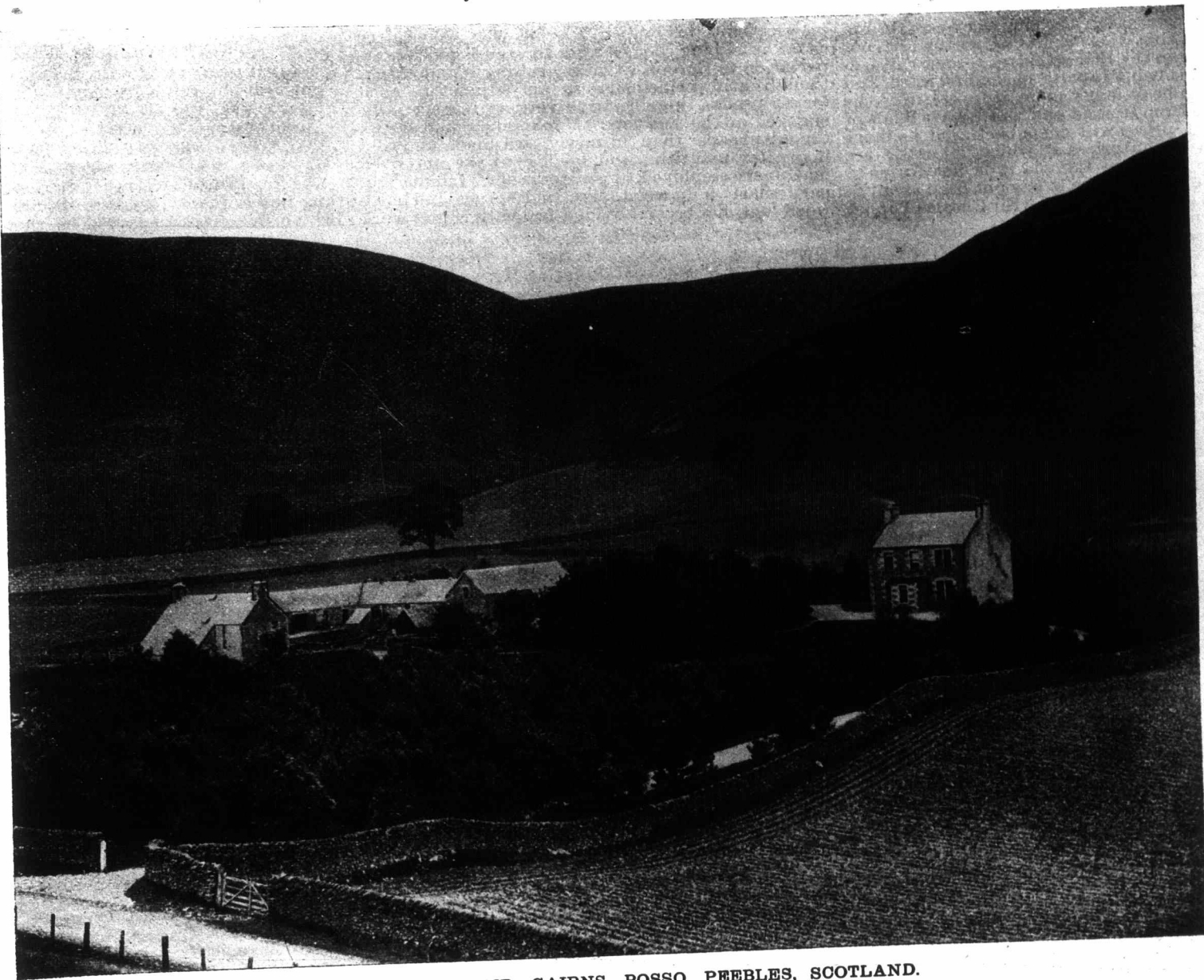


Grain-growing, green cropping, and cattle and sheep feeding are characteristic features of what in the palmy days of agriculture in this country were regarded as the most highly favored parts of

6d.; oats, 18s.; and beans, 30s. 3d. In the first week of November the corresponding figures were: Wheat, 31s. 4d.; barley, 24s. 5d.; oats, 19s. 8d.; beans, 31s. 7d. These figures will suffice to show that a notable advance has been made in grain prices, but this does not by any means counterbalance the losses made by this particular class of farmers during the past twenty months from the low prices of potatoes and fat cattle and sheep. The latter, in very many cases, were fed during the winter of 1895-96 for nothing, and even less, and store cattle were so dear and fat so cheap that next to nothing was realized from this source either. It is not easy to see how matters in this connection can be much mended unless prices advance or rents be still further reduced, because the working expenses on these farms are very high; and while almost all kinds of farm produce have fallen in price during the past twenty years, by the same token wages and working expenses have greatly increased. These things form a perplexing problem, and the situation has not been improved by the prolonged and very bad harvest of 1896. The white crops this year are very luxuriant, but the long-continued wet weather destroyed immense quantities of excellent barley, and even the wheat and oats did not escape. The advance in the price of wheat has come very opportunely; it will relieve present

to the increase in the imports of foreign second-class mutton, against which these cheaper classes of home mutton came into competition, and the notable change in public taste in the matter of home-fed mutton. Formerly a very large trade was done in three-year-old widders from the higher grazings in the Highlands, but this trade is now a thing of the past, and those who followed it have had to adopt other lines of farming. The chief substitute for the old wedder trade is breeding and feeding cross-bred lambs. The great market for Blackface cast ewes—that is, six-year-old ewes—is this trade. They are sold to farmers who cross them with a Border Leicester tup, and they then bring what is called a cross-bred lamb, in contradistinction to a half-bred lamb, which is the produce of a Border Leicester tup and a Cheviot ewe. These cross-bred lambs make excellent eating, either as lambs or hoggets, as they possess the toothsome flavor of the real Blackface, with much more rapid maturing qualities than it possesses. Hence, they are in great favor on the better kinds of land, as it is generally believed that they leave more money than the pure Blackface. On that point, however, there is some difference of opinion. It might have been supposed that the growing extent of this particular kind of business would have led to increased values for Blackface ewes, but there was an evident

"Land of the Mountain and the Flood."



THE FARM OF MR. GAIRNS, POSSO, PEEBLES, SCOTLAND.

Scotland. The Lothian, Berwickshire, and Perth, Fife and Angus farmers in these days were wealthy men, keeping their carriage and pair, and riding to the hounds three days a week. From 1879 onwards, with some occasional variations, the lot of such gentlemen, however, has not been a happy one. It took a deal of money to stock their farms; their expenses were heavy and their rents high. No outsider could obtain a footing in the Lothians at that time, and the West of Scotland man at least who went there felt himself very far from home. Now all this is changed; many of the Western men have gone East, and most of them are doing so well that we have not met anyone who indicated a desire to come back. Their mode of living is much more modest than that of their predecessors, and they are seldom seen in the hunting-field. The rent of land is in most cases reduced, and in consequence of the combined frugality, hard working and reduced expenditure of these new tenants, and most of them have made a good change, and not a few of them have made money. The year now drawing to a close would have been almost as disastrous for most of these cropping and feeding farmers as its immediate predecessor (and that was bad enough in all conscience) but for the advance in the price of wheat, which is rather notable. The average prices of the various kinds of grain in the Edinburgh market at midsummer this year were these: Wheat, 24s. 9d.; barley, 22s.

difficulties, but it cannot recover lost ground. In the South of England the drought of the early summer months played havoc with what cereal crops had been sown; and although the North of England had not so much to complain of, even there things might have been improved.

THE IRISH FARMER

is the man who has all round had a good year in 1896. He is, as a rule, a cattle breeder, and his gain is the Scottish feeder's loss, for the high price of store cattle has done much to help him. He has much more favorable land laws, much less taxation, and altogether has had little to complain of as compared with his neighbors on this side of the water. He grows little wheat, and not much crop of any kind except potatoes, and these have not been a failure this year.

THE SHEEP BREEDER'S LOT

this season has been somewhat peculiar. Phenomenal prices have been recorded for rams of almost all the noted breeds, and yet overhead the prices of sheep and lambs have fallen. Two Lincoln rams were sold at 350 gs. apiece; a Border Leicester ram was sold at £210; a Shropshire ram made 165 gs., and a Blackface ram sold for £150. Good rams, in fact, of all kinds were making very satisfactory prices; but, on the other hand, both ewes and lambs suffered a fall in price. This was largely due

determination on the part of feeders all through the autumn sales to have that class cheaper than they were in 1895, and the sellers had to submit to the reduction which most foresaw was inevitable.

HORSE BREEDING

continues in a quiet way. There is no excitement or enthusiasm in the Clydesdale world, except in the connection already commented on. Still, breeders continue to follow out this calling, and fair prices are made for useful stock when brought to the hammer. Hackneys continue to make headway in Scotland, and are more generally bred than they used to be. Now, however, the foreign market is not so lively as it was, and there is a lack of the necessary impetus to insure extra good prices. The best sale of the season was that of Mr. Waterhouse, in Kent, about midsummer. He had first-class stock, and they sold uncommonly well. A big fight is in progress over the Hackney in Ireland. A commission is sitting to investigate the whole subject of horse breeding there, and the chief point in dispute is whether the introduction of the Hackney will tend to lower the reputation of the Irish hunting horse? The theory of some is that the Hackney should be kept out of the country altogether, as there is always the risk of the blood of their favorite hunters being contaminated. The advocates of the Hackney maintain that there is room