

Hampshire-Downs at Islington, Eng.

At the Christmas Show of the Smithfield Club, these sheep again made their mark. The question of their superiority as regards early maturity may now be considered as definitively settled. It is very much to be regretted that no man, no body of men, has shown sufficient interest in the welfare of the agricultural population of the province to import a few of these most useful sheep. The price is not out of the way: a good ram lamb can be bought for £10, and ewes would cost about £4 10 a piece. Not show sheep; but honest farmers' stock. The ram should, of course, be selected from a family not too nearly related to the ewes.

The following is an analysis of the live weights of the lambs exhibited at Islington; three to each pen:

Cotswolds	595
Leicester.....	558
Lincoln.....	616
South-Downs.....	525
Shropshires.....	451
Oxfords.....	460
Hampshire Downs.....	672

And from this list, I deduce the following most important facts: That the Hampshire-Down lambs were superior in weight to all the others, and not by a trifling amount either, as the next table will show:

Weight of Hampshire-Down lambs

672 lbs	= weight of Cotswold lambs	+ 77
"	= " " Leicester "	+ 114
"	= " " Lincoln "	+ 56
"	= " " Southdown "	+ 147
"	= " " Shropshires "	+ 221
"	= " " Oxfords "	+ 212

And more; while the Southdown wethers weighed 682 lbs, the Hampshire-Down lambs weighed 672 lbs; the former having only 10 lbs per pen of three, or 3½ lbs each, to show for their twelve-month's food! Again; we see by the table two Hampshire-Down lambs weighed as much as three Shropshires, and nearly as much as three Oxfords!

Lastly, the pen of three Hampshire-Down lambs exceeded in weight the pen of three Southdown ewes (3 years old) by 56 lbs!!! The difference between the weight of the Hampshire-Downs and the Southdowns I was prepared to see, but I must confess I was astonished at the amazing superiority of the former over the Shropshires and the Oxfords. Judging from my own past experience of sheep in the state of fatness in which they made their appearance at the Smithfield Club Show, I believe I am not wrong in taking 65 0/10 of live weight as the weight of the four quarters; which would make their value in the London market, at present prices, £7.6 sterling, or \$36.00! Most of my readers know, by this time, that in the English markets, all cattle, &c. are sold by hand, and the price of mutton is so high now in that country, that a good Down sheep weighing, when slaughtered, 20 lbs a quarter, is worth one shilling sterling a pound, or \$20, as he stands. I have no hesitation in saying that as long as prices keep up to what they are now, no more profitable system of farming can be offered to the Canadian than the breeding and fattening of sheep for exportation, if the sort of sheep suited to the trade of the west-end of London be selected. Hampshire-Downs lambed in March, and moderately pushed from weaning, should weigh, by the time the first boat leaves for England in the Spring, something like 12 stones, or 96 lbs, and would bring in the neighbourhood of twenty-four dollars, and there is only one secret in their management in this country: *rape, rape, rape*, from the 20th of June to the end of the season. It would add at least one-third to the yield of our farms.

A. R. J. F.

Mr Bruce Campbell, of St. Hilaire, has sent me a letter, which appears in this number of the Journal. It is rather difficult to answer without going over the land he speaks of, but I will state my own ideas on the subject, assisted by some hints from Mr Barnard, Director of Agriculture, whose long experience gives his opinion great weight.

I fancy the sheep would do very well on the mountain, but I doubt their agreeing with juicy young trees. Elms would stand well alone, and ash, but would not solitary maples, drawn up as they are in their present state by their neighbours, be likely to be blown down? If I meant to clear the hill, I should leave, here and there, belts of trees, say 40 yards wide, as guards against the prevalent winds, first taking out the largest timber, but leaving the remainder thick enough. This would have another effect: it would prevent the washing of the naked parts from heavy rains, ending in land-slides, and causing the denudation of the soil, leaving some places bare to the rock, and accumulating an unnecessary depth of earth in others.

Mr Barnard thinks that the cultivation of timber would be more profitable, in such a tree-less district, than sheep-farming. I have no doubt he is right, but I infer from the questions Mr Campbell asks that present profit is desired.

One shepherd, a boy, and two good dogs, should render fences unnecessary. As to whether sheep-farming would pay, I have answered that question in my article on Hampshire-Downs in the present number. The sort of sheep I should recommend, to start with, would be the native ewe coupled with a short woolled ram. They are jumpers, but that is the shepherd's look out. Of course I look forward to the importation of a ram and half a dozen ewes of the Hampshire-Down breed, and their gradual substitution for the natives—after three crosses, very few signs of the parent stock would survive. The Hampshire-Downs can be kept in flocks of any number—I have seen 4000 in one lot in the same fold—long-wools and the crosses must be kept in small lots; which is another count in favour of my darlings. Low sheds, open on one side, would be sufficient protection in winter. Sheep don't care for cold, but they don't like wet jackets. Bedding of any kind is unnecessary except in lambing time—sheep lie on a road in preference to the turf on each side of it. Dryness is what they want; a damp air, as the Scotch call it, causes foot-rot.

Preparation of the land.—"Some excellent rich land, some thin and poor." Peter must be robbed to pay Paul. The rich land with a light ploughing would grow rape, and the sheep, fed on this during the day, might go to fold at night on the inferior soil. If the hurdles were made after the fashion of those depicted at page 182 of the 2. vol. of the French Journal, a boy could set the fold for 500 sheep in about ½ an hour. I don't think even the native sheep would jump them, if they were made 3 feet 6" high. The cost is a mere trifle, as the wood is on the spot, and any handy fellow could make them.

A mixture of grass-seeds should be sown with the rape, and then would the sheep-walk be established for ever. A dressing of 10 bushels of slaked lime to the acre would improve it very much. The following list of grass-seeds, I think, would answer:

	lbs
Perennial rye-grass.....	10
Smooth meadow-grass.....	2
Cocksfoot Orchard-grass.....	5
Meadow fescue.....	3
Hard ".....	3
Meadow foxtail.....	2
Red clover.....	4
White clover.....	4
Cow-grass (perennial red clover).....	4