

Stock Department.

Errors in Breeding.

IN the course of a discussion by the Massachusetts Board of Agriculture last December, the question was suggested by Professor Agassiz, whether we do not injure the vitality and vigour of our domestic animals by the common system under which "every male is made to be nothing but a breeding machine,"—in other words, by keeping a number of stallions or bulls, for instance, comparatively limited in proportion to that of the colts or calves we raise, and by keeping them too often in a sort of pampered confinement unfavorable for healthy development. "I believe that it is a great misfortune," said the Professor, "that there are some few stallions which have such a reputation that no man wants a colt from any other animal but them. You would probably get better stock if this idea of the great superiority of a few animals was not so prevalent. These are the points to be considered: To what extent you can reduce your productive males without endangering the stock; and to what extent you can carry out the system of oriental polygamy on the farm without deteriorating the race?"

In some countries of Continental Europe, as our readers are aware, stallions and bulls are habitually worked in harness and in the yoke. In whatever other respects these animals may vary from the standard we desire to attain, it is our belief that in healthful vigour, reproductive powers, and capacity of endurance, they afford an example we might seek to imitate with advantage. And we desire to suggest, more particularly for the consideration of breeders of cattle, and farmers generally, whether they would not promote the vitality and constitution of their herds by training the bulls to perform some active labor? We know of its having been done in a few cases, and that others might perhaps repeat the experiment if it was not contrary to ordinary custom.

As matters now are, the bull is regarded by many as a necessary evil, of which the smaller the number the greater the economy; and it is natural that, as a result, he should be put to service too young and overtasked always. Among men, the classes which are shown by social statistics to multiply the most rapidly, and therefore to be not only the most fruitful, but also the least subject to disease, are not those in which the parents live in luxury and ease, but, on the other hand, among those who labour—perhaps those who labour the hardest. Possibly the evil consequences of "over-feeding," of which so much has been said, are rather due to under exercise—to neglect of the muscular labour which would be for the best interest of the animal, combined often with early and excessive service; and that the true mode of meeting them may be, not by a system of stinting food and semi-starvation, but by securing the better digestion and use of what is eaten, and by properly regulating our practice under the second particular.

As Professor Agassiz remarked, the current system ends in this—that the great bulk of our horse stock "consists of castrated males and unproductive females." And so among cattle, how the oxen and steers predominate; and if we do not keep a corresponding proportion of females not allowed to breed, we do find that the breeding is not as certain and simple a thing with them as we should like—a fact attested not only by frequent complaints from herds kept purely for breeding purposes, but also by the serious losses on our dairy farms, which call so loudly, and as yet so unsuccessfully, for a remedy. These are matters which our breeders should take an interest in discussing and investigating; and it is in the hope of eliciting the views of others, and leading to farther investigation, that we refer to them here.—*Ex.*

BITTING AND CHECKING COLTS.—Geo. M. Jackson, Livonia, N. Y., sends the *Rural New Yorker* some sensible hints on this subject. He endorses the thorough biting and the reasonable use of the check-rein on colts. He says:—"The only way the horse can be made available and safe as a roadster is to subject him in some way to the practice of biting, and to the check-rein, not only when breaking him, but when driving him on the road. If unchecked by the bearing rein, a colt is sure to kick, and can easily do so, on the slightest inclination. If the head is checked up they cannot bring themselves in position to kick so easily as otherwise. A young horse should also be accustomed to severe pressure of the bit, so that if he becomes frightened he will obey the driver's force on the rein. If not trained to observe this pressure he is apt to spring ahead on feeling the bit severely."

Cleaning Roots.

ALL farmers who have a due regard for the comfort and health of their stock, are careful to have roots more or less cleaned before feeding them. Much of this necessary work may be done in gathering and storing the crop; and various contrivances well known to farmers are in use to effect this purpose. But, notwithstanding all due care in removing the soil in these preliminary operations, much dirt will unavoidably adhere, and require an extra cleaning before the roots are in a fit state to be given to cattle. This need not, however, be a very troublesome or expensive process; and the accompanying illustrations, of two very convenient and simple forms of root cleaner, will give our readers an idea of the ease with which the work may be done. The illustrations are taken from the *American Farmer*.

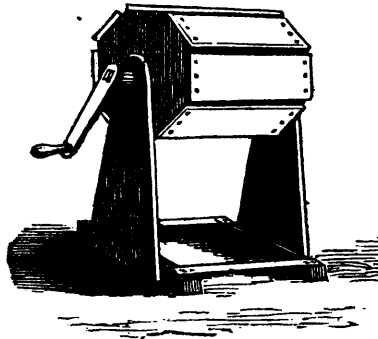


FIG. 1.

Fig. 1 shows the simplest of the two forms, and is such that almost any one who can use tools at all will be able to construct it. The slits between the boards should be about one inch wide. One slat should be moveable to admit the roots. In making a large one more slats than are here represented should be used. Roots may be completely washed by revolving the lower part of the machine in water.

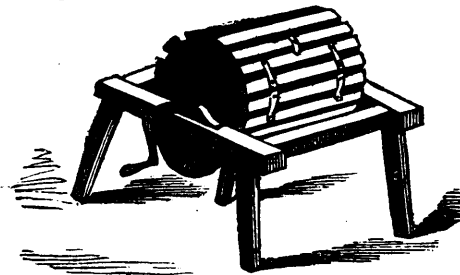


FIG. 2.

The second cut, (Fig. 2,) shows a very similar machine, the construction of which can be readily understood from the illustration. When used, the roots are put in through a door in the side, and the cylinder turned until the dirt is rattled out. The cylinder is two feet across, and three long; the heads made of two-inch plank, and the slats an inch thick, and two wide. The door is put on with a pair of strap hinges, and kept closed by a latch, or hook and staple, or wooden button. The space between the slats is three-fourths of an inch.

Habits of Sheep.

A MAN IN A LUDICROUS POSITION

SHEEP perseveringly follow their leader wherever he goes; but if, in case of sudden alarm, any one of the flock runs forward to escape, and thus takes the lead, the rest generally follow him, regardless of any obstruction. Of this singular disposition we once witnessed an instance in Cleveland, Ohio. A butcher's boy was driving about twenty fat sheep through the city; but they ran down a street along which he did not want them to go. He observed a scavenger at work with his broom a little way before them, and called out loudly for him to stop the sheep. The man accordingly did what he could to turn them back, running from side to side, always opposing himself to their passage, and brandishing

his broom with great dexterity; but the sheep, much agitated, pressed forward, and at last one of them came right up to the man, who, fearing it was about to jump over his head while he was stooping, grasped the short broomstick in both hands, and held it over his head. He stood for a few seconds in this position, when the sheep made a spring and jumped fairly over him without touching the broom. The first had no sooner cleared this impediment than another followed, and another, in such quick succession that the man, perfectly confounded, seemed to lose all recollection, and stood in the same attitude till the whole had jumped over him, not one of them attempting to pass on either side, though the street was quite clear. As this took place during wet weather, the man was entirely bespattered over with dirt before they had all passed; and it is impossible to conceive a more ludicrous appearance than the poor fellow made on the occasion.—*Farmers' Adviser*.

We have seen a performance precisely similar to the above—minus the broom.—*Ed. C. F.*

Horse-breaking and Horse-sense.

A horse's sense is good common sense. Many a man does not know half so much about some things as a horse, and there is a great difference in horses. The horse is not naturally suspicious, but he is timid when young. He learns very soon what his weapons are—teeth and heels—and in what his security lies—flight. His boldness and "the glory of his nostrils" come when "he rejoiceth in his strength." With his age comes the knowledge of his powers, and if he has never been mastered—never made to yield to any will but his own—if he is to be made useful, the struggle must come sooner or later, and man's will or horse's will must triumph. We think it best to begin quite young with colts to control them. So advise to halter a colt while it runs with the mare, and to do it after feeding it with carrots and sugar, until it thinks it will get only caressing from mankind, and has no fear of any man. The colt submits easily, because it is the easiest and pleasantest thing he can do, provided he is not frightened, and would as lief be led as run loose, since the curtailment of his freedom is made up by sweets or carrots. The sense of smell in horses is very acute, and if they are suspicious of anything, they always approach it cautiously and smell it. They should be indulged in this; and harness, saddle, etc., should all be investigated by the nose as well as by the eye before a more intimate acquaintance is forced upon the horse. A horse ring of 40 to 50 feet in diameter is one of the greatest aids a horse trainer can have. In this a horse too restive and spirited to take a lesson may be tired out, so as to be very docile, and a tired horse is much more susceptible to both favours and instruction, than one full of vim, and fire and play. There are a very few simple common sense rules which, if followed, will commend themselves to the horse as well as to the trainer, viz:

1st.—Always feel kindly toward a horse, no matter what he does to you, and consequently never show "temper." Remember the horse knows instinctively how you feel.

2nd.—Never go near a horse if you are afraid of him, the horse will know it and take advantage of it before you acknowledge it yourself.

WILTED GRASS FOR HORSES.—Last week a neighbor lost a favorite horse from feeding wilted grass. Several cases have come to my knowledge this summer of horses becoming ill, and refusing to eat at all, or refusing wilted grass when offered them. I have known, in years past, farmers taking their horse teams into the meadow and feeding them grass just cut, and have known horses to die from eating the same. They are usually ailing but a short time, but suffer extremely, apparently.—*Cor. Country Gentleman*.

SALE OF IMPORTED AND THOROUGH-BRED STOCK.—The second annual sale of thorough-bred stock, the property of M. H. Cochrane, Esq., is announced to take place at Compton on the 3rd of October, next. Our readers will find full particulars in our advertising columns. The stock offered for sale consists of cattle, sheep and pigs, of the best breeds, and comprises many very valuable animals, a large proportion of which have been recently imported from Great Britain. Mr. Cochrane's advertisement did not come under the editor's notice in time to refer to it in the usual place; but we nevertheless cordially commend the sale to the attention of farmers, who will find this an excellent opportunity of improving their stock.