

generally a true index to the valuable qualities of any breed of sheep. Show a thorough judge the head of a sheep, keeping its carcass out of view, and he can tell what kind of animal it is. Mr. Bakewell's improved sheep obtained so much celebrity, that breeders availed themselves of every opportunity of procuring his stock; and as they had no other way of doing so but by hiring tups for the season, or by sending their ewes to Dishley to be served, he frequently obtained from one hundred to four hundred guineas for the use of a ram for a single season. From eighty to one hundred guineas was considered by him a very small sum. He had one favourite tup, and he took in ewes to be served by it at ten guineas each; this animal it is said served one hundred and twenty ewes in one season! These facts indicate the value of his sheep at that early time, and how they were prized by other breeders. Bakewell never sold either tups or ewes as breeders. The tups when old and unfit for use, were disposed of to butchers; but he invariably went himself and saw them slaughtered. With respect to his ewes, to prevent any breeders getting the use of them, he flooded a piece of low, marshy land in autumn, on which they were placed, in order to contract the disease called the rot, which, of course, rendered them useless as breeders. They were generally sold at low prices to butchers; while he probably would have realised fifty guineas for each as breeding stock. Tup breeding was, in fact, a monopoly in Bakewell's hands, and also for some years in those of his successors, and exorbitant prices were accordingly obtained. But this, like other monopolies, was of limited duration; the breed rapidly extended, and in the course of a few years prices came down, and good specimens of both sexes, of the improved blood, could be readily obtained both in England and Scotland, at moderate prices.

It is stated and, we believe, on good authority, that the people of the British Isles have evinced a diminished taste for extra fat mutton, and consequently Leicester sheep have, in some districts at least, experienced a decline. Fat Leicesters and other large breeds do not find so ready a sale as formerly, except at reduced rates. Hence resort has been had to crosses, with a view of obtaining animals of moderate size and meat of a superior quality. For this purpose, also, a greater demand has been experienced of late years for the different races of Downs and mountain sheep, as first qualities of mutton in the British markets are duly appreciated and command high prices.

It has been well observed: "though graziers are justified in attending to the production of that article which best suits the market, there is no reason for alarm lest the Leicester either deteriorate or become extinct as a breed. For crossing, it stands unrivalled, and the demand for rams for this purpose alone is already almost incredible, and yearly increasing." But however much Leicester sheep are valued and prized for their exquisite points, symmetry, great aptitude to fatten, and mellow handling, their early maturity and heavy weights; and although they undoubtedly produce more mutton and wool for the food they consume, than any other breed, still their money value, in markets where butcher's meat is high, is invariably lower than the smaller breeds. Another peculiarity is, that however fat they may become, they seldom prove full of tallow, and it is now generally admitted that the longer they are fed, in the same ratio the produce of tallow diminishes. Although not so coarse grained as many of the other large breeds of England, Leicester sheep are often not so well proportioned, having too much fat and too little lean, and this often not well mixed. For breeding tups for crossing purposes, the Leicester stands unrivalled everywhere; and if kept for feeding purposes, they should be sold young, to make them at all profitable. Some fifty years ago, attempts were made in the north of England to improve the Leicester by crossing with the Teeswaters; the

object being to increase their size, and the experiments are said to have been in that respect successful; but their feeding properties were spoiled, and the cross was found to be almost unsaleable. They were slow feeders, and consumed more food than the pure Leicesters. The breeders were not long in discovering the unprofitable character of the stock, and it cost them a great deal of trouble and expense to renew and renovate their stocks; and traces of the alloy were too obvious for a great number of years. "This," observes a modern practical writer, "is another proof of failure in attempting to improve Leicesters with other breeds; and it must be admitted that Leicester sheep can improve all other breeds, but none can improve them." Many will certainly question the exact correctness of the above conclusion, while most will admit that it contains much truth. It is thought by some that the new Leicesters have been somewhat improved by a dip of Cotswold blood; invigorating their constitution, and more fully developing several of their more valuable points; while it is generally admitted that the latter by a Leicester cross evince a greater aptitude to fatten and early maturity. In the new Oxfordshire breed, which in some localities have already attained to considerable distinction, we have a very striking demonstration of what can be obtained from a skilful admixture of Leicester and Cotswold blood.

The first probable importation of improved English sheep into the United States, was made by the illustrious WASHINGTON, who was always a warm friend and patron of agriculture. "Livingston, writing in 1804, says of the 'Arlington long-woolled sheep,' that they were derived from the stock of General Washington, being bred by his step-son, Mr. Curtis, from a Persian ram and *Bakeritt* ewes." About 1810, some Leicesters reached the United States, (see *Randall's Practical Shepherd*, p. 41.) and subsequently they slowly found their way into the British American Provinces. In Canada, Leicester blood can be extensively traced in the ordinary flocks of the farm, while of late years we have some farmers who possess excellent specimens of the pure and improved breed; though it must be acknowledged that a great many of our sheep that go under the name of Leicesters, are more or less mixed with other breeds. They are found well suited to the country, and this and other long-woolled sheep of Canada, are not equalled by any other portion of this great continent. The long-woolled sheep at our Provincial Shows are the admiration of strangers, and will favourably compare with those at similar exhibitions of the mother country.

The engraving at the head of this article, is an excellent portrait of the first-prize aged Leicester ram, at the recent Provincial Exhibition. This fine animal is owned by Messrs. J. & J. White, of Trafalgar.

## Correspondence.

### Wintering Bees.

To the Editor of THE CANADA FARMER:

SIR,—The time has now arrived when every bee-keeper should examine his bees and see that they are in proper condition for wintering. If there are any colonies likely to want for honey during the winter, there should be no time lost in feeding them. There are several ways of feeding. A common box-hive may be turned bottom upwards in some dark room, and a teacupful of bee-feed poured into the combs in the centre of the hive every day, or if the combs are not down to the bottom of the hive, and the room is sufficiently warm, the feed may be put in a shallow dish and placed under the hive, leaving the hive in its natural position. If moveable comb hives are used, cards of comb may be removed from strong colonies and exchanged for cards from weak colonies; or if the hives are properly constructed, a piece of empty comb may be laid upon the comb frames in the opening through the honey-board, after removing the honey-box, and the feed poured upon the empty comb, pouring in all it will hold, and if some should run in among the combs, it will do no harm. I am now successfully feeding a weak colony in this way. Bees may also be fed by pushing sticks of candy in between the cards of comb, but I prefer the former method. The best bee-feed is made of two pounds of good sugar and one of honey, boiled together, and reduced to syrup by adding one quart of water; but if honey cannot be had, three pounds of sugar to three pints of water will do. The better the sugar the better the feed of course. It should always be given to the bees a little warm, it will draw them

to it much quicker, and they will eat much faster than if given to them cold.

Having attended to the weak colonies, strong ones should now be attended to. If some dark room can be spared, away from the fire, or some out-house can be had which is clean, dark, and tight, it would be better to remove them to such a place than to let them remain on the stands. Give them sufficient ventilation at the top of the hive to carry off the vapour arising from the bees. It is highly necessary that this should be attended to, for the vapour is thereby prevented from congealing and running back into the combs and freezing, which would prevent the bees obtaining their honey; and often (especially when the bees are left on their stands,) the vapour congeals, and running down the sides of the hive, freezes around the edges, completely closing up all passage for air. The result is, the bees are smothered, and the beekeeper tells his enquiring neighbour that the storm or snow beat under his hive and smothered his bees: when the truth is, the hives had not sufficient ventilation at the top to carry off the vapour. In a dark room or properly-constructed bee-house, the common box hives may be turned bottom upwards, which will ensure proper ventilation; if the room is not very dark, it might be necessary to fasten a piece of net cloth on the hive to keep the bees from coming out. If wintered on their stands, holes should be made between every card of comb, if possible, in the top of the hive, then cover the hive with a cap or box, raising the hive from the board on which it stands a little,—say one-fourth of an inch; and if your colony is strong it will pass the winter in safety.

If moveable comb hives are used having properly-constructed honey-boards, and are to be wintered on their stands, nothing more is required to give them proper ventilation than to remove the honey-box, leaving the cover or cap on the hive; but if wintered in a dark room, remove the cap also. If bees should come out and die to any great extent, cover the passage through the honey-board with wire cloth, or net cloth, or clean straw would do. If the honey-board has only small holes through it, there will not be sufficient ventilation to carry off the vapour. A little care and attention just now in seeing that the bees are all put into proper "winter quarters" may save many a colony which otherwise would perish.

Brooklin, C. W.

J. H. THOMAS.

## Owls, Fish, Hedges, &c.

To the Editor of THE CANADA FARMER:

SIR,—The interchange of ideas in the shape of questions and answers is likely to be promotive of much good at small personal sacrifice of time and trouble. I will begin with a subject which appeared in one of your recent numbers, and will put in—

A PLEA FOR OWLS.—"Erect in the middle of your field a long pole; set a steel trap upon the top, and the unweary hawk or owl will light directly in the trap." Now, I won't say much for the hawks, but plead to have the owls spared—they destroy thousands of mice every year. These mice do infinite mischief in our winters by girdling, and then killing young trees and hedges. Broderip calls the owl the "eagle of mice," and White, of Selborne, records minutely the vast good done by these birds. Mr. Macbeth, of South Elgin, had recently several hundred pear trees just coming into bearing. To his intense mortification, all these were girdled and destroyed by mice. I say, then, "spare the owls."

PISCICULTURE.—I did not go so far as to say that it was impossible to introduce salmon into Lake Ontario, but I affirm that it would be almost so. Sixty years ago, before steamboats were introduced, salmon did come at certain periods, and were taken by Indians at their village at Port Credit. Scarcely an instance of a salmon being caught in Lake Ontario has occurred for years. Philosophers maintain that fish cannot hear. The question is not a very important one practically. It is certain that they have other senses to compensate for the want of this. A singular circumstance has occurred here. Our delicious and mysterious whitefish used to frequent that part of our Island called Gibraltar Point. Since the arrival of the artillery here they have fired at a mark fixed near this point. Whether it was the dipping of the cannon balls, or the vibration caused by the report of the great guns, the whitefish have deserted that point, and gone 20 miles eastward. I have called them "mysterions," because up to this time no food has been discovered in the stomach of the fish. Some one at Newcastle wrote that they fed upon a little red worm. The red worm is a parasite often found upon the air bladder of this fish.