knowledge of types and conformation and gives strict attention to the valuable experiences of veteran breeders, sometimes given orally or through the medium of our far-reaching and very valuable agricultural journals. This class of breeder is a student as long as he lives and always realizes that he does not know all about horses.

In selecting his females this man is careful to pick good types of the breed as large in size as possible, he must have a strong sound mare as nearly perfect in conformation as possible, with those good qualities of hard-wearing feet, well-set pasterns, fine, straight-flowing, silken hair, clean, hard, wide loins, well-placed limbs, clean, feminine head, well-muscled shoulder well up at the withers, strong, wide back, great depth and spring of ribs and broad, well-muscled, roomy hindquarters, and he invariably insists on good, true, straight action, a good, fast walker, good tempered, docile and tractable. He well knows that the more good points he can get in the mare the greater his chances of raising a good show colt. The pedigree is next examined and carefully studied, every particular of the merits and demerits of the ancestors being taken into consideration, and the mare only purchased when perfectly satisfied that the breeding is good.

Having obtained his mare the breeder who usually has high ideals and great ambition to breed the best of top notchers endeavors to find a suitable stallion. Sometimes this stallion is very hard to procure, sometimes costing much in money, time and deep study, the breeder fully realizing that unless he can use the very best and right type of sire, his carefully selected mares will be a disappointment to him. He tries to get a weighty stallion of masculine appearance and he must have quality, faultless legs and good action, and he must be bred from good stock as far removed in blood lines from his mares as possible. Breeders as a rule like to mate big strong, healthy mares even if a little rough in legs, with the very finest quality, good-legged stallions, as it is believed by many that the sire almost invariably transmits his own quality and superior bone to the offspring, and the mare transmits her strong constitution, health, good feeding and easy keeping characteristics. The success or failure of his choice in stallion will soon

be apparent when the foals come. If they are satisfactory and up to his expectations he will use this horse as long as possible. During the time the foals are running with their mothers very little can be done to assist nature except liberal feeding and careful attention to the feet of the colt as it grows. If it toes out a little the feet are filed a little lower on the outside, lower on inside if toeing in, if back on the knees the heels are kept high and toes short; if ahead on knees the heels are kept low and all feed is given from the ground; if the back is low feed also from the ground; if a little wide at hocks keep the heels low on the inside. Keeping the feet in proper trim and shape while the colt is growing and getting them properly shod by an expert blacksmith is a most important point in fitting Clydesdales for the show ring. No exhibitor can expect to win a high place unless he has a horse that can walk well and show his paces at the trot. The walk is the most important in the Clydesdale, the trot is not much used in actual work but shows the spring and power and balance of the animal and unsoundness can be more easily detected when in motion at the trot.

The second six months of the colt's life is very important. It should be liberally fed on feed calculated to produce bone, muscle and sinew. The colt should be kept growing as it should attain nearly half its mature weight without being fat at 12 months of age. During the first year the colt should be well halterbroken and trained to walk and trot, but should not be pampered or petted. Do not try to show Clydesdales in high condition until they are matured. Judges look for good strong-framed, growthy colts. First-prize yearlings and two-year-olds very seldom come back and win again. Many good colts are overdone by high feeding and growing. Clydesdales are judged for type, good proportions and conformation, good feet, pasterns, hair and skin, superior class of bone, well-placed legs and clean, well-formed joints, good head and eye, good neck set nicely on well-muscled shoulder with good collar seat and set at a proper angle. The Clydesdale shoulder is just about the medium of the extreme sloping shoulder of the Hackney and the upright shoulder very often found in the Shire. The breast must be full and wide with the legs set well under the body. Judges of Clydesdales do not like a horse with a bull-dog breast or legs set out on the extreme point of the shoulder. The elbows must be set close to the body and chest bulge out round and full ribs well sprung from the back which should be level and wide and well fleshed over loins, hip bones close up to ribs, wide and well fleshed over. Sharp, prominent hip bones are not in favor with Clydesdale judges. The croup is desired broad and well-muscled with tail set fairly high, haunches and thighs must be full and well-muscled and nicely turned. Clydesdale judges look for a horse that looks large from a side view, deep shoulder, girth and flank, wide, well-muscled fore arms and gaskins, legs not too long with very broad bones, cannon bones of hind legs long, and short from hock to thigh. From a front view the Clydesdale should have a strong appearance, good face, eyes prominent and full, set wide apart, head carried fairly high, breast appearing full and wide with legs placed a good width apart and always perpendicular, standing or walking. When standing or moving the Clydesdale should appear to have the power to bring forward a heavy load easily, and place his large feet with sureness and always straight ahead. When viewed from behind the Clydesdale is expected to have the handsomest appearance and nicest turned hind quarters of all the draft breeds, and when in action comes next to the Hackney in hock action, but must not lift so high. Judges will place a Clydesdale down for Hackney action.

In fitting Clydesdales for the show ring nothing must be overlooked from the time the colt is weaned. The feet and legs must be well looked after. Many breeders use a light blister around the coronet to encourage the growth and spread the hoof but as this has a tendency to make the hair coarse it is better to let nature alone. Do not commence too soon before the show to increase the amount of feed, about two months is time enough and in that time the horse can be brought out in nice bloom. For feeding purposes, personally I rather prefer bruised oats with a little bran, cut hay or oat sheaves, an occasional feed of boiled barley with a little flaxseed. During the breeding season with the stallions we much prefer boiled oats instead of barley.

Give the horse plenty of grooming and keep the feet and legs clean, apply a little hoof ointment to hoofs and coronet if inclined to be dry and hard, also apply a little sweet oil to hair of legs to keep soft and straight. When brought into the ring the Clydesdale should have a long, slim fringe of hair around his coronet, short, fine hair all round pastern and long thin, straight, silken hair



Dolly and Her Progeny.

A thirteen-year-old mare with her nine colts in line. Ages are marked on each. Owned by Michael Rettinger, Formosa.