Draft Horse Industry Prosperous.

By H. G. McMillan.

With the return of business and industrial prosperity throughout the land the demand for draft horses has very largely increased, and for no other class of live stock has the market price advanced so rapidly within the past two or three years. In fact, the demand has become so out of proportion with the supply that buyers are scouring the country to find drafters of the right sort, and when prime good ones are found they readily bring from $250 to $350 each in the horse markets of the country.

While the renewal of industrial activity in the United States has had much to do with the increased demand for draft horses, it has not been the only factor. Within the past few years a new market has opened. The foreign demand for American horses practically began in 1893. During the world's fair foreign horsemen visiting this country found good horses selling in our markets at a low figure, while there was a shortage abroad. As an experiment about 1000 horses were purchased at Chicago and exported with satisfactory results. With this small beginning and with a total of less than 3000 horses exported from the United States in 1893, our export trade has grown until the year ending June, 1900, it had reached the astonishing figure of almost 65,000 head, over half of which were draft horses.

The official reports show that the increase in value of horses in the United States since 1897 has been a little over $150,000,000, and in no class of horses has the increase been so marked as in draft horses. As the quality improves the difference in values will be still greater. In raising of draft horses a wise selection of breeding stock is of the utmost importance. Draft horses with action, good bone, heavy weight and proper conformation cannot be produced from undersized, inferior and unsound breeding stock.

First of all a brood mare should be sound and free from hereditary blemishes. A sound mare with good bone and wide draft type, even though she may not be very large, if mated to the right kind of a stallion, may produce drafters of a high order. The stallion is of even greater importance than the mare. On account of there being so many mares that are somewhat undersized it is especially important that the stallion should be large and heavy boned. Soundness in the stallion is essential also and I am surprised that farmers pay so little attention to this all-important point, both in buying a stallion and when breeding their mares.

Next to soundness size and bone are important. When I speak of size I do not mean weight alone. Too many buyers are deceived by mere weight. Weight is necessary, but it is not the only essential. A draft horse at maturity, in fairly good condition, ought to weigh from 1800 pounds to a ton. If a horse of this weight is of good disposition, of proper conformation, is sound in body and limb, with heavy bone, legs set squarely under him, with feet of sufficient size and quality, possessing at the same time that style and action so frequently seen in the highest type of draft horse nowadays, he ought to make an ideal draft sire.

While the electric car, the bicycle and the automobile has possibly, to some extent, displaced the lighter horse, nothing yet has been discovered to take the place of the draft horse in drawing heavy loads up hill and down or over stony pavements or through the mud and snow and in many other ways meeting the growing and unrelenting demands of commerce and trade. The fear that the horse will be superseded by electricity as a motive power is entirely without foundation. This is demonstrated by the fact that no invention of the past century has lessened the work of the horse on the farm, while nearly every improvement in farm machinery has necessitated the use of more horses. The draft horse stands today for the highest standard of agricultural and industrial prosperity. He is the farmer's horse and king of the market place as well.

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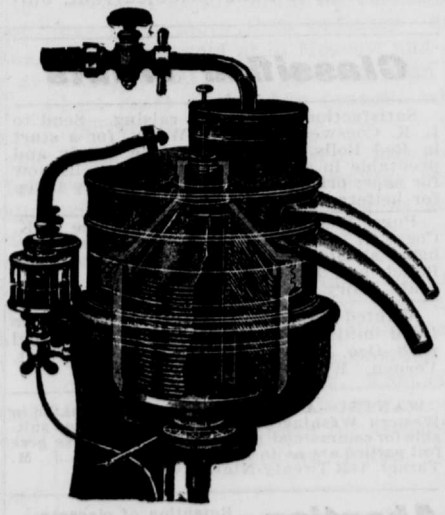

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