

Quantity and Quality.

BY J. C. SNELL.

Mr. Dryden, in your issue for February, criticises some remarks of mine recently published in regard to the claims of Cotswold sheep. He alleges that in that article I urge that quality counts for nothing in the markets of America and Great Britain, and that the prudent course for the sheep-breeder would be to produce as many pounds as possible of mutton and wool, regardless altogether of quality. The quotation upon which he bases this charge is this:—"What are the facts in regard to our markets. Are not both mutton and wool bought at so much per pound, and is there any extra price paid for quality in either case that will nearly compensate for the difference in weight in favor of the Cotswolds at any age, or in the annual clip of wool." Mr. Dryden does not attempt to answer these questions for the very good reason that he knows he cannot do so to the disadvantage of the Cotswolds, but he proceeds to unbosom a confession of "having too much public spirit to allow a statement so misleading to go uncontradicted." Yet, he does not, and cannot successfully contradict either the letter or spirit of my premises, but goes on to attempt to mislead the public by leaving the impression that there is no such thing as good quality in Cotswolds. The friends of this breed claim that in no class of sheep has greater improvement been made in the last twenty years than in this, both as regards mutton and wool, but especially the latter. The fact is Mr. Dryden, so far as Cotswolds are concerned, has been in a Rip-Van-Winkle sleep, and blind to the improvement that has been going on.

It may be that I am lacking in the noble sentiment of "public spirit," but I confess it was the condition and circumstances of the great bulk of farmers in the country I was thinking of when I wrote, and of the conditions of the markets we have and are likely to have. I can readily understand the interest of Mr. Dryden and a few other handlers of short-wooled sheep, who have been making a good thing by importing and selling the finished work of other men's hands. But, the question is, what is there in this for the average farmer, and does it settle the question which is the best breed for the farmer to keep? The destiny of all sheep is "the block," and the butcher will only pay for the number of pounds he gets from the farmer. The farmer who has long-wools to sell will have more pounds of mutton, and consequently will receive more money for the carcass of his sheep. He will have more pounds of wool, and, as the wool buyer pays no extra price worth naming for short wool, he will have more money for his wool. This is the actual state of affairs. But, Mr. Dryden is dreaming about a possible time in the dim, distant future, when those millionaires down in New York shall have acquired a taste for the mutton of short-wooled sheep, and he would have the farmers build upon this very uncertain foundation. Judging from the progress that has been made in this line in the past, the probability is that the present generation of farmers will all be in their graves before this dream is realized. In the last fifteen years more thousands of these sheep have been imported than was ever imported of any other breed in the same space of time. Yet, their friends have utterly failed to establish a special market or any extra prices for either their mutton or wool,

or to show that, in the markets of America, any distinction is made in their favor. Indeed, the public have learned to suspect that these boastful claims to superiority of quality are only a myth, and that it is on the same line as the story that is told of a convention of big-headed scientists, who met in solemn conclave to solve the problem: "Why is a fish heavier when dead than when alive." The question puzzled them sorely, till the latest arrival asked the other question: "Is it?" It is well known that the joke has been often repeated of placing a leg of Cotswold mutton before a company of self-constituted epicures, under the impression that it was their favorite "brand," and they have smacked their lips and praised its quality.

"If you have a reputation for rising at five in the morning you can sleep till nine," but this practical age calls for something substantial, and early maturity is a feature to which great importance is attached in our fat stock shows; and in this respect we claim that the Cotswolds are unexcelled, but can be made attain as heavy weight at an early age, or at any age, as any other breed. Wherever a fairly good Cotswold lamb has been shown at the fat stock shows, it has won in the block test in competition with other breeds, as well as on foot.

The consolidated statement of average weights of the different breeds at the Chicago Fat Stock Shows from 1878 to 1887 inclusive, comparing Cotswolds with middle wools, is as follows:—

	Yearling Wethers.	Wethers under 1 year.
Cotswolds.....	138 lbs.	135 lbs.
Southdowns.....	176 lbs.	114 lbs.
Shropshires.....	173 lbs.	117 lbs.
Oxfords.....	201 lbs.	117 lbs.

The latest public evidence of the superiority of Cotswolds, in respect to early maturity, is the report of the Christmas 1889 show of the Smithfield Club, the greatest fat stock show of England, where the champion prize for the best three lambs of any breed was won by the Cotswolds for the third time in the last five years. A comparative statement of the gain per day in ounces places the different breeds in order of merit as follows:—

	Wethers.	Lambs.
Cotswold.....	8.	11.2
Lincoln.....	7.5	9.5
Oxford.....	7.1	10.
Shropshire.....	6.2	9.3
Southdown.....	5.2	8.1

From these figures it will be seen that the boasted superiority of the short-wools cannot be based on early maturity. Mr. Dryden next suggests that a comparative statement of the cost of production might make a very different showing, but he gives no figures and no proofs that the Cotswolds would suffer by such a comparison, and he cannot do so. This is a difficult question to determine, and has not been fairly tested so far as we know; but we can furnish the evidence of the men who have fed the different breeds together under exactly similar treatment and circumstances in preparing them for the fat stock shows, and I can assure my friend this evidence will not be very flattering to his favorites. The adoption by the Shropshire Association of that narrow-gauge rule, prohibiting its members from keeping any other breeds on the same farm, is pretty good evidence that they know they dare not compete on fair terms with the long-wools, either in respect of cost of production or of early maturity.

Mr. Dryden has prudently confined his criticism to the question of mutton, but the question of wool is nearly if not quite as important, and

when a fleece of 14 to 18 lbs. is pitted against one of 6 to 10 lbs. it is not difficult to decide where the advantage lies, and when a comparison is made of the returns per sheep in mutton and wool combined, then it is that the Cotswolds stand out in bold relief as the most profitable sheep for that large constituency, "the average farmer." The quality of Cotswold wool is well known to have been vastly improved in the last ten or twelve years, and in the best flocks the coarse fleeces with hairy thighs have disappeared, and a fine, even fleece throughout has been attained, and the prospect that lustrous and alpacas will soon be in fashion again for ladies' dress goods bespeaks a bright future for the Cotswold men.

Mr. Dryden evidently thinks he deals a stunning blow to the Cotswolds when he states that having grown them himself he has no desire to repeat the operation. This reminds me of a little incident in my own experience. Riding through old Bourbon County, Kentucky, a few years ago, I asked the colored jehu to what denomination a certain church edifice belonged. He replied, "She used to be a Hard Shell Baptist, but they don't run her now." Would it be fair to judge from the failure of the deacons there to "run" a church successfully that the conditions in that State are not favorable to the production of stalwart Baptists? Anyone acquainted with the country knows that the rivers are full of them.

Those who know the facts know that my friend never owned good Cotswolds, and never was a half good judge of them, and that being ambitious and finding himself badly distanced in the race for supremacy among the Cotswold men, with an eye to business, perhaps, as much as from "public spirit," he dropped out of the race and caught on to the next boom. It was not "the lay of the land" that was at fault in his case either, for on an adjoining farm a flock of Cotswolds was built up which made for itself a continental reputation, which was chosen by the Dominion Government to represent Canada at the Centennial Exhibition, and which, at the Indianapolis Exhibition in 1878, won the grand sweepstakes for best flock of any breed, competing with first-class flocks of imported Southdowns and Shropshires, and this has generally been the result when they have come into competition with other breeds. At the Oxfordshire Show in 1888, one of the very best sheep shows in England, a champion prize was offered for the best shearling ram of any breed, and the English judges, who may be supposed to have known something about quality, gave the prize to Mr. Swanwick's Cotswold ram, weighing at twenty months 380 lbs. "How is that for early maturity?" This was his weight here, after the voyage and quarantine, which must have reduced him considerably.

At the Ontario Provincial Exhibition at London, 1889, a champion prize of silver service was offered for the best flock of sheep for general purposes. Most of the breeds were in competition, including an extra good flock of imported Shropshires, which was selected in person by one of the closest judges in this country, and one of the most successful breeders of these. Those who know the judges, Messrs. John Hope, Frank Shore and Thos. Teasdale, will not say they were likely to overlook quality, yet the prize went by unanimous vote to the Cotswolds.