

The time will come, when, as was the case in village communities in the Tudor days, there will be village flocks ; viz : sheep belonging to several owners, fed, in turn, in each one's land in an arranged proportion, and in an agreed sequence ; and all of which will be entrusted throughout a set time to one shepherd, who will either be part owner, or will occupy the same position to those who do own, as the *bower* who hires a dairy of cows does to the men whose property the cows are. There seems thus to be quite a possibility of men becoming so skilful in the management of a flock in all its stages of produce viz : as ewes, fat lambs, store lambs, and store sheep, and fat sheep and fleeces, that they will be much sought after, and come to hold to the actual cultivators of land, the position of partners rather than servants ; and this condition will give to competent village lads of intelligence and character one new way of rising in the world.

It will of course be necessary, in order for any altered practice to succeed, that the very tone and character of farmers' minds be changed from that which they have hitherto displayed. But does anyone now doubt that this change has become inevitable, and has even now commenced ? The farming in the early part of the century which succeeded best, was that when each household consumed as little as possible of what not home grown.

The successful farming of the future seems as if it were going to be the production of specialties. One man will with his neighbours combine, in a district suitable for it, to turn out the very best cheese, or butter, or milk—neighbours joining hand in hand, not only to make, but also to put their wares to advantage on the wholesale markets. Another set of men will be found to combine, under such similar conditions of soil and climate which are favourable, to grow fruit largely, providing themselves with means to conserve what cannot immediately be taken off fresh, and to utilize all bye-products. A third set will assuredly make sheep a specialty—the best mutton or lamb, with the best price for the fleece. Now, combination will be found to be as generally necessary for this improved and increased yield of mutton as for the other sections of produce. A considerable range and opportunity of choice of diet is essential to the breeding flocks, and to ensure the early maturity of the produce ; and only early matured sheep will pay well. This cannot be had on

small farms, if each occupier stands alone, and it is plain that smaller farms are likely to pay better rents than the larger ones.

The principle of putting out sheep part of the year to keep upon alien farms has always partially obtained on Romney Marsh and in parts of Scotland. It is no new untried practice which I advocate. There seems to be no reason why the plan should not become much more general than it has hitherto been. It will be necessary to find neighbours willing to agree together as to the variety of sheep which is the one best suited to the district ; but this will soon be settled when there will be men of some substance or reputation who will undertake the management of a joint flock.

I do not believe for one moment that this suggestion means any condition of affairs which shall be better than the best of the older systems were, when each of these was in its true prime. But the past can never really recalled ; and all that can be done is to utilize, as new combinations, such principles of antecedent practice as are believed to remain sound.

Flocks which are joint properly have always been common in all parts of the world except in the England of the middle of the nineteenth century. And a plan which has such wide and such long experience in its favour cannot be without vitality. Anyway, it is plain that more sheep are wanted in England, and more sheep of a character which up to this time has never been common *outside* England ; and whilst bearing in mind the wise caution about “ not prophesying till you know,” I do not see how flocks can be very materially increased except by some method, which will bring to bear upon sheep breeding advantages obtained through combination and co-operation.

W. R. GILBERT.

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## The Orchard and Garden.

(CONDUCTED BY MR. GEO. MOORE).

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WINTER.

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Winter is now upon us and while it is a season of rest for all Nature it need not be one of inactivity for the farmer and gardener. Where a stock of cattle is kept a good deal of time must be spent