

friend Maurice found that the priest had been invited to supper. He accepted the invitation, and my readers will agree with me in thinking he was right, for,

"We sat down at seven. Madame triumphed in the *menu*: the peasants' bread soup, fried potatoes, *blanquette* of chicken; beefsteaks, a savoury meat pie; one of Madame's capons," (is the art of 'caponizing' lost in Canada?) "which she had brought to show me in the morning, being proud of its weight, salad, haricots, pastry from Clermont, three kinds of wine—all of Hilaire's own making, and a dessert of grapes, peaches, and little cakes."

Oh! decidedly the priest was right to come. And the conversation, too, seems to have been on a par with the supper. The only thing that was wanting was the constant presence of Madame;

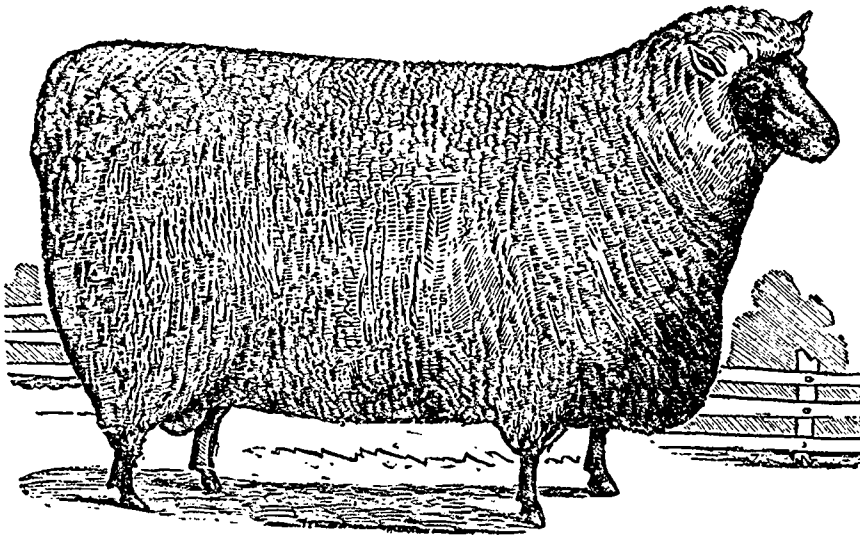
"She alone was silent and preoccupied. As every dish, even the vegetables, came to table separately and required a change of plates, she had much to do in going up and down stairs to and from the kitchen. I thought her better worth looking at than anything I had seen at the great Paris Exhibition. She had been up at four A.M., had gone to early service at the church at five, had done all the washing, clean-

ing, cooking, and all the work of every kind for the family; if for a moment her attention had not been wanting at the fire, and she had nothing else to do, her knitting had been in her hands. After twelve o'clock dinner, she had gone to the field to load up wheat, and had then come home to cook the supper. If Madame could be exhibited in England, it would be a sight that would surprise many of us, so broad-shouldered, so clean-limbed, so active, so sunburnt, so well-featured, so good natured, and so self possessed, and the work she does in the day should be exhibited with her."

The politics of this happy family were of the usual French character: the husband was, theoretically, a republican; the wife, probably for ecclesiastical reasons, an imperialist. But, according to Hilaire's views, there are republics and republics; as may be gathered from what follows;

"So long as society is divided into a rich class and a poor class, some of the latter having nothing at all—he was thinking of the great cities—republics will require a more general diffusion of virtue than is to be found at present."

In all his thoughts, Hilaire seems to have regarded virtue as the first requirement of a government, and of society in general, probably because he was a hard working peasant, and



3. Oxford Down Ram.

had something to lose. He did not complain of the amount of taxation he had to pay for his six hectares, viz. \$30 a year, nor of the wine tax of six cents a bottle. His religious opinions seem to have been what may be termed 'eclectic,' for he loved and revered the good Abbé who acted as *Vicaire*, as well as the old *Cure* who had been long superannuated; he was a most effective member of the choir, but his principal ideas seem to have been that, "virtue was only to be found among peasants," and that, "if a man did his duty, there was no reason why he should be afraid of God or of death."

As on these farms the wages of labour, the profits of cultivation, and the rent of the land, are all in the same hands, and are all spent on the spot, the population is very dense. The amount of traffic at the railway station was surprising, and all this was, almost entirely, local traffic. The surplus of the great amount of produce, extracted from the land by this dense agricultural population, is exchanged at Clermont for manufactured goods, and there maintains a correspondingly large number of people engaged in business. If all France is in the hands of men and women like the peasants

of Brenat, we need no longer wonder at the ease with which she paid off the terrible indemnity exacted by the Germans.

When the wheat had been all carried home, Hilaire began to break up his stubbles a few inches deep. This was to be followed by a deep ploughing of eighteen inches, with six bullocks, sometimes with eight. As no farmer keeps so many animals at a time, they unite their teams and plough each others land by turns. On the farm were to be seen growing wheat, beets, lucerne, and potatoes. The value of these crops is about the same, but the wheat generally is worth less than any of the other three. The lucerne is cut four times, and is kept, not very, but perfectly, clean.

"The beet will sell this year for \$100 an acre. The cost of cultivation for it had been about \$20 an acre. Wheat, with their careful cultivation, on the good soil of Brenat, yields on an average four quarters (32 bushels), or perhaps four and a half (36 bushels), to the acre."

The vineyard was on a small eminence some hundred feet high on the edge of the plain. Part of it was formerly broken rock without any soil, but the necessary earth had been carried there in baskets from the lower lands.