

of 1855 the Emperor came himself to admire his beautiful animals, and congratulated him on his success. It was on that occasion that Mr. Webb offered the Emperor his prize ram, for which he had refused a fabulous sum. The Emperor accepted this splendid present, and some time after sent the generous breeder a splendid chandelabra in massive silver, representing an old oak under which is sheltered a group of horses at liberty.

The ovine race of Jonas Webb is now disseminated throughout the whole world. The French Government, the Emperor himself, and a great number of the proprietors of France, and of every other country in the world, have made numerous purchases of them. Amongst these last, Mr. Allen, the zealous director of the ancient colony of Petit-Bourg, has imported into France some of the finest types of Mr. Webb's flock.

I have stated above that after the Cambridge meeting, in 1840, Mr. Webb had determined not in future to exhibit any ewes. The following are the reasons that induced him to adopt this resolution:

It is well known that one of the most unfortunate effects produced by competition—perhaps the only one—is to display the tendency of certain breeders, and certainly almost all exhibitors, to load their animals beyond measure with fat, in order to give them a better shape. The consequence of this system is almost always fatal to young animals intended for reproduction, especially the females; and Jonas Webb had very soon acquired fatal experience of it. In preparing for the Cambridge meeting, he did what all the competitors practised—he fattened his sheep excessively. They undoubtedly bore off the honours, but he paid dearly for them. Out of nine ewes in lamb exhibited, four died after yearning dead lambs; and out of the products of the others, he saved only two or three lambs. At the Derby meeting, in 1843, the Babraham flock, as before, carried away the first prizes; but this new triumph was again fatal, for it occasioned the death of the two best rams intended for competition; they were killed before the meeting, their fat having rendered them useless.\* These two animals were two-shear sheep, and had received an honourable mention at the preceding meeting at Bristol, where Mr. Webb had refused to

let them for the season at £130, having intended to reserve them for the use of his own flock. During the season preceding the Derby meeting, they produced absolutely nothing, and they were consequently sent to the butcher. From that period Mr. Webb exhibited only ram lambs, for fear of destroying his best rams over two years old by excessive fattening, that was more fatal amongst them than amongst the lambs, which found in the abundance of food an element probably favourable to the development of their growth and the sustentation of their utmost activity.

Mr Webb's flock consists of seven hundred breeding ewes, with a proportionate number of lambs. The number of rams is about four hundred, of different ages. It is from these rams that the animals are selected that are let by Mr. Webb at Babraham every year, which are sent into every country in the world. This annual letting takes place in the month of July, a few days before the general meeting of the Royal Agricultural Society. Last year was the thirty-second letting. It is a proceeding regarded in England as a public event, and all the journals give an account of it with the most exact care, assembling from every country, and even from foreign countries. The sale begins about two o'clock. A circle is formed with ropes in a small field very near the mansion, where the rams are introduced; and an auctioneer announces the biddings, which are frequently very spirited. The rams to be let are exposed round the field from the first of the morning, and a ticket at the head of each pen indicates the weight of the fleece of the animal it contains. Every one takes his notes, chooses the animal he approves of, and can demand the last bidding when he pleases. The evening after the letting, the numerous company assembles under a rustic shed ornamented with leaves and agricultural devices. There tables are laid, round which are placed two or three hundred guests; and then commences one of those antique repasts described by Homer or Rabelais. In other respects, the house is opened to all comers. The tables groan under the weight of enormous pieces of beef, gigantic hams, &c., which have almost always disappeared before the commencement of the sale. From eight in the morning until two in the afternoon, tables laid out in the hall and dining-room are furnished only to be refurnished immediately, the end being equal to the beginning. The consumption of meat, bread, strong beer, and port and other wines, on these occasions, is almost incredible.

At the dinner, in the evening—when the

\*The translator's father (in 1807) purchased a splendid Leicester ram of a tenant of Mr. Coke's, after or at the Wolkham sheep-shearing, where it was exhibited. He put this ram to 100 ewes, and the produce was "one very poor lamb." The ninety-nine ewes filling were fattened the next winter for the butcher; and "Mr. Leicester," as the a-storatic ram was called by the abourers, met a similar fate, being like Jonas Webb's perfectly useless.