

the leading feature in the character of the animal. The quality of the flesh is the next consideration, as it matters little what the form is if not good fleshed; and with this I shall combine the hide or pelt, which if you do err in, let it be with having too much, as in this depends very much the constitution; for how can the animals resist the cold without a proper covering? Yet there is no rule without an exception, and we should be partly guided by our own herds in making the selections as to what properties we want, and what we now possess. In speaking of sheep I must admit there are various opinions about the quality of mutton; some are favorable to *very firm*, or I may say, *hard* mutton, and some prefer loose; but I think there is a medium between the two to be observed, but take care to have plenty of it. All will agree that that which produces the greatest weight from the least food given, is the best. Some breeders have been very curious about bone, but I am of opinion that with very fine bone you are apt to lose constitution.

Gentlemen, I have now endeavored to show you the necessity of breeding good stock, the fallacy of keeping bad; and I have also given you my humble views, and some common practical ideas, how good stock may be bred, and how they may be maintained; but depend upon it, there must not only be application, but skill and perseverance; for one step wrong will often send you many steps backwards; therefore I will again urge caution as to breeding without *pedigree and character*.

In this brief sketch I have given up the feeding part of our subject, but I will make a few passing remarks. I do think, of all the mismanagement it is the worst to breed stock and starve them to death; and I am sure that I speak within compass when I say that there are farmers who starve as much stock to death annually as would pay half the rent, if properly attended to; but there is a wide difference between starving and overfeeding them: and there is also a great difference in localities as to the produce of food. I neither advocate high nor low feeding. Young stock require to be kept growing, with plenty of air; by that course they are more likely to breed and be profitable. I cannot think box feeding can be healthy for young stock, though it may be advantageous on large plough-farms: but in this county our grass lands require attention; and my plan is to winter my young stock in my meadows, giving oilcake and cut chaff; in this practice I have been very successful, not having lost one since I pursued it. These gleanings and observations are now laid before you—they are collected from practical observations, and you may now share them with me. I have had the pleasure of associating with many breeders, and find that all must, sooner or later, stand or fall on their

own merits—for profession is nothing without reality. Breeding has been my hobby-horse (if I may be allowed to borrow that phrase), and we have managed to jog together pretty comfortably up to this time; but, contrary to my wishes and spite of my remonstrances, my hobby-horse has been fed on *peeled corn*; and I am much afraid it cannot be depended upon in future.

Mr. Spencer sat down amidst the hearty cheers of the company.

Mr. Gilbert, the secretary, said,—I think we are all convinced that the great thing in breeding is to select the best females we can, and use the males most likely to correct any faults they may possess; and I am of opinion that (all we have heard to the contrary notwithstanding) that the evil is more in not following out the principles and practice of Robert Bakewell, than in too closely following them. (Hear, hear.) I have learned that in his time there was a number of spirited individuals who formed a society or Dishley Club, and who bred from, and exchanged animals from one another, (and in this number my relation, the late Mr. Buckley, of Normanton, was one of the foremost): thus they had a choice selection of pure-bred animals that they could rely upon, sufficient change of blood to answer all the objections against close affinity, and no fears of degeneracy from breeding from bad-bred animals; therefore I contend for the practice of Bakewell, and that it is the want of following his footsteps in this particular that the long-horned breed of cattle and the new Leicester breed of sheep have degenerated. I think there are sadly too many bulls kept of an inferior kind. Many of you buy the one that is old enough for your purpose at the lowest possible cost—say at £5 or £6: now in many cases one bull would suffice for three or four farms, in some cases for a parish, and by each putting their £5 together an animal that would improve each herd, and in a surprising degree, could be obtained; and in most cases the improved stock would cost less than the present inferior. In walking through our fairs I have seen half-horned bulls purchased for use, and upon remonstrating with the buyer on breeding from a broken stock, have been told that his cows were long-horns, or not true bred, and that he did not want to get into the breed too fast. Gentlemen, can you expect good stock when you put males and females together, the produce of which must be mongrels and probably of defective shape, without size, color, or constitution? Pedigree is necessary to guide you as to what the offspring will be; generally, I think, animals breed backwards—that is, the young generally resemble the sires or dams of their parents, and frequently cry back for several generations to any defect. I look upon pedigree to be, having been bred for certain points of excellence from *selected* parents through