

large measure, obtained animals which renewed and kept up the quality and vigor of their own flocks, and I believe we will always stand in this relation to them.

While it is true sheep are at a discount now in America, the depression is certainly only temporary, and will be followed by increased demand and higher prices, and that in the near future. While high prices may not long be maintained, I believe we will settle down to a healthy trade at fair prices. But at the present time our farmers, and in some cases our breeders, are far too careless concerning the kind of ram they use, and where they get him. The time has come when each farmer or breeder should consider carefully which is the best breed for him to turn his attention to. The locality, the demand, and his own tastes, should govern this (in my mind his own tastes should be governed by the prospect of profit the separate breeds present).

#### SELECTING THE BREEDING EWES.

Having determined which breed he wishes to produce, he should then select the best of his ewes, whether grades or pure-breds, always keeping a certain type in view. The animal which will pay best is the one which will give the "greatest quantity of the best quality" of wool and mutton for the food consumed. While the wool should always be considered, the quantity and quality of carcass should be the prime consideration. In every flock there are sheep which, under exactly the same treatment, fatten much more readily than their fellows, and frequently produce more and a better quality of wool. In comparing these sheep with the others, to use Mr. Youatt's words, "we observe there is an evident difference in their conformation, a fitness of bone, a roundness and compactness of form, a condensation of substance and a beautiful proportion of every part. We find by observing, that there is more or less of this conformation in every sheep that outstrips the others," and by due thought and consideration we find that the rams which have "possessed most perfectly this peculiarity of form and accompanying aptitude to fatten," have produced us our most profitable sheep.

On a closer examination of all such finely proportioned sheep, we find that in handling they present as great a difference as they do to the eye. Mr. Youatt has aptly said, "That there is a softness, a springy, elastic softness, in distinction, from the hard, harsh, unyielding nature of the skin and the texture immediately beneath in the others, which, once impressed on the mind, can never be forgotten." Animals possessing these qualities are certain to mature early. The head should also be considered in weeding and selecting sheep. In Mr. Youatt's valuable work on sheep he says, "The head of the sheep constitutes one of the principal points by which his quality and profitability may be judged of. Compared with its general size it should be small, and particularly not wide between the eyes; too great width of forehead is an invariable proof of inaptitude to fatten, at least externally. The sheep with a large head will be a favorite with the butcher, because in proportion to the slowness with which he gets into condition will be the accumulation of fat within, even if there were no natural tendency to produce tallow; in other words, there will be more profit to himself than to the grazier or consumer. The head should be small, thin and short. It is possible, yet not probable, that this may be carried to too great an extent; but that head must be disproportionately small which can be considered as a proof of too great delicacy of constitution." There is considerable danger in lambing when the head of a ram is large, for the lamb will

generally possess the characteristics of its sire. Next to the carcass and constitution is to be considered the wool. A sheep of whatever breed, to have a good fleece, must have one abounding in *yolk* (that is, the yellow greasy substance found in a greater or less degree in the fleeces of all sheep, but especially abundant in the merino). The fleece should be of even quality throughout, or as nearly so as possible. All fleeces are divided into four qualities, but let these qualities be as near alike as possible. We always like a short leg well woolled down, and in nine cases out of ten such a leg will carry a hardy, profitable sheep. Select sheep with coats which look very oily and yellow when you open them. When there is a deficiency of yolk the fibre of the wool is dry and harsh and weak, and the whole fleece becomes thin and hanging; but where the required quantity is found, the wool is soft, oily, plentiful and strong, and among the Downs there is far less likelihood to peel or shed the fleece, as age approaches.

#### SELECTING A STOCK RAM.

Taking the above conditions as a standard, to which many good qualities might be added, having selected our ewes, rejecting all poor ones, and all over eight years old, let us procure a ram fully up to the standard. Let him be pure-bred, of the kind which we have determined to breed. Some farmers have so few ewes that they feel the expense of a pure-bred ram a burden. In such cases it is a good plan for two or three neighbors to join together and buy and use one. A plan we have known adopted, and it has worked well, is to thus buy one: No. 1 keeps the sheep during the first year, and his neighbors ewes during the time of service; next year No. 2 takes the ram to keep, also No. one's ewes during the breeding season. Three or four can unite and buy a good sheep, and thus materially and at small expense greatly improve their stock. Those who are breeding grades should buy a good and suitable sheep with a good pedigree for \$25. When I say a good pedigree I mean an animal purely-bred, one whose dam and grand-dam, sire and grandsire, at least, were good animals individually, with good pedigrees. Not only this, but be sure that your sheep is bred by a reliable man, a man of integrity and moral worth. I have had a good deal of experience with pure-bred stock, and have learnt from sore experience the necessity of only dealing with honest men. So much depends on the ram, the greatest care should be taken in selecting. Get your ram, if possible, from a soil and location as near like your own as you can. Do not let the change be too violent. If you procure a first-class sheep, and he proves himself a good getter, if he is in no way related to the ewes he is serving, you will bring your sheep faster to a certain type of excellence without injuring their constitution by keeping him three or four years in your service. He may serve his daughters and sometimes his grand-daughters with splendid results. The writer has had considerable experience in this line. Some of the best sheep we have ever seen have been produced in this way.

We think many of our leading breeders (we mean men who make a specialty of producing pure-bred stock for breeding purposes) often make great mistakes in going to the end of creation to buy their breeding rams.

Every one of us who have established flocks should have some, if not all, of our ewes descended directly from first-class animals selected from the flocks of leading British breeds; in fact, many of us have animals selected from such flocks; and in the flocks of Ontario may be found many prize-winning sheep at the leading British shows.

#### SECURING UNIFORMITY IN OUR FLOCKS.

Now, presuming these have been selected with care as to *quality* and pedigree, breeders possessing such males and females can produce their own breeding rams, and from them obtain, in nine cases out of ten, better results than they will get from imported animals obtained at heavy cost. This has been the experience of some of Ontario's foremost breeders. By judiciously selecting our rams from our best breeding stock we will build up flocks of more uniform appearance and higher collective, as well as individual merit. When buying an imported ram we may perhaps know something of his sire, but of the type of his dam it is seldom we know anything more than that she was bred by a certain breeder. She may be of the type we wish to produce, or she may be the very reverse. The same objection may apply to his sire also, for all the buyer knows generally speaking; but when we produce our own rams, while they are exactly the type we wish, we have the satisfaction of knowing that their ancestors for generations possessed the qualities we desire to impress on our flock. Considering these facts, is it not next to impossible to produce a uniform flock where we are continuously buying our males from different sources? while on the other hand, with the exercise of good judgment, a uniform and profitable flock can soon be built up by selecting from our own flock rams and carefully weeding each year our ewes and ewe lambs. There is no better authority than the author referred to previously. In his splendid work on sheep, page 109, he speaks of the above plan as follows: "On this principle of selection the breeder will continue to proceed, . . . and will ever be jealous of the introduction of foreign blood. The good qualities of his sheep, transmitted from one generation to another, are no longer accidental circumstances. They have become a part of the breed" (or family) "and may be calculated upon with the greatest degree of certainty. . . . It would be long ere the good qualities of a stranger would form an identical part of the sheep; and no animal will elsewhere thrive so well, or improve so rapidly, as on the pastures on which they and their ancestors have, generation after generation, been accustomed to wander. But after a while, with a considerable degree of certainty, in a small flock, and too frequently in a larger one, the sheep will continue to arrive early at maturity, and to fatten as kindly as before, or even more so; but they evidently are decreasing a little in size. They have also become less hardy. These are notes of warning; breeding has been carried on too long from close affinities; a little different yet congenial blood must be introduced. A race must be selected from a soil and kind of food not dissimilar to that on which the flock to be imported has been bred, although from a distance as great as convenience will admit. His points should resemble the home flock as much as possible, but should be their superior in as many points as possible, and their inferior in none. By dismissing the home-bred rams and using this stranger the purpose of the breeder will be completely answered—he will have infused tone and vigor among his sheep; while they keep their propensities to fatten, they regain their health, vigor and hardiness. The farmer can now go on breeding from selections from his own flock for a certain number of years. When experience will tell him that a little fresh blood is again needed . . . selection with judicious and cautious admixture is the true secret of improving a breed.

"The errors to be avoided are too long-continued and obstinate adherence to one family; and on the other hand, and even more dangerous, is violent crosses, in