

of a succession of open downs, with very few enclosures. On these downs a certain breed of sheep has been cultivated for many centuries, in greater perfection than elsewhere; and hence have sprung those successive colonies, which have found their way to every part of the kingdom, and materially benefitted the breed of short-wooled sheep wherever they have gone.

The perfection of carcase which the South Down at present exhibits, is owing to the skill of that distinguished sheep-breeder, Mr. John Ellman. He says, "This breed was formerly of a small size, and far from possessing a good shape, being long and thin in the neck, high on the shoulders, low behind, high on the loins, down on the rumps, the tail set on very low, perpendicular from the hip bones, sharp on the back, the ribs flat, not bowing, narrow in the fore-quarters, but good in the leg, although having big bone."

The improvement effected by Mr. Ellman, was not from any admixture of foreign blood, "for even the cross with the Leicester," says Youatt, "was a failure, and the promised advantages to be derived from the Merinos were delusive." It resulted, mainly, from the practice of the true principles of breeding: a system of choice selection from male and female. The introduction of turnip husbandry was another very important agent, which essentially promoted thrift and size, and an early development of form. "They are now," says Mr. Ellman, "much improved both in shape and constitution. They are smaller in bone, equally hardy, with a greater disposition to fatten, and much heavier in carcase when fat. They used seldom to fatten until they were four years old; but it would now be a rare sight to see a pen of South Down wethers at market more than two years old, and many are killed before they reach that age."

The following description of a perfect South Down, from the pen of Mr. Ellman, will be valuable to the Canadian breeder, as well as guard the ignorant from imposition:—

"The head small and hornless; the face speckled or grey, and neither too long nor too short. The lips thin, and the space between the nose and the eyes narrow. The underjaw, or chap, fine and thin; the ears tolerably wide, and the forehead well covered with wool, and the whole space between the ears also.

"The eye full and bright, but not prominent. The orbits of the eye, the eye-cap, or bone, not too projecting.

"The neck of a medium length, thin towards the head, but enlarging towards the shoulders where it should be broad and high, and straight in its whole course above and below. The breast should be wide, deep, and projecting forwards between the forelegs, indicating a good constitution, and a disposition to thrive. Corresponding with this, the shoulders should be on a level with the back, and not too wide above; they should bow outward from the top to the breast, indicating a springing rib beneath, and leaving room for it.

"The ribs coming out horizontally from the spine, and extending far backward, and the last rib projecting more than the others; the back flat from the

shoulders to the setting on of the tail; the loin broad and flat; the rump long and broad, and the tail set on high and nearly on a level with the spine. The hips wide; the space between them and the last rib on either side as narrow as possible, and the ribs, generally, presenting a circular form like a barrel.

"The belly as straight as the back.

"The legs neither too long nor too short. The fore-legs straight from the breast to the foot; not bending inward at the knee, and standing far apart both before and behind; the hocks having a direction rather outward, and the twist, or the meeting of the thighs behind, being particularly full; the bones fine, yet having no appearance of weakness, and of a speckled or dark colour.

"The belly well defended with wool, and the wool coming down before and behind to the knee, and to the hock; the wool short, close, curled, and fine, and free from spiky projecting fibres."

This breed will sustain themselves with occasional short keep, and endure hard stocking equal to any other; and their early maturity is but little inferior to the new Leicesters, the flesh finely grained, and of peculiarly good flavour. Blacklock says "it is unadapted for bleak situations, but sufficiently hardy and active for a low country."

The average weight is from 15 to 18 lbs. a quarter; but on the authority of Mr. Youatt, Mr. Grantham exhibited a pen of three sheep at Smithfield in 1834, one of them weighing 283 lbs.; the second 286 lbs.; and the third 294 lbs.

The average weight of the fleece was, in 1800, 2 lbs.; and the staple at that time very short: it has now increased to 3 lbs.; and the lowland South Down, from better keep, shears from 3½ to 4 lbs. The staple has increased from 1½ to 2 inches in length to from 3 to 4 inches. A picklock fibre is the 1-600th part of an inch in diameter, and the serrations 2080 to an inch.

A serious objection has always existed against English South Down wools, from the brittleness of the fibre, originating in the chalky nature of the soil on which a large proportion of this breed are kept. Formerly much of this wool was employed in the manufacture of army cloths; but its changed character, within a few years, has also changed its uses, and it is now converted into flannels, waizes, and worsted goods of almost all descriptions. The paucity of serrations will prevent its uses beyond combing purposes, for which it is now highly prized.

There are no sheep more healthy than the South Downs. They seldom suffer from the hydatid on the brain, nor are they as much exposed to rot as the sheep in many other districts. Their general health is supposed to be much connected with frequent change of food, and their daily journeys to and from the fold.

The South Downs have borne witness to a mania for their possession, like the Merinos and Saxons in the United States. In 1800, two of Mr. Ellman's rams were sold to the Emperor of Russia, in order to try the effect of a cross on the Northern sheep, for one hundred and fifty guineas each. When Mr. Ellman retired from public life, in 1829, his flock