MARKETING THE HORSE.

ALEX. GALBRAITH, Janesville, Wis.

This is a very important subject and there never was a time when it was so important as right now; but before we can have the horse ready for market we must produce him. I will therefore go back to the young colt and follow the subject along until he gets old enough to be ready for market.

The breeder ought to have a certain and distinct type of horse in mind before starting to breed, and his constant aim should be to produce only the very best of its kind. Unless his aim and ambition be high the probability is that he will never produce anything valuable. He should select the breed or breeds that he thinks are best adapted to his conditions and circumstances, and that when raised and marketed will net him the most money. Assuming that he decides to raise draft horses—and they are much the safest for the average farmer—he ought to aim at producing horses that will weigh at maturity not less than 1600 to 1700 pounds. At present the market value between a draft horse of 1500 pounds and one of 1700 pounds, other things equal, is something like 50 per cent., and the farmer is surely entitled to the maximum price. But size, of course, is not everything. The horse must be proportionately made; he must be of the best quality and stamina, sound, have good legs and feet, good disposition and good walking and trotting action.

Necessity of Good Parentage.

The history of our country and of all countries shows that our greatest men have been the sons of good mothers, and I have never known an animal of outstanding merit, either in this country or Europe, but what had a good mother. For this reason I would impress upon the farmers of this state the great necessity of having good mares to breed from, as you might just as reasonably expect to raise grapes from Canada thistles as to raise good stock from inferior parents. A great deal of the depression and stagnation in the horse market the last few years was directly caused by a system of breeding that did not sufficiently recognize the law of nature that "like produces like." Indiscriminate breeding from inferior, unsound, or unsuitable parents has done great injury in the past and will continue to do so wherever and whenever practiced. And chief among those evils is the production of that nondescript animal frequently got by violent crossing. Very light mares ought not to be crossed with very heavy stallions, nor vice versa. It is unnatural and unprofitable. Select the best types of brood mares available, then mate them according to your judgment with the best and only the best pure bred stallions you can find of the breed you like best or is best suited to the purpose. If you raise draft horses see that they are so, not in name only, but in reality, and give this department of the farming operations your most intelligent and unwavering attention. No other department will, over a period of years, yield more pleasure or a better profit if judiciously managed.

The Brood Mare and Colt.

It is generally admitted that the young colts in this state, as in other states, do not receive anything like the care they ought to get during the first year of their existence. The cus-
tom of working our brood mares while the colts are suckling is not calculated to do full justice to the colt, although it is all but universally practiced on American farms. In Europe the mares are worked up to the day of foaling, but are not generally put to work again until the foal is old enough to wean, unless in some exceptional case. Mares become heated when working during the summer, and unless great care is exercised the foal is apt to suffer. For this reason I would recommend that the mare should, if at all possible, be allowed a complete rest for at least two months after foaling. The young colt should be taught to eat grain, preferably oats, either whole or bruised, just as early as possible, so that when weaned he will be in good condition and not so likely to feel the want of his mother's milk. From four to six months old is about the best age to wean the colt, and from that time on he should be fed regularly and liberally. The first winter of the colt's life is the most important and the so-called economy that allows a colt to run around the straw pile and rustle for a living is certainly the poorest kind of economy. Any man who practices that stands in his own light because he is losing the growth of the colt at that early stage which will never be made up in the future. Feed generously and regularly the first winter and allow the colt to run out every day so he may have abundance of exercise. A little extra attention paid to the colt's feeding and trimming of his feet during the first year will well repay any breeder. If he has a tendency to turn his toes outwards or inwards you can generally correct that defect by trimming the feet, which at that early period are in a soft cartilaginous state. If, for instance, he is inclined to turn his toes out, trim down the outside and that will rectify the tendency. If he "toes in" just trim the inside in like manner. If you allow these habits to go on for a few years you cannot afterwards change them and it is highly important that the horse goes straight when you come to sell him.

The Colt—Feed, Care and Handling.

As regards rations I would of course recommend good sound oats and bran, a little flaxseed meal, carrots, and good bright hay, preferably clover, if free from dust. A little corn ensilage once daily is also recommended, although I have had no experience using it. If you have any skim milk to spare it can be fed with great benefit to young colts, and if fed judiciously nothing will give better results. Continue giving the colt a grain ration when going on pasture the following summer and if at all convenient have him gently handled and halter broken. As he grows up he will require to be carefully broken to harness—the first operation being to teach him that he has a mouth. Use great kindness and patience in bitting him, and on no account lose your temper or you will almost certainly spoil him. In England what is termed a "dumb jockey" or bitting harness is frequently used before the colt is harnessed. A belt or sureingle fastened around the girth and checked from the bridle serves a similar purpose. With this rigging the colt may be turned into a yard for an hour or two daily and he will afterwards be much more tractable, in fact partially broken. Our horses are not well broken, according to European standard, and many foreign buyers find it necessary to break them again after importation with the view of teaching them better horse manners. This, of course, refers only to carriage horses, however, so if any of you are raising that class it will certainly pay you to be very particular in the breaking and handling of your colts, as many a promising, highly bred young horse is absolutely spoiled through imperfect or careless breaking.

In addition to breaking, the colt
must be taught obedience under all circumstances, and accustomed to all city sights and sounds. With the draft horse there is usually little trouble in this respect and buyers will rarely enquire whether or not the horse is accustomed to steam or trolley cars. But in carriage horses it is different. No horse is safe or fit for a carriage until he can be relied on to stand under a volley of artillery.

Preparation for Market.

Now about preparation for market. Suppose you are raising carriage horses, don’t make the mistake now of assuming that your horses are necessarily carriage horses because they are yours, or because they are bred right, as that is a delusion frequently indulged in, but supposing you have such a horse showing style, quality, and action, and you wish to prepare him for market. You must, as I say, have him thoroughly broken both single and double, and accustomed to all kinds of noises and crowded streets. Engage a good blacksmith to shoe him just as well as it can be done, not with the view of making a speed horse, but with shoes suitable for carriage purposes. The men who buy such horses are always willing to pay well for getting their horses in the best possible condition and neatly shod. Feed him rather more liberally so that he may be steadily on the gain without being hog fat, and drive him a short distance daily, to keep his muscles in good form, but not far enough to tire him or take off the keen edge.

Not in Good Flesh.

It has been a general complaint among the dealers in Chicago and other horse markets that a very large proportion of the horses sent in for sale are in an unfit condition, being mostly too thin in flesh. They maintain that this is one of the main causes why horses have sold so cheaply in recent years, and it is a well known fact that many of those dealers buy half fed horses from the farmers, fatten them, and then sell at good prices for the eastern and foreign trade. It seems remarkable that with the abundance of low priced grain which our farmers have had in recent years they should persist in sending their horses to market in a half fed condition. It may be, of course, that they are fat enough for work, but they look better when fat and the buyer wants them fat, and is willing to pay extra in order to get them. In such a case it is folly for us to argue that medium condition is more desirable. If they want fat horses, as they certainly do, let us offer them that kind.

Ventilation of the Barn.

The ventilation of our barns is a matter which I think deserves more attention than it receives, but I will not take time to go into details. There are frequently cracks and open spaces which serve the purpose of ventilation but which often cause drafts, resulting in colds, rheumatism, and other ailments. In like manner the drainage around the barns should be examined, as bad results often come from imperfect drainage. Then there is the watering arrangements. All horses ought to be watered before and not after feeding. The horse’s stomach is comparatively small, it only contains from 7 to 9 gallons, so if you feed him heavily and then water him, the result will be that a certain amount of the food will be washed down into the intestines in an undigested condition. This is a frequent cause of colic and other troubles, and can easily be obviated by watering the horse when his stomach is comparatively empty. If the horse comes from the field or the road in a heated condition it is not advisable to give him all the water he wants. Give him a paliful or so, and then allow him to cool off, by which time his thirst will have partially subsided. On no account water him within an
A half fed horse not in market condition.

A well fitted team of the hackney type of horse that is in good demand.
hour or two after feeding. Running water is best suited for stock, and well water should only be used after being exposed some time to the air, and so become oxydized.

A Glimpse at the Horse Business.

In marketing our horses it is highly essential that we should know exactly for what purpose they are suited, and in this connection I wish to read an extract from last week's paper.

"A buyer at the Chicago stock yards purchased, at a combination sale, a five-year-old stallion for fifty-five dollars. The horse was rather plainly bred, a good individual with some action, not by any means well broken and therefore unable to show himself to the best advantage offered at a time when even the very best bred stallions were a drug on the market unless of world wide reputation, and the result was that his breeder did not get back the cost of a year's keep. The buyer promptly had the horse added to the list, had his tail docked, improved his manners, dispatched him to New York and there sold him at auction for thirteen hundred dollars. Another case may be cited: Newgass & Company heard of a trotting bred stallion that looked like making a good coach horse. Mr. Newgass offered the owner three hundred dollars cash if the owner would pay the freight from the point of shipment to Chicago. This the owner refused to do and the deal fell through. Two of Newgass' buyers came across the horse and telegraphed the house in the city that they could buy him for such and such a price. They were wired to leave the horse, that the house did not want him at any price whatever. Time went on, and no purchaser appearing for the stallion, he was put in a combination sale and first disposed of for sixty-five dollars, but as there was some dispute as to the final bidder he was put up again and bid in by Mr. Newgass for eighty-five dollars. This horse was also added to the list of geldings, docked, trimmed up, given a due amount of training in the way he should go, and when he was sent to New York and there exposed at public auction he provoked the keenest competition, and was finally struck off at sixteen hundred dollars. In both of these cases the breeders had succeeded in breeding good horses; all that they lacked was the ability to dispose profitably of what they had."

Now, the moral to be taken from this is two fold, I think. In the first place it is evident that those men did not know where to dispose of those horses or the work they were best suited for. In the second place, it shows that even in the horse business there are some men that are somewhat sharp when opportunity arises.

A Look Ahead.

Now I will pass on to speak of the prospective future of the horse market. As you all know we have been suffering from low prices of late years. The prices today are gaining, going slowly up, and going slowly for the reason that the market is very full, the receipts lately being very heavy, and they may perhaps continue to be large for some months to come. Another circumstance that militates against an advance, is the fact that the quality of the horses in our market is gradually and surely deteriorating. And why? For the simple reason that buyers when they go into a district to buy horses, take the best and reject the balance; then when they come back they are obliged to take a lower grade of horses, those they had previously rejected, and of course the general average is deteriorating. I think that wide-awake, intelligent breeders throughout the country are waking up to the situation. I understand that in Canada they bred very largely last season, and will breed this season still more largely. We find lately there is far more inquiry for breeding stock than
for years. Only a few will get in this year, but those few will get the benefit, because they will have colts on the market early, and before other people. Some of you may say that horses will not be wanted in the future, if electricity and bicycles, and motorcycles are going to take their place. The other day I read an interview with an electrical engineer in Liverpool, who had been putting in electrical motors into the streets of Liverpool to take the place of draft horses, and after giving that motor a full and fair trial they have abandoned it, and this man gives it as his opinion that they have made virtually no advance during the last sixty years in moving heavy tonnage in the streets of our cities, and he does not think that inside the lifetime of those now living, will draft horses be supplanted in our large cities by electricity or any other motive power, but light drawing will be done largely by electricity and other motive power.

Then we have the bicycle, of course, on all hands, but even the bicycle is a fad, entirely dependent on weather and roads and I find it is going out of style. The wealthy people are giving it up since it has gotten within the reach of the common people. When I was in St. Louis last fall I was told by a gentleman there that the St Louis people were giving the cold shoulder to the bicycle because the negroes are all riding them.

A Word of Advice.

I certainly advise you to breed horses, and I say that there never was a time when there was a better prospect for breeders, but you must breed the very best animals you can produce; have a distinct object in view and when once you start in do not change around with every wind that blows, but stay by whatever you start in with. There are probably higher prices going for carriage horses than any other kind, there always will be, and if you think you have the ability and experience and material to produce that horse and fit him for market, and give what the market demands, you will get a better return than for any other horse.

For the average farmer I would rather recommend the draft horse as a safer animal to produce for several reasons, one of which is that he is easier raised, and if he gets slightly blemished there is less to come off his price on that account; he is more salable than a blemished roadster or carriage horse. We must remember that although we still have a large supply of horses in the market that supply is not going to last forever. As Prof. Craig said, the average life of a horse in the city is only five years, and the horses in the cities now will all need replacing inside of five years and many of them in far less. We are using up our horses just as rapidly as we ever did. Out in the west they are killing them by thousands and sending them to glue factories and canning factories, I suppose. We have an export trade of something like 50,000 per annum, and that trade is growing and ought to be cultivated. We must, therefore, strive to strengthen our weak points and give our horses more style, strength, quality and action; action more than anything else, because that sells the horse of the carriage type, and the prices depend more on that than anything else.

DISCUSSION.

The Chairman—Isn’t there danger of over-feeding colts; suppose you feed them on what Mr. Goodrich would term a balanced ration and they had plenty of exercise?

Mr. Galbraith—No, I think there is very little danger of that. Of course, you will meet an occasional colt that is glutinous and will eat more than is good for him, and then a man must use his judgment. I find that colts suffer more from too little food than from too much,
The Chairman—What is the principal difference between the breeding and raising of horses in this country and those in the old country?

Mr. Galbraith—I think they give them more care over there. They value them more from the start than we do here and they always breed for a special purpose, having something more definite in view.

Mr. Cressy—Is there any means of giving horses this action that you speak of by care and feed?

Mr. Galbraith—No, sir; good action must be born in a colt. There is a kind of artificial action that is produced by shoeing heavily in front, but this is not desirable. We don’t get this natural high action from our general breeding once in a dozen times. Here is the picture of a Hackney mare that a gentleman in New York state imported last year. She is a very valuable mare, and what makes her so valuable is the high knee and hock action which she always displays. Something can be done in the shoeing to make them lift their knees higher, but good action depends on the movement of the shoulders, the knees and the hocks all in unison.

Question—Do you feed your colts mostly to produce muscle rather than flesh?

Mr. Galbraith—Yes, I omitted to say that we do not believe in feeding corn hardly at all to colts; we want such foods as will produce muscle and bone rather than fat. I don’t like them too fat, of course there is a medium in that; but you want a certain amount of flesh.

Question—What is the best food to feed the first year?

Mr. Galbraith—I think oats, bran, and flaxseed meal, with good, bright hay, but not too much hay.

A Lady—Would you advocate putting a bitting harness on a high-spirited colt and turning it out?

Mr. Galbraith—I think so. If he has too much spirit you would take some of it out of him. I would not hit it up too short to make him fret.

Supt. McKerrow—Wouldn’t you handle him some previous to this?

Mr. Galbraith—Oh, yes, he ought to be halter broke and handled a good deal previously. You can put a harness on at two years old; that is early enough, or three years old, if you don’t want to break him until he is three.

A Member—Don’t you think that farmers who are obliged to work their mares during the summer would do well to breed fall colts?

Mr. Galbraith—It would seem so, and yet my experience is the other way. I have not seen many successfully raised fall colts.

Mr. Hays—How would it do to let a colt run till he is five years old before he is halter broke?

Mr. Galbraith—I don’t think you can do so in these days. You can teach a colt very much easier and quicker when it is quite young. On no account should a young colt be driven very fast. Their bones are soft.

A Member—Do you think an idle mare will raise a better colt than one that is kept in the harness?

Mr. Galbraith—No; I think that a mare that is worked moderately will give the best results. Of course I mean before foaling.

Question—In driving a horse a distance say of fifteen or twenty miles, would you advocate the heaviest driving at the farther end of the ride or at the beginning?

Mr. Galbraith—It would depend a good deal on the horse. You would naturally prefer to bring your horse in the barn not in a very heated condition, and consequently the last few miles should be driven quite slowly.

The Chairman—Wouldn’t it be a good plan to start out slowly, then drive up, and then slow up again before you got back?

Mr. Galbraith—Yes, I think so.

Question—At what age would you wean colts?

Mr. Galbraith—About five or six
months. You must be careful that the mare does not become overheated, while nursing a foal.

Question—If the mare should be worked real hard, and the colt is a couple of months old, or even less, wouldn't it be well to take the colt off and raise it on cow's milk, rather than to leave it with the mother if she is out of condition?

Mr. Galbraith—Well, I think the foal ought to be allowed to suckle the mare three or four months at any rate, and five or six are preferable. If the mare is unhealthy the colt is better weaned, however.

Mr. Convey—About what per cent. of mares are being kept?

Mr. Galbraith—A great many of our mares have been sold off. Some years ago we had lots of good mares, but the proportion is much smaller than it was. Breeding stock is at a very low point at the present time. In my opinion the time will never come again when it can be as easily and cheaply bought as right now. If a man is contemplating going into breeding, now is the time to do it, because he can get the benefit of the advance in the market that is bound to come very soon.