

SHEEP AND SWINE.

THE LEICESTER BREED OF SHEEP.

Of the Leicesters there are three varieties, the original or Bakewell, the Border, and the Yorkshire. Of these the first has probably no direct representatives now in Ontario. Mr. Parkinson, of Eramosa, a very intelligent breeder of Leicesters, thus refers to the characteristics of the three varieties. He says:—

"The small, fine Leicester, which some people call the Bakewell, has been bred in-and-in with the object of obtaining fineness of quality, but it is too tender and too small a sheep for this country. But the Yorkshire Leicesters, for instance, in which breeders have largely retained the quality and symmetry of the Bakewells, and also their feeding qualities, early maturity, and an increased fleece of wool, are the class of Leicester sheep which I consider adapted to this country. The fine English Leicester is a good symmetrical sheep, but it is too small and tender to be a profitable sheep for this country.

"The same qualities which have been obtained to some extent by improving the Yorkshire Leicesters are found in the Border Leicesters, only perhaps the Border Leicester does not hold its wool so well, or carry so heavy a fleece as the Yorkshire Leicester; but they are both good mutton sheep, both come to a good size, and both are as hardy as any other long-wooled sheep, and they are as free from disease as the Cotswolds or the Lincolns, or any other long-wooled breed.

at, although there could be no doubt that they both had come from the Bakewell stock."

It matters not for any practical purpose whether selection only, or an infusion at some date, or even more than once, of Lincoln blood, may have made our Leicesters what they are. Either the Yorkshire or Border Leicesters have all the characteristics of a well-established breed. Mr. Parkinson's are the Yorkshire variety, which he thinks approximates more to the Lincoln than the Border Leicester. He describes the difference as follows:—

"The Yorkshire Leicesters are darker coloured on the head than the Border Leicesters; they are shorter in the neck, and they are better filled up in what we call the collar, that is, where the neck joins the shoulder, and the neck never rises so far above the body as it does in the Border Leicester; the neck is more on a line with the back. The Yorkshire Leicester is also, I think, a little fuller or more sprung in the fore ribs. Its fore legs should stand wide apart, and it should grow the wool nearly down to the knee. While the wool of the Yorkshire Leicester is not so thick set, they carry it closer up about their neck, and more underneath than the Border Leicesters."

In regard to wool, Mr. Parkinson says:—

"The reason why Leicesters do not keep up their wool so well as some other breeds, I think, is this, that mutton sheep are valued more highly in the old country than here, and it is generally found, by sheep men, that a sheep carrying a comparatively fine and light fleece will fatten faster than a sheep carrying a coarser and heavier fleece,

Mr. Iler, of Colchester (Essex), while stating that the Cotswolds and Leicesters have been the favourite breeds in that district, says that, to obtain a medium wool, the Southdown is now being used to cross the long-wooled sheep.

Mr. Andrew Elliott, of Galt, says:—"The Down and the Leicester make a remarkably good sheep to cross."

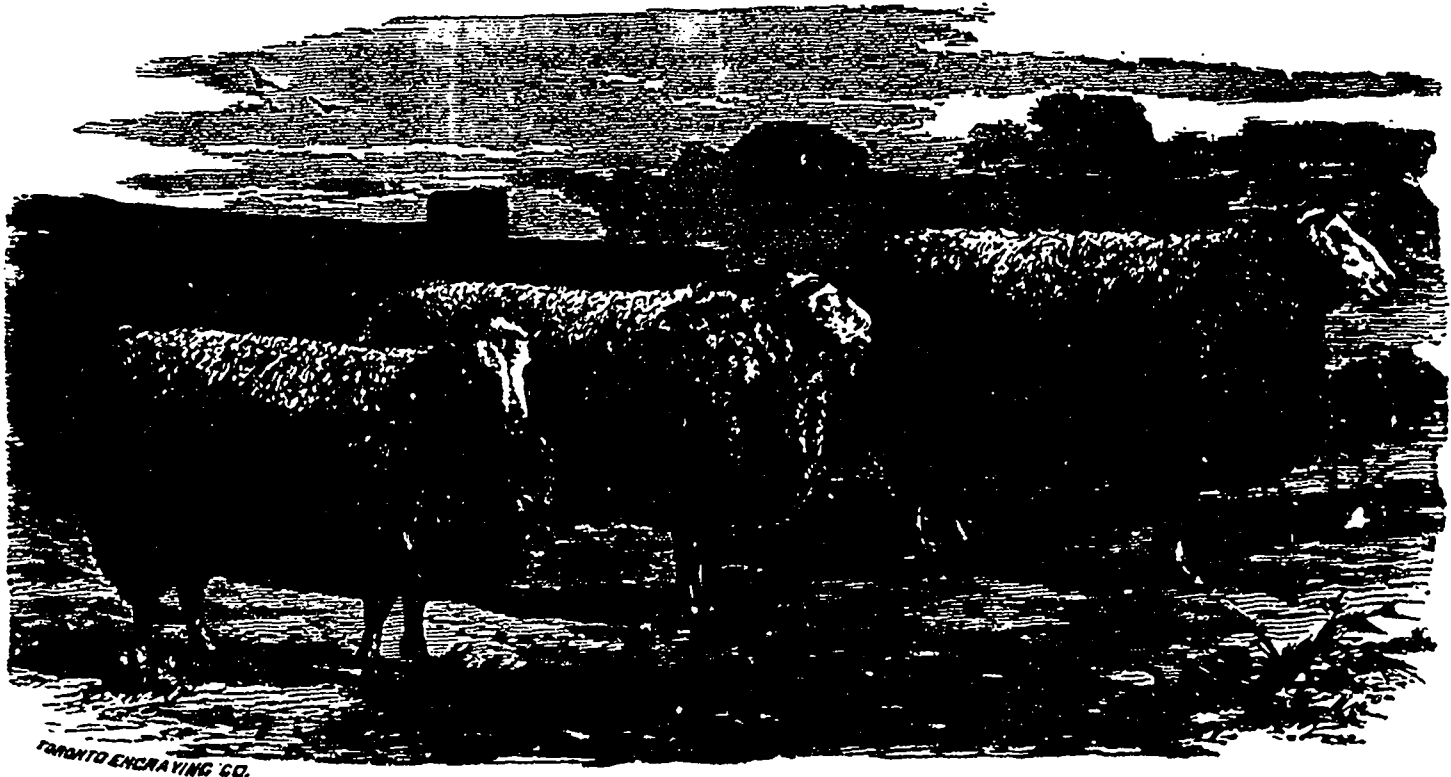
Mr. Douglass, of Blantyre (Grey), says of his experience with Leicesters:—

"Thoroughbred sheep are also being introduced, chiefly the Leicester, which is considered the best breed at the present time. I have been using the Leicesters for about twelve years. Before that I tried a cross with the Southdown. I put the Southdown to the common ewes. It seemed to do very well. I just used one for two years, and we thought they were getting too fine and small. I used common ewes for breeding purposes, and I am using a Leicester ram with those crosses. It was because there was a demand for long wool that made it desirable to have Leicesters. I find the Leicester is as hardy as the Southdown."—*Ontario Agricultural Commission.*

SHEEP ON THE FARM.

An exchange, in speaking of the raising of sheep and their value on a farm, says:—

"Upon lands fed by sheep the droppings



LEICESTERS.

"The Yorkshire and the Border Leicesters are about equal in size, and there is very little difference between them and the improved Lincoln, which has been improved by the use of Leicester blood—so much so, that a few years ago, when Professor Buckland was in England and was reporting for the press what he saw there, he testified that the difference between the improved Lincoln and the Leicester was so small as hardly to be distinguished; and according to Youatt's testimony, all the long-wooled sheep in England owe their improvement to the Bakewell Leicester."

The fine sheep of which the above plate is an illustration, are of the Border variety, and from the flock of Mr. Whitelaw of Guelph, one of the foremost sheep-breeders in Ontario.

Mr. Parkinson also mentions an incident referred to by a well-known author, showing how greatly judicious selection, independently of any out-crosses or new blood, may affect the race or breed. He says:—

"A man in in-breeding has certain objects that he aims at, and where he has material enough to select from, he is able in the course of a number of years, even by breeding from the same original flock, to produce quite a distinct character. Youatt gives an instance of two men who, there was no doubt, both bred from the Bakewell stock; one aimed at getting large size and a full fleece, and the other aimed at symmetry, which is generally accompanied by a small animal. Neither had any out-crosses, and each succeeded in giving the character to his flock which he aimed

and as there is more difference in the old country between the prices of wool and mutton than in this country, they have not regarded the loss of a little wool as being an offset to a sheep that would fatten quickly and come early to maturity. I think that the improvement in the Leicesters has been largely owing to the breeders pursuing a different object from what was followed immediately after Bakewell's time. Bakewell, who originated the Leicester breed of sheep in the middle of the last century, attempted to get a sheep that would mature early, without regard to size and weight of fleece, and breeders afterwards sought to obtain greater size, and, I think, used the Lincoln in doing so."

He goes on to say:—

"About two years ago my flock averaged a little over eight pounds of wool to the fleece; last year the average was between seven and eight pounds. If I made wethers of my ram lambs, and had as many shearlings as I had breeding ewes, it would increase the average weight of the wool, because shearlings—the lambs that come early, in the latter end of February or March—have more than a year's growth of wool, and being well fed, their wool keeps on growing. I don't think the wool of breeding ewes, after they have lambed, increases in weight, while the wool of young sheep does increase in weight. I have had shearlings that would average between eight and ten pounds a fleece. Between seven and eight pounds would be a general average."

Mr. Yuill, of Ramsay (Lanark), says:—

"I have been raising pure Leicester sheep for twelve years, generally wintering about thirty-five, but am now crossing them with the Lincoln as they were getting too fine in the wool and small in the body. I sell them for breeding purposes to neighbours. I can sell all I raise."

would be more evenly spread over the ground than they could be by any other domestic animal, and in particles so small as to be all, or nearly all, covered by the grasses and taken up by the soil, and not dried up by the sun and absorbed by the atmosphere, as is the case with the excrement of other cattle. The closeness with which sheep graze keeps down all weeds and bushes, and forms a close and firm turf. It is not uncommon, even now, to find some old sheep pastures which have been turned to meadows, and are among our most productive mowing lands. The amount of labour for working successfully a farm of any size is decidedly in favour of sheep. These animals require very little attention, except in the spring at shearing. They do not need stabling. Through the winter good comfortable sheds, with yards attached, where they can get plenty of fresh air, are all they require. In fact, most persons who keep sheep are apt to keep them too warm in winter. In the case of a large flock, shelter from the storm and wind is sufficient. Sheep will eat their