THE HORSE OUTLOOK.

BY W. L. CARLYLE.

Never perhaps has the outlook for the profitable production of certain classes of horses by Wisconsin farmers been brighter than it is at the present time. During all the history of horse breeding we find that the best specimens have been produced in those sections where a varied soil and climate favored the production of a variety of grains and grasses and insured good grazing. We also find that a climate comparatively cold, with a clear, bracing atmosphere seemed to imbue the horses reared under such conditions with a vim, vigor and vitality not found in those reared in warmer and more temperate regions. That Wisconsin is eminently adapted for the production of a high grade of horses in the various classes cannot be doubted, since we have all these natural conditions, and the additional proof that in no state in the union outside of a few in New England, in close proximity to the large cities, are horses so highly valued in the last report of the Department of Agriculture as they are in Wisconsin.

The subject given me for discussion before this convention deals with breeding in Wisconsin and naturally divides itself into two sections: First, the classes or types of horses that are likely to be in demand, and second, how shall these types be produced in best form?

The Reason for Low Prices.

The expression "there is no money in horses" was almost universal during the years 1892–97, which statement was no doubt true when the average price obtained was taken into consideration. As is almost always the case under conditions of this kind, our horse breeders did not take time to consider as to the true cause for the low prices prevailing for horses, and immediately concluded that the days of profitable horse raising had gone by forever. The primary cause for these low prices no doubt was
the great financial depression prevailing at that time throughout the country, and associated with this was the introduction of improved machinery, especially the use of electricity in its different forms, which largely supplanted the cheaper grades of horses, more particularly for street car work in our larger cities. This had the effect of greatly lessening the demand for this class of horses and they were consequently thrown on the market and affected the price of all classes. The breeders of high class horses, with but few exceptions, not recognizing the fact that there must inevitably be a good demand for their horses again as soon as the large supply of cheap low grade animals had been disposed of, also discontinued their breeding operations, until we find the horse outlook as it is today, with an almost unlimited demand at good prices for high class horses of the various types and very few of them in the country to supply it. The effect of this period of low prices has not, however, been an unmixed evil. It has resulted in the disposal in one way or another of a large number of very inferior stallions and mares that had formerly been used for breeding purposes, the produce of which never was very profitable and certainly never can be reared at a profit in the future. It has also called the attention of the foreign markets to the value of the horses bred in this country, which has resulted in a greatly increased export trade. This is clearly evident from the following table giving the extent of our export trade in horses since 1890.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Exported (horses)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>3,501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>3,110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>3,226</td>
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<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>2,967</td>
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<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>5,246</td>
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<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>13,984</td>
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<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>25,126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>39,532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>51,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>45,778</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The surprising increase in the number of our horses exported during the years 1896 and 1897, over what the exports had
been before and the continually increasing numbers being exported up to the present time in spite of the higher prices paid is a very promising feature of the outlook for the future of the horse business.

Another promising feature is the unprecedented demand for certain classes of our horses for use in the British army. From statements seen in the daily press it has been estimated that orders have been issued for over fifty thousand American horses to supply the British army in South Africa within the past few months. And it would appear that the value of certain classes of American horses for this purpose will result in a steady demand from this source, and also for supplying our own army.

Again I say there is every encouragement for the farmers of Wisconsin to breed good horses, provided they will breed those types which are in demand and the extent of the profits from this business will depend only on their ability to breed good ones.

The types most in demand at good prices in our leading markets can best be shown by quoting from the yearly report of the Chicago Union Stock Yards, which is today the largest horse market in the world.

Draft horses, average price for year ..................... $152.00
Carriage horses, average price for year .................. 204.00
Saddlers, average price for year ....................... 150.00
Drivers, including speed horses, average price for year 137.00
Bussers and "expressers," average price for year ...... 114.00
General use, average price for year ....................... 103.00

Probably the greatest volume of business done in this market is in horses for general use and "expressers," which it will be observed command the lowest prices. It is quite safe to say that there is an unlimited demand for good heavy drafters, high class carriage horses and expressers, and the farmer who breeds the right type to supply the demand in these three classes may confidently look for remunerative prices for a good many years to come, and for the reason principally that the supply of breeding animals suitable for the production of these classes of
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horses is decidedly limited and for the further reason that this supply cannot be greatly augmented in the next few years.

Why Brood Mares are Scarce.

The outlook for a plentiful supply of the classes of horses now in demand is not very encouraging, owing to the great lack of good brood mares in the country. These were largely disposed of in one way or another during the period of depression and stagnation in horse breeding, so that the farmers when they wish to breed horses at the present time are at a loss to find suitable foundation stock. The tendency will now be greater than ever towards breeding from inferior stock, especially on the side of the dam. It appears to be so very easy to ignore that fundamental aw of all breeding, namely, that like begets like, and the tendency no doubt will be in the future, as it has been in the past, for the farmer to breed from any kind of mares that happen to be on his farm with the inevitable result that a great many horses will be reared that will not be worth what they cost. In reviving our horse-breeding business in Wisconsin we cannot exercise too much care in selecting our breeding stock, as the outlook at the present time is that there never will be any demand for the common grades of horses, such as were formerly largely used for the street car trade and similar work. Farmers, as a rule, will do well to confine their breeding operations in horses to the production of the draft or express type. Occasionally there is a man with a decided love and taste for the training of horses, and with considerable ability in this respect, in which case if he can secure brood mares of the right class he will no doubt find that the production of high class carriage horses will be the most profitable branch of horse raising that he can engage in; but I maintain that the average farmer whose attention is more or less taken up with his farm work, and who wishes to rear colts as cheaply as possible and with least possible risk, will do much better to confine his attention largely to the production of heavy draft horses, or to those of the express type, for which there will always be a good demand.
It has been a matter of much surprise to the writer to observe the haphazard manner in which the average farmer selects his brood mares. They seem to take it for granted that all the good qualities of the chosen sire will be transmitted and that none of the deficiencies of the dam will be found in the offspring. It is well to bear in mind a fact that has been observed through all the history of breeding, namely, that other things being equal, the dam exercises the greatest influence over the characteristics and quality of the offspring. The Arabs recognized this fact hundreds of years ago in their horse breeding practice, when they traced all the pedigrees of their running horses through the dams and not through the sires, as we do today. Our German shepherd at the university farm has established this fact by practical experience in sheep breeding; nothing will induce him to dispose of the ewes which he has found to be the best mothers in the flock. He has learned that these dams invariably have good lambs even if the sire be only medium in quality. The inference is obvious: do not attempt to breed any horses unless you have good mares of the type that you wish to produce. It is the height of folly to breed a heavy draft stallion to a small, common, or inferior mare, expecting to produce a profitable horse for the market under present conditions. The man who wishes to raise draft horses for profit in the future must have mares of good size, well proportioned and with a good deal of quality. They must have size first of all, for this is the prime requisite in draft horses where power is required to move heavy loads in our large cities and other places where draft horses will be required in the future. A study of the prices obtained for the various draft horses sold by a leading Chicago commission firm during a single year has shown that approximately 25 cents per pound on the average was realized on every pound of weight added to horses over 1,400 until 1,800 pounds weight was reached.

In selecting a brood mare for the purpose of breeding draft horses she would weigh not less than 1,400 pounds, and should be possessed of sufficient quality to insure offspring that will
have substance and vitality to perform a large amount of work for a term of years. The very best illustration that can be given of a horse of this character was in the now celebrated Clydesdale gelding, 12 years old, shown at the Chicago International Live Stock Show in December. This horse had been used for six years on the hard stone paved streets of Liverpool as a cart horse, and yet when shown in Chicago his limbs and feet were of as choice quality and as free from blemish as could be desired in a four-year-old. Size associated with quality and action is what is demanded of the draft horse today. By quality is meant solid, firm muscles and clean, dense, heavy bone, as evidenced in the size and conformation of the joints of the limbs, the canon bones, and the head, all of which should be clearly defined and without any coarseness of the tissues surrounding these parts. The foot of the draft horse is also a very important factor and this point should not be neglected in the selection of the brood mare. Her feet should be of good size and should be made up of hard, tough, fibrous tissue of a dense, waxy appearance, good, large and round hoof heads, wide, deep and open heels, surmounted with clean, sloping and springy pasterns. In disposition the draft mare should be kind and gentle and yet have sufficient spirit and vigor to carry herself well together and move freely. The draft stallion to which she should be bred must be her counterpart in all these things but in an intensified degree. He should be larger, stronger and more masculine, and at the same time more compact in form and more stylish and free in his movements, the outcome of good feet, well set pasterns and properly proportioned limbs and body.

The mares selected for breeding carriage horses must be chosen with even greater care, as the market for this class is much more discriminating, and much more care and skill is required in the production of this class of horses than in producing those of the draft or express type. Brood mares for
producing this class should weigh 1,100 to 1,300 pounds, and should have good style, action and quality. Style, pleasing appearance, grace of outline, symmetry of form or whatever term we may use to describe that appropriate blending of all parts of the body which constitute the chief beauty of the carriage horse is one of the first considerations in choosing a mare for breeding this class of horses; associated with this must be smooth, graceful, true and frictionless action, with good quality and with no hereditary unsoundness. Mares of this class are exceedingly rare on the farms of Wisconsin, but where they are found in the hands of enterprising breeders, with the above mentioned qualifications, they should most certainly be kept producing this class of horses, as they are the most profitable that can be reared. The selection of a sire to mate with them is also a somewhat difficult task. We have any number of so-called carriage stallions in Wisconsin, but only here and there one that has sufficient style, size, quality and action to get the class of colts desired in the market when mature. A carriage stallion must weight not less than 1,300 pounds, have a smooth, well rounded, graceful form and carriage, and be possessed of sufficient vim and courage to make him move freely and with spirit. His action also must be the counterpart of the mare's, and in an intensified degree.

A much larger number of mares suitable for the production of express horses will be found in Wisconsin than either of the above mentioned classes. The trouble is that our farmers will persist in trying to breed high class carriage or very heavy draft horses from mares that should be used for the production of expressers. When the mares on the farm do not conform fairly closely to the standards given above for carriage and draft mares they should be crossed with a clean limbed, stylish stallion of comparatively small size belonging to one of the draft breeds, perhaps, where the product will supply the very large demand for expressage or farm horses; or these mares may be bred to a good large coach or carriage stallion, when the result
of the cross will approach very nearly to the class of the horses demanded by the army for artillery and infantry types.

In choosing the breed much will depend upon the personal choice of the breeder, though an effort should always be made to continue in the same lines of breeding and not endeavor to cross pure bred stallions of one breed on high grade mares of another breed. This is quite important where a uniform class of horses is desired that will make good matched teams. The breeds most in favor for draught purposes at present are the Percheron and Clydesdale, either of which have their strong points as well as their weak ones. And here let me say that in selecting a sire from your chosen breed do not hesitate to secure the very best possible, even though the service fee be double that of an inferior one, for you cannot afford to breed to the latter at any price. In Percherons, see to it that the stallion is well proportioned, with good, clean, flat legs, large, round hoofs surmounted with strong, clean and sloping pasterns. In Clydesdales, select a horse that possesses quality of bone, as evidenced by the skin and hair surrounding his limbs; also pay particular attention to the quality of their feet and the depth and character of the middle piece, which should be surmounted by strong, muscular loin.

The breeds that will be found most useful in producing high class carriage horses are the Hackney, French Coach and American trotter. The Hackney is usually possessed of sufficient style and action, but often lacks in size and quality when mated with somewhat plain mares. In choosing a French Coach horse be sure to get action and style combined with pedigree that insures prepotency, as the grades of this breed appear to lack quality and uniformity.

The American trotter appears to lack style and size in a great many cases, and owing to his mixed breeding, he is also very apt to lack uniformity.

Finally, it is of the highest importance to select breeding stock of the different sexes that will so mate as to correct any deficiencies in the progeny that may be present in either of the
parents; and above all, study the demands of the market and aim to produce what it demands, leaving personal preference out of consideration.

DISCUSSION.

Mr. Ames: I want to ask the professor to what extent barrenness will grow upon the mares of this country. I thought the past season that I would go to work to breed horses, having at least the ordinary mares that have been described here this afternoon for brood purposes. In attempting to secure three prospective colts I utterly failed. My mares would certainly come under that two per cent., and yet I found myself failing entirely.

Prof. Carlyle: The trouble is not with your mares. It is much more to be laid to the other side of the house. That has been my experience. The use that is made of the sires in the breeding season and the way they are handled. I do not suppose there are two per cent. of the sires in this country that are used for anything else, except to drive in a buggy or stand in a box stall. One of the very best cures for barrenness has been to use the sires for practical purpose through the year. It gives them vigor and vitality. A horse is the very last animal in the world to be put in a small stall and left there to fret and get no exercise. There is no animal that likes to run about so well and which will so soon develop uselessness as a horse.

Mr. ——: Put them to work on the farm; set them to plowing. I have one that has been doing all kinds of farm work for the past four years, and there never was a surer horse; and before that he was not considered sure by any means.

Mr. Ames: What per cent. of mares will he get with foal?

Mr. ——: Something like 72 per cent.

Prof. Carlyle: That is a big average. I think the average horse would not get 50 per cent.
Question: If this man’s mares are all right, what is the reason?

Prof. Carlyle: Sometimes all the mares are not all right. The men that handle them may not give them a proper chance.

A Member: I get about 60 per cent. with foal and about 40 living colts. That has been my experience.

Mr. Carroll: Why are there not more than two per cent. of our mares good for breeding purposes?

Prof. Carlyle: I do not say that there are not more than two per cent. in the country, but in the vicinity of Madison. Every time I get a chance I look them over. Simply because the good ones have been disposed of. Anything that will sell at all will be sold and the others are taken home. Another reason is, I fear, we have been breeding to these types. The great demand has been for common horses, but that demand is all gone. We are not going to have it again in the future. The common horses will never be profitably raised again. The ranches are producing that kind anyhow. They can produce that kind of horses for $12 apiece, and the farmers of this country are never going to raise that kind profitably.

Mr. Ames: My mares are eight or nine years old, never having been exposed. Does age and not having been exposed add to the doubt as to getting them with foal?

Prof. Carlyle: I do not think so. It may be that you tried at a time of year when they were going downward in flesh.

Mr. Ames: That does not apply at all. This was in the summer.

Prof. Carlyle: The warm weather might account for it.

Adjourned.