

TOWNSHIP OF HAMILTON FARMERS' CLUB.

At a meeting of the Township of Hamilton Farmer's Club, held at Grieve's Hotel, Court House, on Saturday, January 31, 1857.

Matthew Forsyth, Esq., in the chair. Present, Messrs. Alcorn, Underwood, Wright, White, Ball, Bennett, Burnham, McDonald, Richardson, McMurray, Johnston, Brown, Roddick, Riddell, &c &c.

Mr. Riddell read the following address on

CHEVIOT SHEEP.

Sheep are certainly among the most useful of the domestic animals. With them prosperity and industry are introduced into a country, and there is probably no animal that contributes so much to our comfort as the sheep, as there are few, or none of the inhabitants of our country from the highest to the lowest, who are not daily arrayed in some article of dress made from the cast off covering of a sheep. Besides in every house from the cottage to the palace they furnish the most comfortable articles of furniture.

From the earliest records of our race, we find man keeping flocks and herds, and in ancient times the keeping and tending sheep was the employment of Prince and Patriarch, of Priest and Prophet. It is not however sheep in general, but one particular variety to which I wish at this time to direct your attention, a variety which has not been extensively introduced here as yet, but which I feel assured, when their many valuable qualities become known, will yet be found suitable to us, especially to the higher and more hilly sections of the country. We shall proceed to notice very briefly the history—numbers—management—quality, &c., of the Cheviot Sheep.

History—From time immemorial the Cheviot hills have produced a breed of sheep of large carcase, and valuable fleece, which, combined with hardiness and endurance of privation second only to the Blackfaced heath breed is justly ranked as the most valuable mountain breed in the kingdom.

Previous to the middle of the eighteenth century they seem to have been confined to the mountainous districts of the two counties of Northumberland and Berwick—approaching nearly to the sea at the latter place and reaching inland perhaps thirty miles.

From that period they spread gradually westward, and they now occupy not only the grassy hills of the Border counties but nearly the whole range of hills which have often been called the Southern Highlands of Scotland. Before the beginning of the present century the Cheviot breed of sheep had spread over nearly all the south of Scotland, and had there supplanted the black-faced breed, and though there have been pauses in the progress, when from bad seasons the farmers were deterred from changing, yet it may be said on the whole, that it has been regular and steady; and now in the hilly districts from the east to the west coast of the south of Scotland, they constitute three-fourths of the breeding stock, the other fourth being Black-faced.

In the Highlands of Scotland, north of the Forth the introduction of Cheviots began only about the commencement of the present century, by the late Sir John Sinclair, but they were generally introduced by farmers from Northumberland and Roxburghshire who took leases of some of the large mountains famous in Sutherlandshire, they are now found in great force over large portions of the north and west Highlands, where they have thriven amazingly, and in the hands of some spirited breeders have attained to as great perfection as in their native district. Indeed some of the five year old ewes from Sutherlandshire are admitted to be better than any others in Scotland. The Cheviot sheep has likewise been introduced to portions of Ireland and Wales, and of late partially into the Cape of Good Hope where by crossing they probably increase the quantity and quality of the carcase and wool. And there seems no doubt from their hardiness and highly improved qualities for producing both mutton and wool, that they may yet spread with great advantage over many portions of both Europe and America.

The number of this breed is estimated by Mr. Stewart Hillside, (in a valuable paper on this breed prepared by him for the Paris exhibition) thus: "By the statistical report of 1854 the number of sheep in the counties south of the Forth amounts to 2,231,438, of these we estimate the Cheviot including the immediate progeny of Cheviot ewes by Leicester rams at three-fourths or about 1,900,000. And north of the Forth the whole number being 3,133,299, the portion of the Cheviot breed may be 1,500,000. And there