

early cabbages, beans, or early sweet-corn between the strawberry rows. Every weed should be kept out, and the ground be kept mellow with the hoe. The cabbages and the corn-stalks, when removed, should be cut off beneath the surface with a sharp spade, so as to leave no stumps or stubble. The beans should not be picked green, as this causes too much travel between the rows. If all goes well, there will be a good growth of young plants between the rows. In the spring a good many of these can and should be removed with a transplanting trowel, either for new planting, or for sale. The plants should not finally stand nearer than 6 to 8 inches apart, with a path 18 inches wide in the middle, between the planted rows, for convenience in gathering. Late in the previous fall, a thin covering of straw (preferably cut about 6 inches long) should be spread over the beds. The plants come through this cover in the spring, and the straw keeps the fruit from being soiled. I should have said that, in selecting the site of a strawberry plantation, a spot should be chosen where the snow lies well in winter. This is very essential. As a rule, the valleys of brooks, otherwise preferable, are preferable in this respect also.

If strawberries must be grown in an open field, I would advise that currants and gooseberries be grown with them. They should be set in rows 30 feet apart, and 4 or 5 feet a sunder in the rows. These, which may be set out when the sod is first broken, should be 3 years planted when the strawberries are set. I do not find any profit in taking more than one crop from each setting of strawberry plants. After picking is over, I mow the tops and plow the beds under, generally getting a good crop of English turnips from the ground, by the aid of a little superphosphate. The next spring, the land is heavily fertilized again, and re-planted to strawberries as before. One row in five should always be of the Wilson, to furnish pollen for the rest. When grown between rows of currants or gooseberries, as above advised, I set the row of Wilsons in the middle of the bed, with 2 rows of pistillate plants on each side, and keep the runners clipped so as not to allow the plants to intermix. It answers equally well, when there are no bushes grown between, to plant a bed of two rows of Wilson, with beds of 5 or 6 rows of a pistillate sort on each side.

The proper gathering and marketing of strawberries is an important part of the business. Here, at Newport, we have two large factories of berry baskets, which are sold for the best full quarts, at about \$6 per thousand. These full quarts are the most profitable, always. They should be well heaped in picking, so that when they reach market they will be at least level-full. A slack filled basket is very hard to sell, and often stays on hand until the fruit spoils on the dealer's hands. A short-measure basket is avoided by all, if those of full measure can be found. A good, strong crate holding 32 quarts is the most popular, though some are using a crate of 24 quarts, as easier to handle and less likely to be broken.

In gathering the berries, it is best to begin early in the morning, and dew, unless very heavy, need not be regarded: yet we must not begin picking after a rain until the wet is well dried off. Care should be taken that every ripe berry is picked, but none that are not ripe. Each berry should be picked singly, with finger and thumb, without bruising, and as carefully placed in the basket. Where the business is carried on on a large scale, the picker has a belt with a catch to which he (or she) can attach the basket, leaving both hands free for picking. A little stand is given to each picker, holding four baskets, and when this is filled it is carried to the packing shed, where four more empty baskets are supplied, and a ticket given for the four full ones. Settlements are made either every Saturday or at the end of the season. The latter is the best way. The person who puts up the baskets

in the crates should do so carefully, and attend also to the addressing them and preparing them for shipment. He, or a field superintendent, should also see that the pickers do their duty in properly filling the baskets. To do this he must occasionally reverse a basket, as it is brought in, into another, to see that no tricks are played. Many other points in the management of a large strawberry plantation will be suggested by experience, and much of this is recorded, from time to time, in the horticultural press, of which every fruit-grower should be a student.

Newport, Vt.

### Keeping Sheep for Profit.

**EDS. COUNTRY GENTLEMAN**—Farmers who keep sheep are greatly troubled, just as wheat growers are, by the competition of the Western producers whose land costs less per acre than the annual interest on the cost of a farm. But the shepherd has a very great advantage over the wheat grower upon high valued farms, and is not nearly so squeezed by the competition. It is a fact, quite plain to every one who can understand figures, that the Western and North-western wheat growers have reduced the price of wheat all over the world, so that the wretched ryot of the East Indies is severely taxed to live in competition with the wheat growers of Minnesota, Dakota, and California.

By somewhat similar circumstances, sheep owners of the farming States from the Missouri river to the Atlantic, are just now compelled to consider whether or not they are to suffer from an equally severe competition, and to produce wool at a loss or abandon their flocks. I know from experience that wool can be produced on the Plains, and on land that is all purchased and owned and provided with every convenience for keeping sheep, for 12 cents a pound; the charges against the wool including every expense, even to a 10 per cent. charge for deterioration of plant and other perishable property, and estimating that the ewes are kept until they die, and are then lost. This leaves the sheep ranchman a handsome profit when he sells his wool for 20 cents, and gets a fleece of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  pounds on an average from his improved sheep. The New-Mexico ranchmen can do better than this, selling their wool for 12 cents a pound, and getting with one-fourth of the outlay a profit equal to that of the Kansas shepherd, or by percentage about double. Now can a farmer keep sheep and live in competition with these Western producers, or in other words, at what cost can he produce wool east of the Missouri river?

It is very clear that the farmer cannot keep a flock profitably on pasture in the summer, and hay and grain in the winter, and compete successfully with the Western shepherd. It will occur to some readers, just here that the farmer has the advantage of a good market for mutton; but the largest proportion of wool produced is grown upon sheep that have a very small value for mutton, and this cannot be taken into account excepting as an incidental advantage in some cases. But even this is offset by many extra expenses which nearly always sweep away any advantage which may exist. It is simply a question of wool and increase of flock.

It can scarcely require figures to show that a farmer cannot keep sheep with profit on land worth \$40 an acre, when 2 acres are required to carry 5 sheep through the year. This estimate is made on the basis that one acre of pasture, and one acre of crops will support 5 sheep. The return from  $2\frac{1}{2}$  sheep per acre would amount to \$3.75 for wool, taking 5 lbs. for the fleece and 30 cents for the price, and \$5 for two lambs, equal to 80 per cent. increase. Against this \$380 would meet interest and other charges on the land &c., and \$500 is a small allowance for other expenses. The account, thus im-