

ram. The consequence of this was that although the South Downs lost some hardihood, as it regarded both keep and weather, they obtained a carcass not materially diminished in value in the estimation either of the consumer or the butcher—coming somewhat earlier to the market, and yielding a fleece longer in its staple, finer in its fibre, with much of its former strength, and feltness too, and nearly doubled in weight—a true combing wool, valued by the manufacturer, having ready sale, and producing a fair remunerating price*.

Crosses between the New Leicester and the Dorset sheep have not been attempted on any extensive scale; but now that the middle wool finds so easy and profitable a market, the experiment will doubtless be resumed.

Still further in the west the Leicesters have been eminently useful. Both the Dartmoor and the Exmoor sheep owe much to them, with respect to earlier maturity, increased size so far as it is desirable, and a far more valuable fleece. Mention will presently be made of the Devonshire Hampton sheep, a cross of the native sheep with the Leicesters, and now become scarcely inferior to the Leicesters themselves.

In Cornwall the Leicester blood has been introduced with decided advantage, not only in improving the sheep that were obtained from Dartmoor and Exmoor, but in imparting a better fleece and a better carcass to the native breed on the downs and heaths of the farther extremity of the country; and that, without seeming to diminish in any material degree the hardihood by means of which they are so well adapted to the situation which they occupy.

In Somersetshire, their influence may be traced to the Bampton, extending from the borders of Devonshire to the river Parrett; and their form and character will not be overlooked in many of the flocks that wander on the Mendip Hills.

The cross of the Leicesters with the Ryelands has already been described. For a while it was of doubtful advantage—the carcass suffered in the fineness of the fleece and the flavour of the mutton. Now, however, that the Ryeland sheep has participated in the fate of all those of the short-woolled breed, and is no longer employed in the manufacture of fine cloth, the change produced in the fleece by the introduction of the Dishley blood is beneficial rather than injurious, as it better fits the wool for its new destiny, while it adds materially to the weight of the sheep. In the present state of sheep-husbandry and the employment of wool, a cross with the Leicester is advantageous to the farmer, as materially increasing his profit from both the carcass and the wool.

In the adjoining county of Worcester the Leicester sheep has also been at work, and profitably too, for the sheep farmer. In the north of the county the prevalent breed is composed of the grey-faced Shropshire and the Leicester; and, towards the centre and the south, of the Leicester and the Cotswold. This is likewise the character of all the Shropshire long-woolled sheep; while there is scarcely a short-woolled breed that has not some of the Leicester blood in its veins. In Staffordshire the case is little different. Those crosses which were considered to be of doubtful advantage before the short wool was either deteriorated in itself, or driven from the market by German and Spanish fleeces, are now regarded in a different light. It was often a dubious question whether the enlargement of the carcass was not dearly purchased by the altered character of the fleece, but in Staffordshire, as elsewhere, the pasture suiting the sheep, a double advantage is now evidently gained, and the farmer is becoming more disposed to take advantage of it.

Into South Wales, and even to the farthest extremity of it, the Leicesters have penetrated, and generally with success; but they have met with powerful antagonists in the Cotswolds, that, or crosses from them, inhabit the fertile valleys with which the southern parts of the principality abound.

In North Wales the Leicesters have been used with some, but not uniform success, in crossing the mountain breeds. Sir W.

* This cross was early tried by Dr. Will' for another purpose. The situation of his farm was favourable to the rearing of grass lambs. He reasoned that the disposition to fatten in the Leicester being greater than in the South Down, the lambs of the cross would go earlier to market than those of the pure South Down breed—that the same disposition to fatten would be extended to the ewes of the breeding stock; while the hardy constitution of the South Downs would enable the cross to live on less food than the pure Leicesters would require. The speculation seemed to succeed for a while, but was finally abandoned, because the best properties of these sheep were not brought fairly into play, or developed and improved by a cross for such a purpose.—*Agric. Mag.*, April, 1803.

Bulkeley and Mr. Pritchard employed them with decided advantage in the Isle of Anglesey. In other places the improvement was not so evident. In fact, there seems so much contrariety of form and habit between the Leicester and the mountain sheep that uniform or frequent success could scarcely be expected. The Cotswold sheep, although heavier than the Leicester, is more active and more patient both of cold and scanty food, and therefore more likely to produce a cross suited to such a country. The pure Leicesters were cultivated by some farmers, but they did not answer so well as crosses of them with the native breed; this was naturally to be expected.

In Lancashire, in Westmorland, and in Cumberland, the native short-woolled sheep have been crossed by the Leicesters with good benefit.

In Northumberland the black-faced sheep are numerous, and is the native country of the Cheviots; and from this district both breeds extend to the northern extremity of Scotland. The features of the country in an agricultural point of view are exceedingly different in various parts of Scotland, and the cattle and sheep that are bred in the different localities can possess but few qualities in common. The black-faced sheep can alone thrive, or even exist, on the heath and peat of the northern Highlands. The grassy and less exposed districts of this mountainous region will support somewhat heavier sheep, and there and in the central Highlands the Cheviots are cultivated with advantage; while the valleys and plains, and they are numerous and fertile, will bear the large Leicester breed.

It might, on first consideration, be questioned whether any cross was necessary between these,—whether the highland, or the upland, or the vale sheep could receive improvement by admixture with each other, and whether the only rational method of proceeding was not to keep the breeds pure and distinct, and improve them by careful selection alone.

Sir John Sinclair has recorded his opinion on this point. "The Dishley breed is perhaps the best ever reared for a rich arable district; but the least tincture of this blood is destructive to the mountain sheep, as it makes them incapable of standing the least scarcity of food." Experience, however, has proved, that both the highland and the upland sheep may be much improved by admixture with lowland blood; they may obtain the faculty of turning every particle of food to nutriment, and the early maturity, which constitute the value of the Leicester breed.

The breed itself cannot be changed. "I occupied a farm," says a Lammernuir sheep-master, "that had been rented by our family for nearly half a century. On entering it, the Cheviot stock was the object of our choice, and so long as we continued in possession of this breed every thing proceeded with considerable success; but the Dishley sheep came into fashion, and we, influenced by the general mania, cleared our farm of the Cheviots and procured the favourite stock. Our coarse, lean pastures, however, were unequal to the task of supporting such heavy-bodied sheep; and they gradually dwindled away in less and less bulk; each generation was inferior to the preceding one; and, when the spring was severe, seldom more than two-thirds of the lambs could survive the ravages of the storm." This was a sufficient illustration of the folly of placing certain breeds of sheep on situations which nature had not formed them to occupy; but it is another question whether there are not certain qualities belonging to sheep occupying a very different locality that may be advantageously imparted to other breeds.

The Cheviots occupy the upland districts—they are valuable in many particulars, but may they not obtain from another source a disposition to fatten more kindly and to arrive more early at maturity? They used to weigh from 17 to 20 lbs. per quarter, and to be ready for the market at three years old. They were crossed with the New Leicester sheep. They had sufficient inherent hardihood in them to thrive as well as ever on their native hills; they did not much increase in weight when they were in condition for the butcher, although some of them have been exhibited weighing 30 and 32 lbs. per quarter, but on the same pasture and stocked as closely as before, they arrived at maturity at less than two years old, and more frequently ready for the butcher at sixteen months. Nothing more needs to be stated in order to show their increased value, and that derived from the New Leicester cross. It is true that the wool underwent considerable change as well as the carcass. It was longer, heavier, and soon devoted to another purpose; but, before the revolution