

and round, and no uneven or angular formation where the shoulders join either the neck or the back, particularly no rising of the withers, or hollow behind the situation of these bones. The arm fleshy through its whole extent, and even down to the knee. The bones of the leg small, standing wide apart, no looseness of skin about them, and comparatively bare of wool. The chest and barrel at once deep and round; the ribs forming a considerable arch from the spine, so as in some cases, and especially when the animal is in good condition, to make the apparent width of the chest even greater than the depth. The barrel ribbed well home, no irregularity of line on the back or the belly, but, on the sides, the carcass very gradually diminishing in width towards the rump. The quarters long and full, and, as with the fore legs, the muscles extending down to the hock; the thighs also wide and full. The legs of moderate length, the pelt also moderately full, but soft and elastic, and covered with a good quantity of white wool, not so long as in some breeds but considerably finer.

"It was about the middle of the last century that Mr. Bakewell first applied himself to the endeavour to improve the then existing breed in Leicestershire. Up to this period very little care had been bestowed upon the breeding of sheep.

"Two objects alone appear to have engrossed the attention of the breeders: first, to breed animals of the largest possible size; and, secondly, such as should produce the heaviest fleeces. Aptitude to fatten, and symmetry of shape, that is, such shape as should increase as much as possible the most valuable parts of the animal, and diminish in the same proportion the offal, were entirely disregarded.

"Mr. Bakewell perceived that smaller animals increased in weight more rapidly than very large ones; and that they consumed so much less food, that the same quantity of herbage applied to feeding a larger number of small sheep would produce more meat than when applied to feeding the smaller number of large sheep which alone it would support. He also perceived that sheep carrying a heavy fleece of wool possessed less propensity to fatten than those which carried one of a more moderate weight.

"Acting upon these observations, he selected from the different flocks in his neighbourhood, without regard to size, the sheep which appeared to him to have the greatest propensity to fatten, and whose shape possessed the peculiarities which he considered would produce the largest proportion of valuable meat, and the smallest quantity of bone and offal.

"In doing this, it is probable that he was led to prefer the smaller sheep, still more than he had been by the consideration above stated, because it is found that perfection of shape more frequently accompanies a moderate-sized animal than a very large one.

"He was also of the opinion that the first object to be attended to in breeding sheep was the value of the carcass, and that the fleece ought always to be a secondary consideration. The reason of this

is obvious: the addition of two or three pounds of wool to the weight of a sheep's fleece is a difference of great amount; but if, to procure this increase, a sacrifice is made of the propensity to fatten, the farmer may lose by it ten or twelve pounds of mutton.

"The sort of sheep, therefore, which Mr. Bakewell selected were those possessed of the most perfect symmetry, with the greatest aptitude to fatten, and rather smaller in size than the sheep then generally bred. Having formed his stock from sheep so selected, he carefully attended to the peculiarities of the individuals from which he bred, and, it appears, did not object to breeding from near relations, when by so doing he put together animals likely to produce a progeny possessing the characteristics that he wished to obtain.

"Mr. Bakewell has been supposed by some persons to have formed the New Leicester variety by crossing different sorts of sheep; but there does not appear to be any reason for believing this; and the circumstances of their varying in their appearance and qualities so much as they do from the other varieties of the long-wooled sheep, can by no means be considered as proving that such was the system which he adopted. Every one who has attended to the breeding of domestic animals must have experienced that, *by careful selection of those from which he breeds, and with a clear and defined conception of the object he intends to affect, he may procure a progeny in which that object will be accomplished.*

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"Such is the origin of the New Leicester breed of sheep, which have, within little more than half a century, spread themselves from their native county over every part of the United Kingdom, and are now exported to the continents of Europe and America. Such, indeed, have proved to be their merits, that at the present day there are very few flocks of long-wooled sheep existing in England, Scotland, or Ireland, which are not in some degree descended from the flock of Mr. Bakewell. A pure Lincoln or Teeswater flock is very rarely to be found; and although some flocks of the pure Cotswold breed remain, in the greater number of instances it is probable that they have been crossed with the New Leicester.

"No other sort of sheep possesses so great a propensity to fatten—no other sort is fit for the butcher at so early an age—and although they are not calculated for the poorest soils, where the herbage is so scanty that the sheep must walk over a great deal of ground for the purpose of procuring its food, no other sort of sheep, in soils of a moderate or superior quality, is so profitable to the breeder.

"They vary much in size, weighing at a year and a half old, with ordinary keep, from 24 to 36 lbs. per quarter. In this respect, therefore, they are inferior to the Lincoln, the Cotswold, and the Teeswater sheep. By crossing them with either of these breeds, the size of the sheep may be considerably increased; and it is said that this may be done without diminishing perceptibly either their inclination to become fat, or the early maturity for which they have always been remarkable.