



Walter Rose Butchers, Devizes, Sidmouth Street.

Christmas Fare

Whatever effect the cattle disease may have had upon the Price of provisions, it has certainly not reduced them in quality, as far as Devizes is concerned; for on no occasion have we seen greater abundance, or a finer display of all that can minister to "good living" than our town presents on this, its Christmas market morning. Visions of roast beef, decked with holly and mistletoe, with its many etceteras in the way of plum pudding, and those other dainties which help to make up a Christmas dinner, seem to present themselves at every turn, and to force upon us, as it were, the realization of those glad tidings which we still enjoy in these our English homes - of "Peace on earth: good will towards man." There is not one among us at such a season who, be he poor or be he rich, will not be ready to thank God that his lot is cast in England - amidst its thousand smoking chimneys, which tell of happy firesides and joyous hearts and all that makes this world worth living for. And is there a place on earth where this feeling may be more truly realised than in Devizes! - where the only difference that need exist amongst us, is how we may best advance the common weal of our town and of those who dwell within it. But we have no time to indulge this train of thought. Our object at present is rather to tell of the material preparations for the approaching festivity with which we are surrounded - and amongst them all, there are none which stand out more conspicuously than our butcher's stalls.

Mr. Hull's display has, as usual, been the great object of attraction in the Brittox during the morning: and a splendid show of beef and mutton it is. The Hereford and Devon oxen, of his own grazing, are equal to anything we have seen this year - not so much on account of their extreme fatness, as for the excellence of their meat. Then there are five very nice 4-year-old short-horn heifers, from that noted grazier, Mr. Charles Rich, of Sutton; a handsome heifer grazed by Mr. Bodman of Beanacre; and some very pretty beef from a well-grazed animal by Mr. Fry of Foxham. Here also hung two of Mr. Little's four beautiful Southdowns which carried off the prizes at the Chippenham and Melksham Agricultural Shows; and which are as remarkable in the carcass as they were when they were alive. Indeed, it would be difficult to find two handsomer sheep: the fat is dispersed evenly throughout, with plenty of lean; and they are said to weigh 50 lbs. A quarter. Mr. Hull had also one of Mr. Robert Henley's sheep which took the first prize at Chippenham, against Mr. Moore of Littlecot; some very fine 6-tooth wether sheep from G. W. Heneage, esq., of Compton Basset House; and some nice mutton grazed by Mr. Charles Rich of Sutton; with a well-fatted calf and early lamb, as usual: altogether a splendid show.

Then there is Mr. Lewis, in Northgate Street, who has from sheer necessity been compelled to extemporize a stall on the pavement; for both his shop and his yard together are inadequate to accommodate the immense supply he has provided for his Christmas customers. Here again, as at Mr. Hull's, we have beef and mutton by the most noted graziers of our neighbourhood; foremost among whom must be mentioned the Messrs. Tayler of Baldham, whose handsome heifers are the theme of universal commendation. The Pembroke ox shewn in our market last Thursday, and which does so much credit to its grazier, Mr. J. Wason of Ingleback, Bath, is here exhibited in the carcass; with a quantity of prime beef, the result of the careful feeding of Messrs. Ghey of Littleton, Mr. Collins of Outmarsh, and of Mr. Lewis himself. Mr. Lewis has also the other two out of Mr. Little's prize pen of four Southdowns - handsome as pictures, but hardly so heavy as the pair selected by Mr. Hull; with three remarkably fine sheep (the produce of one ewe) from Messrs Tayler of Baldham; a very superior Southdown, fed by Mr. Ghey of Keevil; and others by the Messrs. Ghey of Littleton; two nicely fattened lambs by the Messrs. Ghey, another by the Messrs. Sainsbury of Devizes, and one of Mr. Lewis's own fattening, completing one of the finest shows of Christmas fare Mr. Lewis has ever made.

In Sidmouth Street, Mr. Cox's display occupies also a large share of the pavement near his house. The most conspicuous carcasses here, are Mr. Chapman's prime oxen, some of which were shown live in our market last Thursday, and which fully realize the anticipations which were then formed of them. Six in number, they form as handsome a half dozen of Herefords as are often seen. Side by side with them are five beautiful short-horn steers grazed by Mr. Arnold of Wilcot, an ox grazed by Mr. Rawlings, and some heifers of Mr. Cox's own grazing. Also a number of Southdown wethers from Mr. Redman of Melksham, some exceedingly handsome downs from the flock of S. Hitchcock, esq., of All Cannings; others grazed by Mr. Cox; with some pretty Welsh mutton, a fat calf fed by Mr. Harris of Devizes - and a number of prime porkers. Altogether, we do not remember ever having seen a finer display of Christmas fare: and we may say the same of Mr. Dangerfield's shop, which has throughout the week been filled with poultry and game of all descriptions; whilst the grocers seem to vie with one another in decorating their windows with fruits and confections, set out in the most tempting fashion, amongst sprigs of holly and other emblems of this festive season.

All that is wanting is the wherewith to purchase the good things so abundantly displayed before the public; but with beef and mutton at present prices – prices higher than have been known for the last 50 years - beef at 11d. a lb., and prime joints of mutton 9½d. to 10d. – there is many a household, we fear, where considerable difficulty will be felt in obtaining those creature comforts which go far to make “a Merry Christmas.”

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