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Cotswold Breeders.

The annual meeting of the American Cotswold Association was held in Chicago on Nov. 19, during the week of the Fat Stock Show. Breeders of these sheep report business much more brisk than for several years. According to the treasurer's report there is a balance of \$675 in the treasury. About one hundred paid-up members are now on the books. The following officers were elected:—President, R. C. Judson, Farmington, Minn; Vice-Presidents, E. B. Emery, Md.; J. C. Snell, Edmonton, Can.; C. E. Carothers, Houstonville, Pa.; Sec. Treas., Geo. Harding, Waukesha, Wis.; Directors, E. B. Emery, J. O'Malley, Wannakee, Wis., and J. B. Herkless, Knightstown, Ind.

Cotswold Sheep.

BY J. C. SNELL.

Cotswolds are among the most ancient of the recognized breeds of sheep. It would, perhaps, be claiming too much to say they are "as old as the hills," but it is a fact that the hills upon which they are generally found in their native land take their designation from the sheep rather than the sheep from the hills. They derive their name from *Cote*, as sheep fold, and *wold*, a naked hill. Stowe in his chronicles, states that in 1464 King Edward IV., "Concluded an amnesty and league with King Henry, of Castill, and King John, of Aragon, at the concluding whereof he granted license for certain Cotswold sheep to be transported into the country of Spain, which have there since mightily increased and multiplied to the Spanish profit." This breed, contrary to the habit of most long-wooled sheep, has made its home on bleak uplands. There are few sections of the Old Country where the land is poorer and less productive than upon the range of uplands known as the Cotswold hills, and extending through parts of the counties of Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire; yet it is here that these large and well furnished sheep are principally found, though a few good flocks are found in Norfolk and Hereford, and also in Wales.

We believe the first importation of Cotswolds to Canada was made by the Messrs. Miller, of Markham and Pickering, in 1854. Of these the late John Snell, of Edmonton, purchased one ram and one ewe, which formed the nucleus of the flock, which has since been steadily maintained by himself and his sons as one of the leading flocks in America. In 1855 Mr. F. W. Stone, of Guelph, made an importation of a choice lot of yearlings, which, together with those of the Messrs. Miller and Snell were exhibited at the Provincial Exhibition, held at Cobourg in the same year, and created quite a sensation; their stylish carriage, and long flowing forelocks, as well as their great size and substance proving a passport to public favor which at once placed them upon a firm footing as one of the breeds peculiarly adapted to this country.

For a period of about twenty years from the date of their introduction in Canada they grew rapidly in popularity—and the demand for the classes of ladies' dress goods known as alpacas and lustras, which during those years became very fashionable, and called for the class of combing wool which Cotswolds produce, had the effect of raising the price of this wool to an unprecedented extent, as high as fifty cents per pound having been paid for it. Those were the

palmy days for Cotswolds, and large profits were realized by the importers and breeders of these sheep, while the Americans drew largely upon the supply of Grade sheep in the country having a considerable infusion of Cotswold blood, and the prices paid for such made it a profitable branch of the farmer's income. When the fashion changed and these classes of goods were less in demand, and the boom in the middle woolled sheep was started, a large proportion of those who had been breeding longwooled sheep were led to try the experiment of crossing with the different classes of Downs, but the experiment in the great majority of cases proved a disastrous failure, and men who formerly had flocks of which they felt proud, found in a very few years that they had only a non-descript class of sheep which had gone from bad to worse, lighter in carcass and lighter in fleece as well as shabby in appearance, till in disgust they were sold off to the butchers and drovers for what they would bring, and a large proportion of the farms of the country were found to be destitute of sheep.

The recent advance in the price of wool and mutton, though by no means large or startling, and the fact being brought to the notice of farmers by the agricultural press, that they were doing themselves and the country injustice by not having a few sheep as a factor in a system of mixed farming, has had the effect of creating a general enquiry for sheep, and of leading a large proportion of the farmers to purchase small lots as the nucleus of flocks, and so far as our observation has gone it has been in the majority of cases Cotswolds or their grades that have been sought after, and I am fully persuaded there is no breed of sheep that is better adapted to the conditions of the country and the circumstances of the average farm and the average farmer than are the Cotswolds.

If our circumstances were such that we had a special market and could secure special extra prices for a certain quality of wool or mutton, one can readily understand the wisdom of breeding to meet the demands or requirements of such a market; but what are the facts in regard to our markets? Is not both wool and mutton bought at so much per pound, and is there any considerable extra price paid for quality in either case that will nearly compensate for the difference in weight in favor of the Cotswolds in carcass at any age, or in the annual clip of wool.

We find that the larger sheep are the favorites with buyers and shippers here, and my observations in the markets at Liverpool and London convinced me that there, where they are not bought by weight, the large ones are the favorites with the buyers, and Canadian grade Cotswolds were readily bought at the highest quotations.

For the purpose of grading up, either from common or native ewes, or from pure or cross breeds of any sort, I am convinced that the Cotswold ram has a prepotency that is unsurpassed by any breed, and this is well understood and admitted in England, where the demand at present for Cotswold rams is greater than ever for this very purpose. Many of the farmers who have flocks of Down ewes, preferring to cross them with the Cotswold ram, because their lambs feed so much faster after weaning, and make so much heavier yearlings to go off to the butchers after the first shearing, and producing fully twice as many pounds of wool per head as the pure Downs. So great is this demand that we find

that only a few of the breeders hold any of their ram lambs over for shearing, most of them being sold as ram lambs to be used as breeders the first season. It is admitted that, as a rule, the Down ewes are better nurses than the Cotswolds, and if lambs for the butcher be the object the Downs may have the advantage; but from the time the lambs are weaned the Cotswolds will go ahead, and increase in weight, and put on flesh faster than any other. It has been demonstrated in Canada that lambs of this breed can be made to weigh at seven months old from 150 lbs. to 175 lbs., and yearlings at 18 months from 300 lbs. to 350 lbs., while mature rams at two-and-a-half years have been made to attain a weight of 400 lbs. and 425 lbs.

With regard to weight of fleece, we have known yearlings to shear from 18 lbs. to 21 lbs. of unwashed wool, while 14 lbs. to 16 lbs. is common in well fed flocks, and we have known whole flocks to average 10 lbs. of washed wool. The quality of the wool of Cotswolds has been greatly improved in the last fifteen years by careful breeding and selection, so that the coarse, harsh fleeces, with a hairy tendency on the thighs, has almost disappeared and the fleeces are found of more uniform quality all over the surface of the body, and of much softer and finer fibre. One of the strongest claims of the Cotswolds is that for crossing or grading up cross bred or native sheep, while with many other breeds the first cross is a success; subsequent crosses show a falling off in size and character. The Cotswold cross proves a success almost uniformly, not only in the first cross but in future crosses. The offspring taking on the Cotswold character tell in a few generations; the type becomes thoroughly fixed, and they breed with a large degree of certainty to the desired standard.

Another strong claim which the Cotswolds have for favor in this country, where all classes of stock are pastured together, is their habit of grazing. It will be noticed that they do not close up their ranks and go in solid phalanx to the destruction of a pasture, but scatter all over a field, and thus only partially reduce the herbage, while most of the finer woolled breeds go in solid column or in the shape of a letter A, and if kept in large flocks are nearly as destructive to a pasture as an army of grasshoppers or locusts. This habit of scattering is conducive to the health of the sheep and freedom from disease, while it also helps to avoid making the land what is called "sheep sick."

The Cotswolds are well adapted to the climate of Canada and that of the Northern and Western States, which is generally comparatively dry. In Canada especially, where in a system of mixed husbandry sheep are not likely to be kept in very large numbers, they succeed admirably.

No class of sheep requires less care or skill in their management. Their wool is of such a nature that the rains and the dew of heaven falling upon them after shearing puts their fleeces in the most desirable condition for looks or for profit, and no professional tonsorial artist is required with comb and brush and scissors to keep them from taking on a shabby appearance and to make them presentable; but with the ordinary care which the average farmer can easily give them they will prove one of the most profitable and satisfactory investments on the farm, as they yield their semi-annual dividends in the shape of a crop of wool and a crop of lambs, while their keep is generally of the least expensive kind and is scarcely missed, and the returns they make may be counted upon with a reasonable degree of certainty.