

known by the water running entirely clear, each washer seizes his own by the fore parts, plunges it deep in the vat, and taking advantage of the rebound, lifts it out, setting it gently down on its breech, on the platform. He then, if the sheep is old or weak, (and it is well in all cases,) presses out some of the water from the wool, and after submerging the sheep to a process, presently to be adverted to, lets it go. There should be no mud about the vat, the earth not covered with sod being graveled. Sheep should be kept on clean pastures, from washing to shearing—not where they can come in contact with the ground, but on logs, &c.—and they should not be driven over dusty roads.

The washers should be *strong and careful men*, and protected as they are, from anything but the water running over the sides of the vat, they can labor several hours without inconvenience, and without drinking whiskey until they cease to know whether a sheep is well washed or well treated, as was the bad old fashion. Two hundred sheep will employ two expert men not over half a day, and I have known this rate much exceeded.

It is a great object, not only as a matter of propriety and honesty, but even as a matter of profit, to get the wool clean, and of a snowy whiteness. It will always sell for more than enough extra, in this condition, to offset against the increased labor and the diminution in weight.

SHEARING—Is always done in this country on the threshing-floors of our barns, sometimes on low platforms, but more commonly on the floor itself. The 'bay' is divided by a temporary fence, one part being used for the yarding of the sheep, and the other for doing up the wool, &c. The inclosure should communicate by a door, with another and larger yard outside of the barn. Both of these should be well littered down with straw, and fresh straw thrown on occasionally, to keep the sheep clean while shearing. No chaff, or other substances which will stick in the wool, should be used for this purpose. When the dew has dried off from the sheep, on the morning chosen for shearing, a portion of the flock sufficient to last the shearers half a day, is driven into the outside yard, and a convenient number into the bay. An assistant catches the sheep, lifts them off from the floor, as already directed, and delivers them at the door, through the 'breastwork,' to each shearer. The shearer, before taking the sheep, picks off any loose straws sticking to its wool, and if dung adheres to any of the feet, brushes it off with a little besom formed of twigs, hung up near the door, for that purpose. The shearer then takes the sheep to his stand, and commences shearing.

The floor or tables used for shearing, should be planed or worn perfectly smooth, so that they will not hold dirt or catch the wool. They all should be thoroughly cleaned, and, if necessary, washed, preparatory to shearing. It is the catcher's business to keep the floor constantly swept, dung removed, &c. Having a new stand or place swept for the shearer who has finished his sheep, he catches him another, and then clears up the stand previously occupied. He first lifts the fleece, gathers it up so that it shall not be torn or drawn asunder, and turning his arms so as to invert it, (i. e. bring the roots of the wool downward,) deposits it on the *fold-ing-table*. He then picks up the 'fibs' (small, loose locks) left on the floor, which are deposited in a basket or on a corner of the table. Lastly, he sweeps the spot clean, to be again occupied by the shearer. An active fellow will tend four shearers, and do up the fleeces.—But he should not be hurried too much, or he cannot give sufficient time to doing up. A small boy or two, are handy to pick up fibs, sweep, &c.

If there are any sheep in the pen, dirty from purging or other causes, they should first be caught out, to prevent them from dirtying the others.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to give intelligible practical instructions, which would guide an entire novice in skilfully shearing a sheep. Practice is requisite. The following directions from the American Shepherd,* are correct, and are as plain perhaps, as they can be made:

"The shearer may place the sheep on that part of the floor assigned to him, resting on its rump, and himself in a posture with one (his right) knee on a cushion, and the back of the animal resting against his left thigh.—He grasps the shears about half-way from the point to the bow, resting his thumb along the blade, which affords him better command of the points. He may then commence cutting the wool at the brisket, and proceeding downward, all upon the sides of the belly, to the extremity of the ribs, the external sides of both thighs to the edges of the flanks; then back to the brisket, and thence upward, shearing the wool from the breast, front, and both sides of the neck—but not yet the back of it—and also the poll or fore part, and top of the head. Now the 'jacket is opened' of the sheep, and its position and that of the shearer, is changed, by being turned flat upon its side, one knee of the shearer resting on the cushion, and the other gently pressing the fore quarter of the animal, to prevent any struggling. He then resumes cutting upon the flank and rump, and thence onward to the head. Thus one side is complete. The sheep is then turned on to the other side, in doing which, great care is requisite to prevent the fleece from being torn, and the shearer acts as upon the other, which finishes. He must then take his sheep near to the door, through which it is to pass out, and neatly trim the legs, and leave not a solitary lock anywhere, as a harbour for ticks. It is absolutely necessary for him to remove from his stand, to trim, otherwise the useless stuff from the legs becomes intermingled with the fleece-wool. In the use of the shears, let the blades be laid as flat to the skin as possible, not lower the points too much, nor cut more than from one to two inches at a clip, frequently not so much, depending on the part and compactness of the wool."

In addition to the above, I would remark that the wool should be cut off as close as conveniently practicable, and even. It may be cut too close, so that the sheep can scarcely avoid 'sun-scald,' but this is very unusual. If the wool is left ridgy and uneven, it betrays that want of workmanship which is so distasteful to every good farmer.† Great care should be taken, not to cut the wool twice in two, as inexperienced shearers are apt to do. It is a great damage to the wool. It is done by cutting too far from the point of the shears, and suffering the points to get too elevated. Every time the shears are pushed forward, the wool before cut off by the points, say a quarter or three-eighths of an inch from the hide, is again severed. To keep the fleece entire, so important to its good appearance when done up, (and therefore to its saleableness,) it is very essential that the sheep be held easily for itself, so that it will not struggle violently. To hold it still by main strength, no man can do, and shear it well. The posture of the shearer should be such, that the sheep is actually confined to its position, so that it is unable to start up suddenly and tear its fleece, but it should not be confined there by severe pressure or force, or it will be constantly kicking and struggling. Heavy-handed, careless men, therefore always complain of getting the most troublesome sheep. The neck, for example, may be confined to the floor, by placing it between the toe and the knee of the leg, on

* Pages 179, 180.

† I hold that a man is not half a farmer, who has not a dash of the æsthetic mixed up with his utilitarianism. Profit should not often be sacrificed to appearances, but where they are strictly compatible, he who disregards the latter, betrays a sordid and uncultivated mind.