

Selected.**COTSWOLD SHEEP.**

Having noticed recently many inquiries among our farming community as to the breed of sheep that will produce the greatest amount of wool and mutton with most profit, I propose laying before them some facts which may prove of interest, in which I hope to show that the Cotswold blood combines more of the desired wants than any breed of sheep known. They have been known in this country for a long time, and many good sheep were imported some years since, but, as a general thing, they have been much neglected, and the difficulty of procuring pure bred rams has caused them to be so blended into other blood, that, in many instances, it is impossible to trace any of their well known points. But the recent large demand for combing wool, and the increasing necessity of greater attention to mutton sheep has induced some of our enterprising stock raisers to make fresh importations, at considerable expense, of choice sheep from the best flocks in England.

The home of the Cotswold is in Gloucestershire, England, on the range called the Cotswold hills, a country as bleak and barren as can be found in England. And upon searching the records of this county, which was the earliest trading district, in native wool, in England, it is proved beyond a doubt that they were the original sheep of England.

"Where Cotswold hillocks famed for weighty sheep
With Golden Fleeces clothed."—[Camden's Britannia.]

England being the home of mutton sheep, our starting point must necessarily be there, and I am indebted to James Marsh Reed, Esq., for some valuable statistics, which are given elsewhere.

It is somewhat singular that so remarkable a race of sheep have never had the great patron that many others have had to bring them before the world, but, having always been in the hands of tenant farmers, who pursue sheep raising as a business, and solely for profit, they have remained upon their native hills until the increase in Agricultural shows brought them forward, and to this fact alone we are probably indebted to their present wide dispersion. Wherever exhibited, their immense size, perfect form, and grand appearance, attract the attention of all.

Their dispersion over the entire civilized

globe without this aid to push them, is the best guarantee of their value. Success, in this case, is the test of merit. The Cotswolds were formerly a local breed, but now they have found their way into every county in England, and nearly every foreign land. France and Germany have their established flocks. Ireland, Scotland, Sweden also, and the far off Cape of Good Hope, Australia and New Zealand, where they are in great favor. Before they were so fully appreciated, sales were only made in a private way, but as demand increased, it was found public sales were more satisfactory to both buyer and seller. The sales take place in July, in each year, and continue about three weeks, sometimes two and three sales in one day. Usually none but yearling rams are offered. The number sold every year reaches several thousand; of course here, as elsewhere, there is a very great choice in the flocks, only a few of the best breeders having kept their blood pure from all crosses of other Longwools.

With the increased demand the past few years, several large prices have been obtained.

In 1863 William Lane, Esq., of Broadfield farm, paid 230 guineas for the ram "Cotswold King," being the highest price ever paid for a Cotswold, (equal to \$1,200 in gold)

The average of the best flocks is equal to about \$125 to \$150 each in gold. The choice bringing sometimes equal to \$1000 gold and falling to \$50 for the poorest. The rams are mostly sold in England for crossing on other breeds; for this purpose they stand pre-eminent, as their undoubted purity of blood enables breeders to calculate with precision the result of a cross.

The use of Cotswolds so widely, and under every possible change of soil and climate, shows their adaptability to all seasons and temperature.

At one year old they are more forward probably than any other breed. Weathers at this age, or a little later, say Christmas days, frequently weighing 350 pounds, and at two years they are much heavier.

The character of the meat is not second to the justly famed South-Down. In fact many of the mutton sheep in England are produced from Cotswold rams and South-Down ewes, thus increasing the size and reaching earlier maturity.

As breeders the Cotswold ewes are

very prolific, besides being abundant milkers. In moderate sized flocks, with ordinary luck, 100 ewes will raise 125 lambs. The wool, from its length and strength of staple, is used in making what is called worsted goods—the wool being combed—not milled or felted. The demand for this wool cannot be supplied, and it will bring in our market from ten to twenty cents per pound more than any other. It varies in length from ten to fifteen inches, and the fleeces of a flock will average about twelve pounds each of unwashed wool. The shrinkage in washing and cleaning is very small as compared with most other wools.

They are probably one of the most hardy sheep known, on their native hills being always exposed to the winters without housing. Roots are grown largely far their maintenance in winter, while in summer they have ordinary pasture, and occasionally hurdled on green food, such as vetches, rape, &c. Very valuable experiments were made in England, in the space from 1850 to 1853, by Mr. J. B. Lawes, as to the breed of sheep that would produce the most meat with least amount of food. The sheep experimented upon were Cotswold, Leicester, Sussex, and Hampshire Downs, cross bred wethers and cross bred ewes. Every particle of food was charged to each lot, and returns accurately kept. Without going into details, the grand result was that, in comparison to Downs, the Cotswolds consumed the least food to produce a given amount of increase, and yielded more than half as much again wool. In comparison with the whole the Cotswolds gave, by far, the greatest increase weekly, being nearly one-fourth more than Hampshires, which were second in order of increase, and half as much more than Leicester, Sussex Downs and cross bred wethers and ewes. The Cotswolds and Leicesters cut the heaviest fleeces, both per head and per hundred pounds of live weight of animal Cotswolds taking the first rank, then Leicester, cross bred Hampshires and Sussex. The Cotswolds had more tendency to increase and fatten for the food consumed than any other.

Another experiment was tried by Lord Kinnaird, where Cotswolds were bred against Leicesters, the result being that from exactly the same quantity of food, the Cotswolds gained 17 shillings in value where the Leicesters only gained 11 shillings 8 pence farthing.