

and from 7 to 8-lbs. the fleece. The superior hardiness of the improved Cotswold over the Leicester, and their adaptation to common treatment, together with the prolific nature of the ewes and their abundance of milk, have rendered them in many places rivals of the Leicester, and have obtained for them of late years more attention to their selection and general treatment, under which management still further improvements appears very probable. They have also been used in crossing other breeds, and have been mixed with the Hampshire Down. It is, indeed, the improved Cotswold that, under the term New or Improved Oxfordshire sheep, are so frequently the successful candidates for prizes offered for the best long-wooled sheep at some of the principal agricultural meetings or shows in the kingdom. The quality of the mutation is considered superior to that of the Leicester, the tallow being less abundant, with a larger development of muscle or flesh. We may, therefore, regard this breed as one of established reputation, and extending itself throughout every district of the kingdom."

MERINO SHEEP IN ENGLAND.

George the III. was distinguished as an ardent promoter of agriculture, and determined in 1787, to make a fair trial of this renowned breed; and accordingly a few were ordered and placed on his farm at Kew. They were selected in Estremadura, on the borders of Portugal; and this, at that time was a sort of smuggling transaction, as no Merinos could be sent from any Spanish port without a license from the king; therefore they were obliged to be shipped from Lisbon. The sheep were hastily chosen from among different flocks and various districts, and consequently exhibited but little uniformity, and not fully the true character of the breed; the king therefore soon disposed of them to others.

Subsequently, it was determined to make a direct application to the Spanish monarch for permission to make a selection from some of the best flocks. This was promptly granted; and a small number was taken from the Negrette variety, then deemed the most valuable of the migratory sheep. This flock arrived in 1791, and was immediately placed on the king's farm.

From ignorance, they were at first badly managed. Having been placed on a moist and luxuriant soil, many soon became affected with foot rot, and others died from attacks of liver rot. This calamity was a triumph to the prejudiced, but a change to dryer pasture proved a remedy, which soon led to a change of opinion in their favor. In a short time it appeared that they were no more subject to disease than British sheep.

Crosses took place with several varieties of the native breeds with various success. Dr. Parry crossed with the Ryeland, the most superior short-wooled sheep in England, and the fourth cross produced a wool equal to pure Merino.

Mr. Coke, the renowned English agriculturist, also experimented on both the Ryelands and South Down, and affirmed that the cross with the latter was superior to that of the former. It was but a few years afterwards, that he expressed the following opinion, in an address before the Merino Society, Holkham:—"I feel it my duty," said he, "to state my latest opinion of the effects of the cross of a part of my South Down flock with Merino tups, and I wish it could be more favorable. From the further trial which I have made, (this the fourth year,) I must candidly confess that I have reason to believe that, however one cross may answer a farther progress

will not prove advantageous to the breeder." This opinion of Mr. Coke should be duly considered by every American breeder.

But, sometime antecedent to this decision of Mr. Coke, very many who had entertained apparently insurmountable prejudices were bold to acknowledge the merits of the Merinos, and became fully satisfied that neither the climate nor herbage of their new home were incompatible with perfect success. Sir Joseph Banks and Lord Somerville were amongst their staunchest and zealous advocates, and the latter duly tested the sincerity of his opinions, by importing a considerable flock of them.

Thirteen years after the king's importation of the Negrette flock, a public sale by auction was made of Merinos. The rams averaged about fifty dollars per head, and the ewes thirty. In 1808, four years after the price averaged 130 dollars for rams, and 100 dollars for ewes. In 1810 the Merinos arrived at the climax of public favor. In this year, at another public auction sale, rams commanded nearly 300 dollars per head. "One full-mouthed Negrette was sold for over 800 dollars, and another for nearly 700."

A Merino Society was instituted in the following year, at the head of which was placed Sir Joseph Banks, with fifty-four Vice Presidents, and local committees were established in every county in England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales.

Mr. Youatt observes—"No more striking instance can be produced of the fallacy of human expectation and judgment, than the establishment of this society. From this period is to be dated the rapid decay of the Merinos in public estimation." After a passing tribute of just praise to the breed, he proceeds to say, "In Great Britain, nevertheless, where the system of artificial feeding is carried to such great perfection—where the sheep is so early and so profitably brought to the market—that breed, however it may ultimately increase the value of the wool, can never be adopted, which is deficient, as the Merinos undeniably are, in the principle of early maturity, and general propensity to fatten."

Other reasons for the abandonment of the Merinos are given by Mr. Plint, a distinguished agriculturist. He says—"I always thought the speculation of cultivating the Merinos a decidedly foolish and unprofitable one. We can consume all the coarse, wool we grow, and more if we could get it; and taking carcass and weight of wool together, the long-wooled sheep is more profitable by far than the Merino. Besides, if the English breeds were to any considerable extent superseded by the Merinos, the price of that wool would fall, and long wools would rise; and the advantage of growing fine wool, on account of its high price, would slip through the fingers of the agriculturist. If we could grow more of both kinds, well and good; but in present circumstances, a profit by foreign wool is as good as a profit by fine wool, and we can only have one; and it is the part of wisdom to take that which is easiest got."

The above are the substantial reasons for the downfall of the Merinos in great Britain, and not altogether, as many have supposed, from the humidity of the climate. Long after their introduction, the wool of the Merinos was carefully compared with the best samples of pure Spanish, and no deterioration was perceptible. A dry climate is best suited to the Merino, but many years would elapse before a humid one, without other causes, would produce any essential change in the properties of its fleeces. High feeding is altogether a more potent cause of deterioration.