

free from infirmity, and enjoying to his last hour the use of his faculties.

In this family the career of agriculture has been an heir-loom, transmitted from generation to generation. Jonas Webb has four brothers, who, like himself, are farmers. He has four sons, of whom three also are agriculturists. One of them, the oldest, succeeded his grandfather, and conducts the farm so long occupied by the old patriarch.

It was in 1822 that Jonas Webb commenced his agricultural career, by taking the Babraham Farm, where he has always remained. Trained in the school of his father, who was already noted for his intelligent method of rearing the old Norfolk breed of sheep, he soon attached himself to the breeding of Southdowns, which he immediately began to improve. Following the principles of Bakewell, the object he had in view was to form animals for meat. Before his time, the ovine race of the country was the old Norfolk breed, like that which his father reared. Mr. Webb rejected it as incapable in itself of improvement; for all the efforts of his predecessors had failed. This race had the dorsal spine projecting, the sides flat, the reins narrow, the chest little developed, and the thigh short, and far removed from the ham. It, therefore, presented none of the conditions essential to the constitution of the races for the butcher. The results already obtained by Mr. Ellman, the example of the Earl of Leicester, who had also not only rejected the Norfolk breed, but even that of Bakewell, contributed, probably, to determine him in choosing the Southdowns in preference to every other breed. But what exercised the greatest influence over his choice were the numerous experiments made by his father on a great number of different races. The result of these experiments was to convince the son, that the Southdown breed produced per acre more meat, and wool of a better quality, than any other on nine-tenths of the surface cultivated in England, where it is the custom to fold the sheep on the land, especially where the soil is not naturally fertile.

Urged by this conviction, and strong in the experience he had acquired under his father, Jonas Webb went into the county of Sussex, the native country of the Southdowns, and there he purchased, regardless of price, the best rams and ewes he could procure. Such is the origin of that famous flock of Babraham Downs; there were no others, for Mr. Webb assures us himself, that he has never since introduced into the blood of his stock any other element of reproduction, and that all his Southdowns

came direct, and without mixture, from the first breeders that he purchased in 1822. Thus the merit of having fixed the eminent qualities by which the Babraham flock is distinguished belongs exclusively to Mr. Webb himself. For having taken his elements from the aboriginal race, as it then existed on the Sussex Downs, he has been enabled, without having recourse to other rams than those of his own flock, that is to say, by a process essentially in-and-in, to create first, and then to fix in his products, qualities till then unknown in that race, and which no other has yet equalled. It was in 1840 that Mr. Webb began the series of triumphs in the competitions. That year the Royal Agricultural Society held its annual exhibition at Cambridge, and Mr. Webb sent thither some of his animals, which gained for him the first prize for sheep and lambs intended for breeding, and also that for ewes fifteen months old. At this meeting, all the short-woolled breeds competed with each other, and it is the only time that Jonas Webb has exhibited ewes from his flock. I shall give presently the reasons which induced him not to exhibit his sheep for competition. Since that period he has only exhibited rams.

To enumerate all the prizes carried off by Mr. Webb since 1840, would be too long and monotonous a task. It is sufficient to say that since that period he has received only two checks in the competition where he has exhibited. The first took place at the great Exeter meeting, in 1850, and the second at Chelmsford, in 1856. On these two occasions he had reason to think that the decision of the judges was not founded on a just appreciation of the qualities of his animals, and he determined to present his beaten rams at the following meeting, and in the two instances the results fully avenged him for his defeat. In 1851 he presented the unsuccessful of the Exeter meeting at that of Windsor, and took the first prize. In 1857 he exhibited at Salisbury the vanquished at Chelmsford, with a similar result; that is to say, he triumphed there also, over every opponent. Since 1851, after his first revenge, he exhibited no more till 1856, at Chelmsford, where, as I have just said, he was beaten by Mr. Overman. This defeat occasioned his revenge at Salisbury, in 1857; but since that period he has no more competed.* In 1855 and 1856, we know with what success he presented himself at the Universal Exposition at Paris. At that

*Mr. Webb re-appeared at Warwick, where he was beaten by the Duke of Richmond.—
Ed. M. L. E.