

AN ESSAY
ON
BRITISH SHEEP
AND
THE MANAGEMENT OF A FLOCK
ON A
LIGHT LAND FARM,

Read before the Veterinary Medical Association,

London, March 25th, 1879,

BY WILLIAM HENRY BEACH.

*With the Author's Compliments
Bridgnorth 1888*

69059078



SOUTHAMPTON
UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

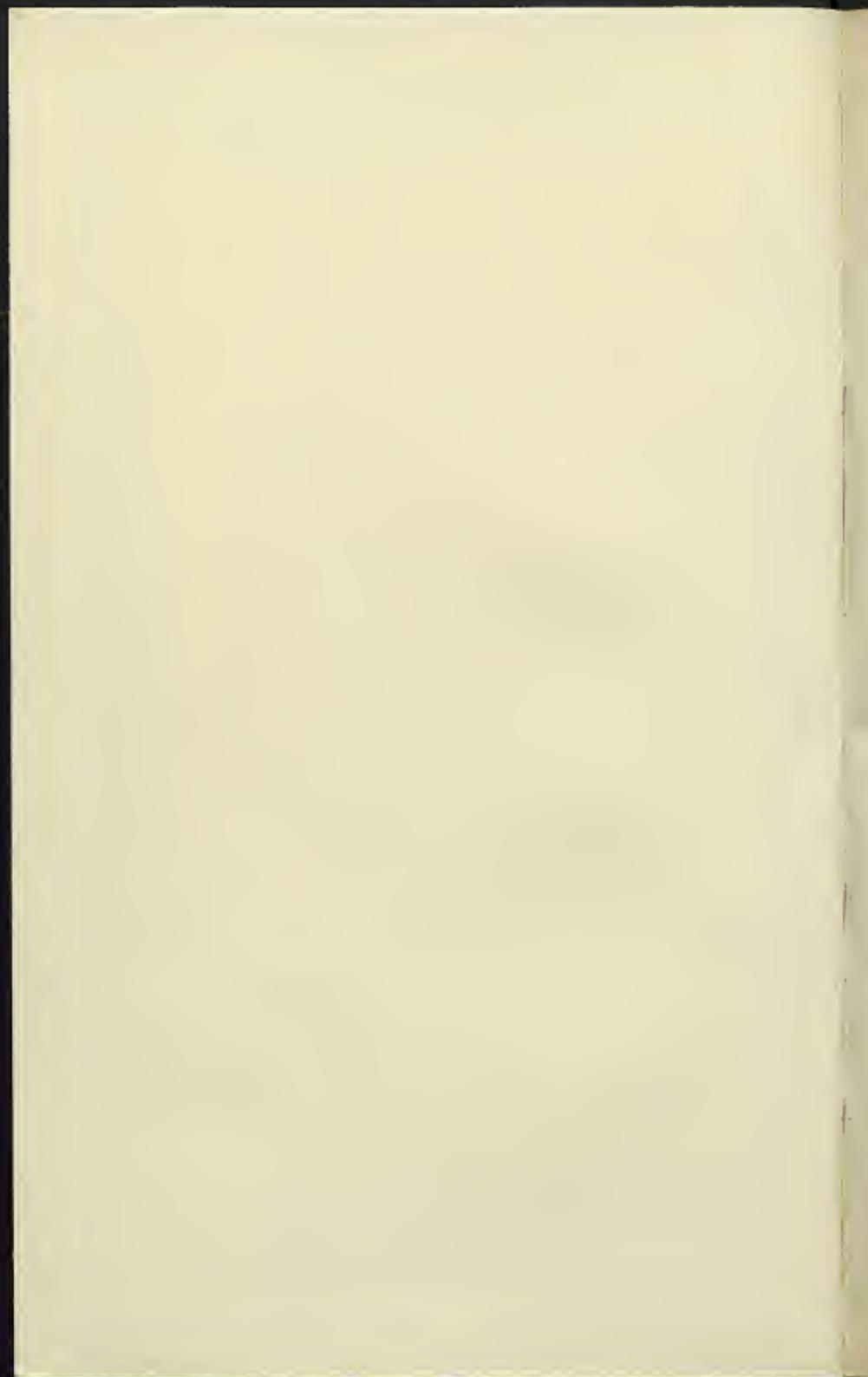
BOOK NUMBER	69-059078
CLASS MARK	SF 375
	P.A.L.

Perkins

SOUTHAMPTON UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Date due for Return
(Unless recalled for another reader)

63. JAN 90 22 JAN 1990 returned	
---------------------------------------	--



PREFACE.

In presenting this Essay to my readers, I take the opportunity of expressing a deep sense of gratitude to those gentlemen who have so kindly supplied me with information on the Breeds of Sheep with which they are severally connected. Without exception, they filled up a large form of questions which I issued, and many rendered me great assistance by the loan of Books, Newspapers, Pamphlets, Reports, &c. Their names appear below.

Firstly, I will tender my sincere thanks to one who, by his sound and impartial judgment, has been instrumental in establishing and advancing that fashionable and important breed "The Shropshire Sheep." I refer to my friend Mr. R. H. Masfen, to him I am indebted for recommendations to many of the following noted breeders. Mr. Jacob Wilson, "Usher on the Border Flocks"; Mr. Richard Corner, Article from Field Newspaper; Mr. R. W. Creswell; Mr. Thomas Duckham, "Report on the Farming of Herefordshire"; Mr. James Drew; Mr. Henry Dudding; Mr. Howell Harrys; Mr. William Hindson; Mr. Charles Howard, "Pamphlet and Journal of Central Farmers' Club"; Mr. Walter Johnstone; Mr. Griffith Jones; Mr. Henry Mayo; Messrs. Edward Nelson and John Wilson, "Pamphlet on Herdwicks"; Mr. Jonathan Peel, Two numbers of the Farmer Newspaper; Mr. Penry Powell; Mr. Robert Russell; Mr. Chapman Saunders; Mr. R. Stranger; Mr. Russell Swanwick; Mr. Henry Woods, "Lecture on Abortion and Mortality in Ewes."

For information relating to the second part of this Essay, viz.: on Management, I am indebted to my brother, Mr. Joseph Beach, and his shepherd.

The reader must bear in mind that the proprietor of The Hattons flock has no wish to see his system set forth as a pattern, or even to appear in print, but, at my special request, he has allowed me to include it.

The Appendix has been written to elucidate some false notions with regard to "Husk" and "Scour" in Lambs, and also to show up a system of quackery which has long deserved exposure.

*The Royal Veterinary College,
London: November, 1879.*



BRITISH SHEEP.

LONG WOOLS.

SHORT WOOLS.

POLLED.		HORNED.		POLLED.		HORNED.	
LIGHT.	DARK.	LIGHT.	DARK.	LIGHT.	DARK.	LIGHT.	DARK.
Leicesters	Oxfords	Scottish Mountain	Lonks	Ryelands	Southdowns	Dorsets	Hertwicks
Border Leicesters	Dartmoors			Cheviots	Shropshires	Exmoors	Welsh Mount.
Lincolns					Hampshires		Radhors
Cotswolds							Chattarvons
Kentish							Norfolks
Devon Long Wool							
Teeswaters							

N.B.—In this Plan an attempt has been made to arrange British Sheep in a Natural Order. The third bracket contains the headings Light and Dark, which apply to the colour of hair on face and legs. The former term signifies white, or nearly so; the latter, speckled, grey, brown, or black.

THE VARIETIES OF
BRITISH SHEEP.

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN,

Before proceeding to describe the varieties of British Sheep, allow me to make a few remarks by way of introduction to the subject. The advanced curriculum at our Veterinary Colleges, necessitates not only a thorough knowledge of the Horse and its management, but also of all the domesticated animals, more especially the Ox, Sheep, and Dog. A Veterinarian would indeed be considered a tyro if he could not distinguish between a Thoroughbred and a Cart Horse, and I maintain that it is almost, if not quite, as essential that he should have a knowledge of the distinctive characters of the Sheep; if the provincial members of the profession paid a greater attention to these animals, I think that flockmasters would more frequently seek their advice, instead of employing, or using the medicines of, non-qualified men.

You may notice some photographs which serve to illustrate a few of the breeds I have to speak about: they are pictures of some prize heads of Sheep which were exhibited at the last Smithfield Show (1878); the skulls from the above are also before you; I have brought them here to-night, not with the intention of entering into such a thorough description as I could wish, if time and the design of my essay permitted; I rather place them here that by examination of them you may be in a position to understand that the investigation of the varieties of Sheep is not a matter of mere surface anatomy. The very bones are modified.

In the second part of this paper, viz., on Management, I shall not enter into Sheep Pathology; you may perhaps agree with me when I state that with the exception of contagious and infectious maladies, 80 per cent. of ovine disease is due to bad management.

Prior to entering upon the subject of the breeds of this country, I must make a brief sketch of the *Ovis Aries* in its fossil, antedeluvian, wild, and ancient and modern domesticated state.

Sheep belong to the order Ruminantia, the tribe Capridæ, and the genus *Ovis*. They are so nearly allied to Goats, that the distinguishing characters of the two genera are of a trivial nature.

Four distinct kinds of Wild Sheep are known to Naturalists, viz. :—

The Musmon of Cyrus, and other of the Mediterranean Islands.

The Argali, found in northern and central Asia.

The Bearded Sheep, belonging to the north of Africa.

The Rocky Mountain Sheep of America.

It is supposed that domesticated Sheep have originated from one or more of these wild races, but from which it is impossible to say.

Geological observations over fossil organic remains of mammiferous animals have revealed a considerable number of specimens of the *Ovis Aries*, in or about the ancient lake habitations of Switzerland.

From the account given in the Bible, we learn that Sheep existed co-eval with that of man, in Genesis iv chapter, it speaks of Abel offering the firstlings of his flock as a sacrifice. Throughout the whole history of the Bible we hear of Sheep constituting the wealth of man. Homer, who wrote some 850 years B.C., compares Ulysses drawing up his men to a Ram ordering his flock, thus :

“From rank to rank he moves and orders all!
A stately Ram thus measures o'er the ground!
And master of the flock surveys them round!”

Mahaffey, the celebrated professor of ancient history in the University of Dublin, in his work on “Old Greek life,” tells us of the value of flocks of Sheep and of Goats to the inhabitants of the various parts of Greece, during the whole period of history; he shows us how Homer sings of the flocks, and describes their folds; he tells us how the woollen cloaks of Pollene were given as prizes in some of the celebrated athletic contests, and how the Sheep in Athens was valued most for its wool.

A study of foreign breeds reveals some most extraordinary

and what we might call abnormal forms of Sheep. Darwin, in his work on "The variations of animals and plants under domestication," makes constant reference to them. He points out how they become transformed as it were by variation of climate, food, &c. For if ordinary English Sheep are taken to India, their wool becomes quickly supplanted by hair. It is well known that if Cotswold Sheep are removed to the Ryeland district in Herefordshire, their fleece becomes materially altered; but the greatest wonders of all are effected by *artificial selection*. The celebrated Otter variety of America was originally started by breeding from a Ram which, by chance, was born with very short legs; of course nothing but careful weeding of unlikely animals kept the variety to its extraordinary type. Hampshire Down Sheep are nothing more than a cross between Sussex Downs and the old Wiltshire breed; the latter were horned and had Roman noses; now, if you will look at the illustration or skull, you may see that the horns have disappeared, but the Roman nose still remains; this has been wrought partly by the cross with the Sussex Down, but mainly by selection. I could relate many more wonders similar to the above but time will not permit; what I want to impress upon your minds is the eminent power of selection, as it appears to form the very backbone of successful Sheep breeding.

Under these circumstances, it is impossible to determine the source of some of the breeds which stock the pastures of this country. Youatt treats of the matter thus:—"In all the different districts of the kingdom we find various breeds of Sheep beautifully adapted to the locality they occupy. No one knows their origin: they are indigenous to the soil, climate, and pasturage, the locality on which they graze, they seemed to have been formed for it and by it." There was a Sheep walk in Norfolk stocked jointly with Lincolnshire and Norfolk Sheep, the first large and inactive, the others agile and light. This walk contained a variety of soil, one part lying low, yielded a plentiful but coarse herbage; the other, lying higher, had a dryer, lighter soil, and bore a hard benty grass. The Sheep of both kinds were bred on this walk, yet, whenever they were turned on it, they would, in a short time, separate themselves even to a Sheep, the Lincolnshires would draw

off to the Lincolnshire soil, and the Norfolks to their own dry sandy loam; and while there continued to be a blade of grass in both parts, the two breeds would keep themselves perfectly distinct.*

The first authentic record of English Sheep is that the Romans established a woollen manufactory at Winchester, about A.D. 50, and since that early time, till the beginning of last century, the notice of Sheep has been small; at one time they seemed to be valued for their wool, at another for their milk for cheese making, and latterly for their flesh.

In passing to describe the varieties of the present day, I must tell you that I found it impossible to obtain trustworthy information from books, for, as a rule, they are not of a very recent date, and are few in number. It will be my endeavour to point out the Origin and Distribution, together with the Breeding and Wool, and Mutton producing qualities of each breed, time will not allow of me enumerating all the celebrated breeders in each variety, so that I mention none but my informants.

The breeds will be considered in the order they occupy on plan (see page 2), which is based upon the colour or character of their tegumental appendages, wool, horns, and hair.

LONG WOOLS.

LEICESTERS.

No matter how other varieties of Sheep may rise in public estimation, this breed will always maintain a name, and justly so, for with it we have the prototype from which so many flockmasters have reaped unknown benefits.

It is now more than a century and a quarter since the celebrated Robert Bakewell, of Dishley, conceived the idea of selecting his flock with a view to their permanent improvement; he set to work upon what was known as the Old Leicester, a long-wooled Sheep—coarse in every sense of the word, a bad feeder, with bad wool, and, above all, bad mutton. After ten years of careful breeding, he managed to let a Ram for the large sum (?) of 17s. 6d. in 1760. Youatt remarks “he had great difficulty in inducing the farmers to act upon his plan; his whole scheme of improvement

* Marshall's, Norfolk.

was ridiculed and opposed, and most of all by those who lived in his immediate neighbourhood." It was not until the year 1780 that he began to receive a remunerative price for them, then the long deferred turn in the tide of fortune occurred, his enemies became his best friends, and, with Bakewell at their head, they formed the Dishley Society, which was for the thorough improvement of the Leicester breed. In 1789, he (Bakewell) made 1200 guineas by three Rams, and 2000 guineas by seven others, he likewise received 3000 guineas from the above Society for the use of the rest of his flock.

From that day to this, the breed has been designated the New Leicester, and with the exception of a slight increase in size and in weight of fleece, they are precisely what Bakewell left them. Mr. R. W. Cresswell, of Ravenstone, informs me that the Leicesters are now to be found principally in Yorkshire, although some of the best strains still remain in their native county. A pure Leicester may be distinguished by the following characteristics:—

"Hair on face and legs white, seated upon a dark blue skin; face somewhat elongated; ears long and thin, with plenty of wool about them, and this should also extend well underneath the body; the animal stands close to the ground; fore quarter well developed, neck full and broad at the base, seeming to project straight from the chest, so that there is, with the slightest possible deviation, one continued horizontal line from rump to poll."

The wool from yearlings averages about 10-lbs. and is worth 16d. per lb. The wethers at fifteen months old average 20-lbs. a quarter.

March is the usual month in which the Lambs fall; 100 Ewes generally produce about 135 Lambs.

Leicester Sheep have been used most extensively for crossing. Many established breeds of the present day having some Leicester blood in their veins.

BORDER LEICESTERS.

Here we have a striking example of the changes effected by careful selection and alteration of food. These Sheep take their name from the border counties of England and Scotland, where

they were originally introduced about the year 1767, direct from Bakewell's stock. Mr. John Usber, in his admirable little work on the "Border Flocks," gives a somewhat lengthy description of the breed, from which I take the following extracts:—"While the Yorkshire Leicesters have a blueness in their faces, and a tuftiness in their legs, the Border variety is white and clean in both and more, what are generally called upstanding Sheep. The head is of fair size, and devoid of wool, profile slightly aquiline; eyes full and bright, the ears of fair size, well carried; the animal has plenty of bone, and is clad with wool of medium texture; they move with a graceful and elastic step; which, in the Leicester Sheep as well as in the human species, constitutes 'the poetry of motion.'"

Mr. Jacob Wilson's yearlings cut between 8 and 9-lbs. of wool, and their average weight is from 18 to 20-lbs per quarter.

LINCOLNS.

These Sheep are chiefly confined to the Chalk Hills or Wolds, and the Marsh districts of Lincolnshire, but many are to be found in the contiguous counties of York, Nottingham, Northampton, and Leicester. Nothing definite is known about their origin: the earliest record being that of Ellis, who wrote at the commencement of last century. He remarked they were "the longest-legged and largest-carcassed Sheep of all others, and they carried more wool than any Sheep whatsoever." Thus we see they have been noted wool-bearers for nearly two centuries.

The present Lincolns, according to Mr. H. Dudding, of Wragby, were improved some 30 years ago by the introduction of Leicester blood. The carcass is now almost equal to that of the Cotswold. The colour of hair on face and legs should not be too white, the ears being spotted with black, and fine lustrous wool evenly planted all over the body.

The average fleece from yearlings is 12-lbs., worth 15d. per lb., but they have been known to cut as much as 26-lbs. of washed wool. It is on this account that they are in such high demand for the colonies; the above named gentleman lately sold two prize Rams for 300 guineas, to go to New Zealand.

The Ewes are good nurses, but not particularly prolific, bringing 120 per cent. of Lambs.

The yearlings, when sent to market, do not average more than 20-lbs. per quarter.

COTSWOLDS.

Native to the Cotswold Hills in Gloucestershire. We hear they were celebrated in the 15th century, and about that period some were exported to Spain, where, by gradual selection and judicious crossing, they are said to have been developed into the Merino (?).

It is generally accepted that the Cotswold variety is the largest framed Sheep in the world. Mr. Russell Swanwich, of the R. A. C. Farm, remarks:—"A pure Cotswold should have a bold handsome carriage; head well elevated, and surmounted with a good "top knot" of wool; face somewhat long, and covered with hair of a white colour, the same applies to ears and legs (frequently the white hair is of a brownish tint, or very slightly grey, and still the animal may be considered pure-bred)." The fleece should be what is called "lustrous;" that is, the locks should be large, curly, and have an individuality, so that they separate easily.

The yearlings clip on an average 11-lbs. of good lustrous wool, and when well fattened, are sent to the butcher weighing from 26 to 28-lbs. per quarter: their mutton is not of the best quality, fat predominating to a great extent. The Ewes bring Lambs amounting to about 125 per cent.

Cotswolds are to be found principally on their native hills, but many flocks exist in the adjacent counties, and large numbers are annually exported to America and the Antipodes.

KENTISH OR ROMNEY MARSH.

Peculiar to the marsh districts of Kent is this breed, without any satisfactory record of its origin. "Real thorough-bred Kents are the most delicate of any." They somewhat resemble Lincolns, having white faces and legs with an abundance of wool all over the body. When crossed with Leicesters (as many are) they become hardy and thrive well on the cold exposed grass lands of the county.

Mr. Robert Russell, of Dartford (my informant on this breed), won the 1st prize and gold medal at the Paris Exhibition last year for Kentish wool, this leads one to conclude that the Sheep carry a valuable fleece. It is long in staple, fine in quality, and of a bright lustrous character.

Kent is not a very good feeding district, but some yearlings have been brought to the Smithfield Show weighing 65-lbs. per quarter.

DEVON LONG WOOLS.

This variety is bred extensively in the three western counties; it took its origin from a cross between the old Barmpton breed and new Leicesters, in some instances Lincolns and Cotswolds were used. They were named Devon Long Wools some twenty years ago by a Mr. Featherstone, an Auctioneer; the reason why he chose the name is obvious.

Mr. R. Corner, of Williton, remarks: "They were for many years shown in Leicester classes, but, attaining such large dimensions, their purity was questioned, and they now stand alone." They have white hair on face and legs; with sometimes a little blue skin underneath (showing their Leicester extraction), in most cases there is a tuft of wool on the forehead and wool well down the legs.

Fat wethers at 14 months old will cut 10-lbs. or more of clean washed wool, and this after being shorn as Lambs, when the clip is from 2½ to 3-lbs. each. When sold as yearlings the wethers average 24-lbs. per quarter.

The Ewes lamb early, and bring about one-fourth twins.

TEESWATERS.

This name is derived from their original locality, the vale of the River Tees, which separates Durham from Yorkshire.

The old Teeswater was a very large framed, open woolled, clumsy animal, but noted for being very prolific; not only were twins usual, but Ewes very frequently dropped three and even four Lambs.

By crossing with Leicesters their carcasses have been much improved, and they now cut valuable fleeces. They muster in large quantities at Market Weighton Fair.

OXFORDS.

The origin of this breed is tolerably well known, for it was established some fifty years ago by crossing Hampshire Down Ewes with Cotswold Rams; but in some few cases Leicesters and Southdowns were used. Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, and Bedfordshire may be considered their habitat. Mr. Charles Howard's definition is that "A pure Oxfordshire Down should have the face and legs of a nice dark (brown) colour, the head well covered with wool; a fleece not too open but thick on the skin; a deep symmetrical body on short legs, with a good firm touch."

The word "Down" is generally accepted as signifying a short woolled Sheep. This variety having partly descended from Longwools, the term is undoubtedly misapplied; but setting aside nomenclature, the breed is one of the best results of modern crossing, for it possesses a big frame, good constitution, and a large clip of wool. The mutton is of fair quality.

The average fleece from Tegs is about 11-lbs., and the mutton weighs some 20 to 23-lbs. per quarter.

The Ewes yearn early, are good sucklers, and fairly prolific.

DARTMOORS.

This race may be found in the southern and western parts of Devonshire and the east of Cornwall. Some 80 years ago the old Dartmoor Sheep had white faces, and were horned; but a cross having been effected with a speckled face south Devon Ram by a Mr. Candy, of Samerton, a considerable variation was wrought in their character; for they are now devoid of horns, have speckled faces, and a good large curly fleece extending well over the body.

On the authority of Mr. James Drew, of Artiscombe, I insert a very high average for wool, he informs me that his yearlings cut an average fleece of 14-lbs., this weight surpasses that of the celebrated Lincoln. (I can testify to the wool being long in staple, for he sent me a lock measuring over 2-ft. in length of fibre). His wethers, which are not turned on the moor, average at Christmas (when they would be about 22 months old) 25-lbs. per quarter.

The Ewes bring 115 per cent. of Lambs.

MOUNTAIN (SCOTCH).

The mountainous districts in the extreme north-west of England, and also the greater portion of Scotland, are stocked with this breed. Tradition relates that they were originally imported from some foreign country to Ettrick Forest by a Scottish king. Mr. Hindson, of Shap, thus describes them: "Hair on face and legs black and white (darker the better). Face of medium length, terminating at right angles with the nose, and broad between horns, which should be deep and flat, somewhat similar to a half-moon, and about 26 inches in length," though this is often exceeded. These Sheep as a rule have necks too low as well as long, the back short and deficient in breadth, but the frame is deep, and the hind quarters well developed.

The average weight of fleece from yearlings is about 5-lbs., now worth 6d. per lb.

When fed as yearlings they would weigh about 12-lbs. per quarter; but on account of small expense it is usual to keep them till three years old.

Both sexes are horned.

LONKS.

A corruption of the first syllable of the word Lancashire.

These Sheep are to be found on those bleak and lofty hills, which form a boundary between the counties of York and Lancaster. Nothing whatever is known of their early history; but, like other mountain breeds, they exist where "lowlanders" would quickly starve. This has been amply proved by Mr. Jonathan Peel, of Knowlmere, a gentleman who, by careful breeding, has done much to raise the variety to its present standard. His flock is thus distinguished: hair on face and legs black and white, these colours should be distinct and sharply defined (not mixed together so as to form a muddy grey); horns, which sometimes attain the length of 40 inches, strong, well grown, and open away from the cheek. The wool, of fair quality, averaging $6\frac{1}{2}$ -lbs., should extend down to knees and hocks, belly and breast being also well covered.

The male portion of the flock is allowed the privilege of retaining the tail. The females are docked and are horned, but of course in a less degree than the Rams. The Sheep on these hills "live and die unknowing of a turnip," consequently, the yearlings are sold to be fed elsewhere.

SHORT WOOLS.

RYELANDS.

Well known, says Youatt, in the year 1343.

At that early period they were widely spread throughout the midland and western counties; but now, unfortunately, and for no apparent reason, they have lost ground, few flocks being found except in the counties of Hereford and Worcester. Mr. T. Duckham thus describes the character of a Ryeland Sheep: "They have white faces and are polled; their body is cylindrical, and grand upon the loin, thus giving the appearance of a little drooping at the rump; the legs are good, fine in the bone, and short; and the whole animal is, with the exception of the nose and feet, well and thoroughly covered with extremely fine and close wool, so much so that frequently its eyes are completely hidden from view."

The Ewes are good nurses and prolific, bringing 120 per cent. of Lambs.

The wool is exceptionally good, realizing the highest price in the market. The yearlings weigh about 17-lbs. per quarter; the flesh is much esteemed by the epicure, and commands a high price at that fashionable and salubrious town, Malvern.

CHEVIOTS.

Native to the Cheviot Hills, which serve as a boundary between England and Scotland, or, as legend asserts, the first of them were imported into this country by the Spanish Armada; some of the shipwrecked vessels were drifted on the western isles, and some Sheep, managing to swim to shore, started a new colony.

About one hundred years ago they were vastly improved by a Mr. Robson, who travelled throughout England to see if he could find an animal from which they would be likely to derive benefit by crossing. He is said to have purchased several Rams in Lincolnshire which thoroughly answered his purpose.

A modern Cheviot possesses the general conformation of a border Leicester, the main difference being in the fleece, which is short in staple, but thickly planted over the carcase. The head is covered with white hair, devoid of wool; the legs are clothed after the same fashion.

The average weight of fleece, when the Sheep have been kept on the hills, amounts to about $4\frac{1}{2}$ -lbs. The mutton averages 15-lbs. per quarter, but some two-shears exhibited at last Islington Show turned the scale at 2-cwt. 1-qr. 2-lbs.; they were bred by my informant, Mr. Walter Johnstone, Moffat, Dumfrieshire.

SOUTHDOWNS.

There is something supremely excellent about these animals. They take their name from the Sussex Downs, where record tells us they were found more than two hundred years ago. From those original Sheep I believe the Southdown of the present day has descended without taint or admixture; for if we look at breeds which most nearly resemble them in character, we see that a single cross would throw them entirely out of their present groove.

They are not confined to any particular county or district; but distributed throughout the eastern and southern counties.

Mr. Henry Woods (Agent to Lord Walsingham) has kindly given me his opinion respecting the breed, it is as follows: "A South-down Sheep should have what I would call a thorough-bred-shaped face, of dark mouse colour, and legs of same tint; a clear intelligent eye; ears well shaped, and thoroughly covered with their natural down; a well covered poll, with an absence of dark wool between the ears; a well formed, nicely curved, fully developed neck, shoulders properly attached to the body (and not, as is too often the case, a mere supplementary article—affixed to the animal after the other parts are completed), wide between the fore legs, and well developed fore quarters; straight back, wide hips, and well sprung ribs; good haunch, and nicely turned rump end; good dock, properly placed, deep and wide thighs, short legs, so placed as to give proper power of locomotion; the skin should be of a clear bright light pink colour and the wool close, fine, and abundant."

The mutton is of delicious flavour, and fetches a higher price than any other kind.

Fat Sheep at 15 months weigh about 16-lbs. per quarter.

Darwin asks the question, "When will Sheep be brought to their highest standard of improvement?" I think he has only to look at pure Southdowns for a satisfactory answer.

SHROPSHIRE or MIDLAND DOWNS.

The ancestors of this important breed are known to have existed on Cannock Chase, in Staffordshire, and Morfe Common, a tract of waste land in the southern division of Shropshire, for upwards of four hundred years. These Sheep had small horns, dark brown faces and legs, and close wool. I should be in error if I maintained that the present variety has been exclusively bred from the Heath Sheep above mentioned; a little Southdown blood was introduced many years ago, the other merits are due to hereditary disposition and careful selection.

These Sheep made their first appearance in the show yard when the R. A. S. E. held its first meeting at Shrewsbury in 1845. In 1853 the same Society held its meeting at Gloucester, when, through the instrumentality of the late Mr. Holland, special prizes were offered for Rams and Ewes, which caused a spirit of competition, the result of that meeting induced the breeders to memorialize the Council to recognise the Shropshires as a distinct breed, since which their class has been more numerously represented than any other in the show yard. In the midland counties they reign supreme, excluding other varieties, but they are to be found in almost every part of the kingdom, thriving on a variety of soils, from Cornwall to Scotland; they are kept extensively in Ireland; and large numbers are shipped to the colonies.

Mr. R. H. Masfen's definition of a pure Shropshire is as follows: "A dark brown face, amounting almost to black, the jet or very black is objectionable, as with it there is a tendency to black wool. A head not too long, well set on and borne by a strong muscular neck; the poll must be well covered with wool, which must extend to the extremities of the body, being of a close character. Shoulders oblique, and good cylindrical ribs; rump not too large, but leg of mutton well developed within and without; and legs standing well outside the animal."

The Ewes are more prolific than any others, frequently producing 160 per cent. of Lambs, and in one instance I know of, it amounted to 175 per cent. in a flock of 150.

The wool, which is of excellent quality, averages from yearlings 10-lbs. per fleece; the mutton, of superior flavour, averages 20-lbs. per quarter.

The following is an extract from Journal of the R. A. S. E. :
 "A very large number of Rams of this breed are kept for stock purposes. At the annual sale held last year (1877), Mr. R. H. Masfen sold 58 at an average price of £22 8s., and Mr. Evans sold 39 at an average of £23 4s., whilst at the sale of the noted entire flock of Mrs. Beach, 34 Rams made an average of £33 12s. each, and the whole flock of 452, nearly half of which were Lambs under seven months old, made an average price of £13 14s. 6d. each."

HAMPSHIRE.

The present breed of Hampshire Down Sheep may generally be stated to be the result of a cross between the old Wiltshire and Sussex Sheep. The old Wiltshires (which it is believed had existed for centuries) had horns, Roman noses, and coarse bone; they finally disappeared early in the present century to make way for the improved breed of Hampshire Downs, now sometimes termed Wiltshires or West Country Downs, which are to be found in Hampshire, Wiltshire, and a large part of Dorsetshire.

The head of a Hampshire Sheep is very characteristic of the breed: a Roman nose, large pendulous ears, and prominent lower jaw, are points easily recognised. "A good specimen of the breed should have a large frame, a broad straight back, deep chest, and good girth behind the shoulders, legs well abroad and adapted for travelling, hair brownish-black on face and legs (too black a colour oftentimes carries with it a less proportionate amount of flesh, and also a tendency to black wool, which it is well to try and avoid)." The above is the definition given by Mr. T. Chapman Saunders, of Dorchester.

The Tegs at a year old weigh over 22-lbs. per quarter, and cut about 5½-lbs. of wool of fair quality, but short staple (now worth 1/4 per lb.).

Although the ancestors of this variety had horns, the tendency to throw up these appendages is almost obsolete.

DORSETS.

These Sheep are confined mostly to Dorsetshire and the Isle of Wight, where they have existed from time immemorial. Mr.

Henry Mayo, of Dorchester, says he believes that "a century or two back, eyes and noses were black, which is seldom now seen, and generally objected to." A pure Dorset of the present day answers to the following description:—"both sexes are horned, these appendages should be nicely curled and with at least an inch of wool between them where they protrude from the head; face and legs white, wool close and fine with length, no hair about the breech, short legs, wide chest, tail well up, and animal good through head."

This variety has long been celebrated for producing Lambs which are ready for killing at Christmas (when they weigh about 11-lbs. per quarter), for this purpose the Ewes take the Ram very early, and in October they drop their Lambs, which amount to about 130 per cent.

Lambs for stock purposes fall in December, in the following summer they are shorn, the clip being about 2½-lbs., but at the next shearing time they cut as much as 6-lbs.

EXMOOR.

Native to and bred chiefly in the north of Devon, the western part of Somerset, and district around Exmoor, is this pretty little variety of mountain Sheep. According to Mr. R. Shanger, of North Molton, the best Exmoor flocks "have white faces and legs, with good forelocks and body well covered with close wool of fine quality."

Their mutton is good, and fetches a proportionately high price in the market; they stand on short legs, have good backs, and are altogether very symmetrical. Both sexes are horned.

The yearling Tegs cut about 6-lbs. of wool, and the price varies little from that of other short wools. The mutton amounts to 16-lbs. per quarter.

HERDWICKS.

The origin of this variety, like that of their neighbours the Cheviots, is exceedingly doubtful. Undated tradition tells us that many generations ago, a Spanish vessel was stranded on the sandy coast of Drigg (West Cumberland), and that about 40 small Sheep managed to save themselves from the wreck; they were taken pos-

session of by the Lord of the Manor, and turned upon the adjacent hills, where they evinced a peculiar sagacity of foreseeing the approach of a snow storm. A little before its coming, they clustered together on the most exposed side of the mountain, where the violence of the wind prevented the snow from lodging. This instinct caused them to be regarded with a degree of superstition. They were called the Herdwick breed from the custom of farming out a flock to a Herdsman, who took part in lieu of wages. They are small animals, with short wool averaging from $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 4-lbs. (worth 6d.); it greatly needs improvement, for it is very coarse. The colour of hair on face and legs is light grey, the ears being white. The rams only are horned. The wethers are fattened and sold off at 4 years old, when they average 14-lbs. per quarter. My informants were Messrs. Nelson and Wilson, of Cockermonth .

WELSH MOUNTAIN.

Native to Cambria, where they gain sustenance from the scanty herbage of the mountains; the best specimens of the race are kept on the eastern side of Wales. Mr. Howell Harrys, of Yestradowen, who took the prize for Welsh Sheep at the Meeting of the R. A. S. E. at Cardiff, thus describes their characteristics: "hair on face, ears, and legs, grey, horns of the Ram generally spirally twisted two or three times (the Ewes are seldom horned). The wool is heaviest over shoulders and back, being rather deficient underneath, average weight of fleece, 3-lbs." They are not killed till 3 or 4 years old. Owing to scanty food and bad shelter, the Ewes do not rear more than 80 per cent. of Lambs.

RADNORS.

An old but celebrated breeder of Radnor Sheep is of opinion, that they were established in the last century by a cross between Welsh Ewes and hardy Ryeland Rams. The mountain pastures of Radnor and Breckonshire are mainly stocked with this race. Mr. Penry Powell, of Knighton, describes them as having "yellow or tan coloured face and legs, a well set neck, open shoulders, fleshy back, well sprung ribs, heavy hind quarter, and a long thick tail; they are well covered under and over with very close wool, except

the back of the thighs, twist, and tail, where it is rough and strong; this denotes hardness and good constitution." The Rams in some instances are horned.

Many Sheep with grey spotted faces and legs are called Radnors, but they are a cross with the Clun Forest breed.

The fleece averages 5-lbs, and the mutton at 3 or 4 years amounts to 15 or 20-lbs. per quarter.

CARNARVONSHIRES.

This variety is native to the counties which border on the north coast of Wales. According to Mr. Griffith Jones, of Mold, "they have light brown hair on face and legs. The males are furnished with very large horns, which curve in very much, but the Ewes are generally polled. As a rule, the fore quarter is deficient, but the hind (like that of most mountain races) is well developed." The tails are not removed.

The Ewes lamb in March or April, and the number of twins is very small. The yearlings cut about $4\frac{1}{2}$ -lbs. of wool, and weigh 11-lbs. (average).

NORFOLKS.

This peculiar variety of Sheep has been found in the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk from time immemorial. Some 40 years back they were kept in large quantities, but at the present day, it is the exception to find a farm stocked with them. They have been supplanted by the more modern and improved varieties.

Youatt thus describes them: "carcase long and slender, face and legs black or mottled, face long and thin, flat on the forehead and pointed at the muzzle, the countenance lively, and expressive of mingled fear and wildness."

With this variety I draw to a close my remarks on British Sheep; other breeds I know do exist, but they are small in quantity, and of so little importance, that I should be trespassing on your time if I enumerated them.

Part II.]

THE
MANAGEMENT OF A FLOCK
ON A LIGHT LAND FARM.*

Having given you a description of the various breeds, I now pass on to say something about the Breeding, Feeding, and General Management of Sheep, for it must be evident to all, that no matter how pure and well constituted the Flock may be (in these days of advanced agriculture and artificial feeding), it will require the strictest attention on the part of the master and shepherd, or the death rate will soon become alarming.

I presume it has not been the good fortune of one man to have spent any length of time observing the habits and management pursued in each of the different breeds which have been noticed in this Essay; I must own, that the practical part of my experience has been confined more particularly to the "Shropshire Downs," and the Management of a Flock of these Sheep I shall now endeavour to describe; but before doing so, it devolves upon me to state, that I am indebted to my brother, Mr. Joseph Beach, The Hattons, Penkridge, Stafford, and also to his shepherd, for supplying me with many of the facts contained in this part of the paper. You must understand, that the Flock about which I am speaking, has been kept mainly for Exhibiting and Ram breeding purposes; but I shall avoid touching upon these matters as much as possible, and treat of it (the Flock) with a view to the production of wool and mutton for the market; it is necessary to state, that the Sheep in question have been kept on a farm of 225 acres,

* Strictly speaking, the Farm in question does not consist of very light land, it is more of a medium character; but I chose the above term to distinguish it from the clay land system.

mostly arable, on the New Red sandstone formation, with a lay of grass land some 4 miles distant. The standard number of breeding Ewes kept was 120.

The duty of the Flockmaster now comes under consideration. Some people remark, any man can breed Sheep, provided he has capital, and a good trustworthy shepherd! but it would be easy to enumerate instances where Sheep breeding has proved an utter failure, simply because the owner was ignorant of that one grand maxim, "change." "No animal (says Professor Simonds) derives so much benefit from a change of food or pasture as the Sheep," and in this I am sure he is well borne out by every practical Sheep farmer; consequently, the flockmaster should "fore-cast" as much as possible, by providing yearly such necessaries as swedes, common turnips, clover root, with rye grass, vetches, mustard or rape, cabbage, and also a sufficient supply of hay or fodder. A good quantity of hurdles should be at hand, for it is the rule now-a-days to have large open fields to facilitate cultivation, and without a proportionate number of hurdles, it is impossible to give "removes." Iron ones are preferable, and at this present time they are very cheap, costing about £7 10s. per ton.

In the ensuing remarks I shall detail the various operations as they occur monthly, commencing in the autumn.

October is the month in which turnip feeding should commence. The Tegs are now taken from the clover root or stubbles, and, preparatory to swede feeding, they are folded upon common turnips for about two months, this, with "dry food," prevents the scouring which would otherwise ensue; a fresh "remove" is given every morning, and also "dry food" in the following proportions: bran and malt dust of each $\frac{1}{2}$ a bushel, cut chaff 2 bags, to 100 Sheep; a plentiful supply of hay in rack is always before them, and it is indispensable that they should have access to rock salt, which may be in box fixed on end of rack. I cannot too strongly advocate the method of steaming chaff, not only is it rendered more digestible, but it is a fact, that old and musty hay which the animals otherwise reject, may, by this simple process, be converted into a food they will eat with avidity; besides all this, myriads of parasitic germs are destroyed by the high temperature.

The breeding Ewes are now on the meadows, the tugging season not finishing before the first week in November, when the Rams should be removed, and placed in a small paddock by themselves, a few roots being given them if required.

At the beginning of December the Tegs (with the exception of Ewe Tegs) are removed to the swedes, which have been cleaned and placed in heaps, with straw and earth over them, at regular intervals about the field, for the purpose of more evenly manuring the land; the Sheep are limited to a certain area, but are allowed fresh ground day by day in proportion as the swedes are consumed; after they have taken well to their new fare, a $\frac{1}{4}$ -lb. mixed linseed and cotton cake is added to their dry food, the swedes are cut or sliced with a machine and given in troughs three times a day; of course it is necessary to have the Ram Tegs in separate division.

The Ewes must now be prepared for the lambing season, by giving some dry food, in the shape of bran and chaff, and a few common turnips may be drawn on to the meadows for them once daily. (We hear of fearful losses in some Flocks where the Ewes have been badly looked after in the very trying winter which has just terminated). The shepherd should be careful to remove at once any Ewe that has "aborted;" in a few days (if well) she can be sent to turnips, and fattened for the butcher, or put back (in a week or two) to the Flock; in many cases they prove good breeders in future.

January.—The method of feeding the Tegs is the same as last month, with this exception, their cake is increased to $\frac{1}{2}$ -lb. each per day, or, in place of it, they may have $\frac{1}{4}$ -lb. of split peas or maize. About the middle of the month, the earliest and heaviest lambing Ewes should be taken into a "fold" at night, and supplied with some pulped roots, bran and chaff (mixed). A very serviceable lambing fold may be erected at a trifling cost with some old railway sleepers, $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch pine boarding, and thatch; the outer sides may be gas tarred over, and, as a sanitary precaution, the inside (at least, as high up as the eaves) must be thoroughly whitewashed. When the Ewes have finished yeaning in the spring, the place must be cleaned out, and thoroughly whitewashed or disinfected; these measures, if perfectly carried out annually, would do much to avert

the prejudice which now exists against permanent lambing yards. The shepherd should also have some structure wherein he can constantly keep a fire, for at this time it is often necessary to bring weakly Lambs to the fire just after they are born. The best kind of house is made of wood, with stove, for he invariably has to warm some Cow's milk for the twins and triplets; the house should be on wheels, so that it may be drawn to any part of the farm; it proves very useful as a receptacle for corn, &c., in the summer.

With February, the lambing season commences in earnest, and it is as well to fold all the Ewes at night, so that they may be under the immediate supervision of the shepherd, who should go with his lantern and look them over four or five times during the night, rendering assistance in any difficult case of parturition; but he should not be too hasty at giving help, unless the Ewe has given up straining, when he may examine her per vaginæ, after anointing his hand and arm with some carbolized oil; after any operation of this kind, the Ewe must be kept in for two or three days, and not exposed if the weather is at all rough. After the first 24 hours, a Ewe (in ordinary cases) may be turned out to grass during daytime, but in again at night; weakly Ewes should have a little linseed cake. All Lambs must be "ear marked" as soon as they are dropped; this avoids any mistake that might occur with regard to their sire.

The Togs remain on the swedes through this month, and at beginning of March, their cake may be increased to $\frac{3}{4}$ -lb. each per day.

The lambing season is now at its height, the oldest may with their dams leave the yard entirely and be put on clover during the daytime, but at night they must be removed to meadows where they have some common turnips or mangolds, but these must be given sparingly during frost. If Sheep are allowed to trample on clover which is frosted, they will damage the plant very much.

April.—We ought now to have come to the end of the lambing season when they should all be out of the yard and on clover root as last month, special attention being paid to those Ewes having more than one Lamb; Ewes with only one Lamb may be put upon some late sown common turnips, giving a remove to fresh ground

every day. "Lamb Hurdles" constructed with rollers should be provided, so that they may pass through and pick in front of their mothers, they may also have a little corn with cake dust.

Castration.—Much difference of opinion exists as to how and when this operation should take place, the various methods are well known, and I should pass over the subject with little comment, if it were not that I find so many breeders resorting to the "Drawing" operation, which usually takes place when the Lamb is about a fortnight old. It simply consists of slitting open the scrotum and drawing out the testicle with the teeth or forceps. I am a strong advocate for deferring Castration until the animal has attained the age of two months, especially in a Ram breeder's flock, for this reason, Lambs undergo such a vast alteration in a few weeks, some Ewes do not nourish their offspring as well as others, and an animal which we might elect to castrate at a fortnight may grow into a good one if left for six or eight weeks, at that age it is easy to select those you wish to keep for stock purposes; the rest may be operated upon with actual cantery; three men and one boy are required for the proper performance of this operation; one man officiates with the clams and iron, a second seated on a bench holds the animal, a third catches and delivers the Lamb, while the duty of the boy is to replenish the fire with wood or charcoal, see after the irons, and keep the Lambs moving about. At the same time the tail is removed with hot iron, this far supercedes amputation with knife, for the animal seldom loses blood.

Towards the middle of the month (April) the ripest Tegs should be washed; this is done in various ways, a very simple one is to throw them into deep water, where they float about with only their heads above the surface, then baste them with a wooden rake (made for the purpose), after which they are allowed to swim out; they do not appear to suffer materially from the immersion, provided the weather be warm, a fortnight is now allowed so that the yolk may rise, they are then shorn and sent to market.

Shearing is invariably performed by hand, some passing the shears in a circular manner, others obliquely, while a third method is to go with the long axis of the Sheep's body, but whatever direction is taken, they always commence on the venter surface where the wool is scanty.

It is about this time that the swedes begin to fail, and the Tegs which were not sold must be finished up on mangolds and corn; excepting Ewe Tegs, which go to meadows.

May.—Wash and shear both old and young Ewes and Rams, giving the latter shelter if required; on the farm about which I am speaking, there is a portable shed, which has been in use for eighteen or twenty years; it consists of an old waggon supporting a large sheet zinc roof which folds up for transit; with a few straw-stuffed hurdles, it proves very useful shelter, either from the cold wintery blasts or the scorching summer rays. By the end of this month (May) the remaining Tegs go to the butcher.

Should the Lambs scour while on the clover, change them to grass, which will tend to check the complaint. (See “scour” in Appendix.)

June.—Let all Sheep have access to water and rock salt. We now arrive at that season when the flies (*Muscus Cæsar*) begin to deposit their eggs amongst the wool, and the Lambs will require careful attention morning and evening; it is as well to remove any fecal matter which may adhere to their wool, as it appears to be attractive to the insect, undoubtedly the best preventive measure is to dip the Lambs, it also destroys any external parasites investing the creature; before using any Sheep dip, it is advisable to catch a few parasites and see if the compound will destroy them. Great care should be taken in dipping Lambs, it must always be done under the supervision of the master, who should stand with his watch in hand, and see that the animal is not in the solution more than the specified time. Many of the dips contain a large quantity of arsenic, which has a very great effect on the animal if used too strong, or too long an immersion given; when the Lamb is lifted on to the strainer, a man should be at hand with a bucket of clean water and a cloth to wipe out the flanks, &c. A dull day is best for the operation, and the Lambs must *not* be allowed to go to the pastures for two or three hours. The Ewes should be closely folded, and some dipping solution poured on their backs with a watering can, or some fly powder distributed over them will answer the same purpose.

Wean the Lambs, giving a change of pasture, and look after their mother's udders, put them on poor pasture to check the secretion of milk, and draw off their milk once or twice.

Select or draft the flock, passing in young Ewes and rejecting very old ones, especially if they have lost a quarter.

July and August.—The flies are exceedingly troublesome in these months, a little bichloride of mercury or Sheep dip solution is useful to destroy maggots, and should be sprinkled on to them from a wine bottle with slit cork. Bad heads (if there are any) may be dressed with brimstone and train oil (this complaint is seldom seen amongst pure Shropshires, their heads being well defended with wool).

Ram Lambs (if any were saved) can be put on cabbage, which is a splendid change.

Rams (if any were retained) are offered for sale by Auction in the latter part of August, and a fresh stock must be sought after. In buying a Ram, see that he has not been "wormed," that, is the removal of vermiform appendix of penis; or he may prove useless as a stock getter. Select an animal with good masculine appearance, wide and deep carcase, with plenty of bone, and an abundance of wool, and above all good action.

About the end of August change the Ewes to some mustard or rape, which tends to forward them for the Ram.

At beginning of September put the Ewes on the meadows with a "Teazer," a rig is often used for this purpose, he is raddled and a piece of bagging is sewn to his wool underneath the belly, a portion hanging down, so that he can only mark the ewes, when they may be drawn out and put to any sire which is thought best, and most likely to remedy any defect which might ensue in their offspring; then, after marking them for date and Ram, they are turned out, but kept away from any ordinary flock for a fortnight, after which they go back, to see if they "turn again," this may supervene in eighteen days.

The clover by this time is nearly all scorched up by the sun, or eaten, consequently the Lambs must be removed to stubbles if not already on cabbage or early turnips.

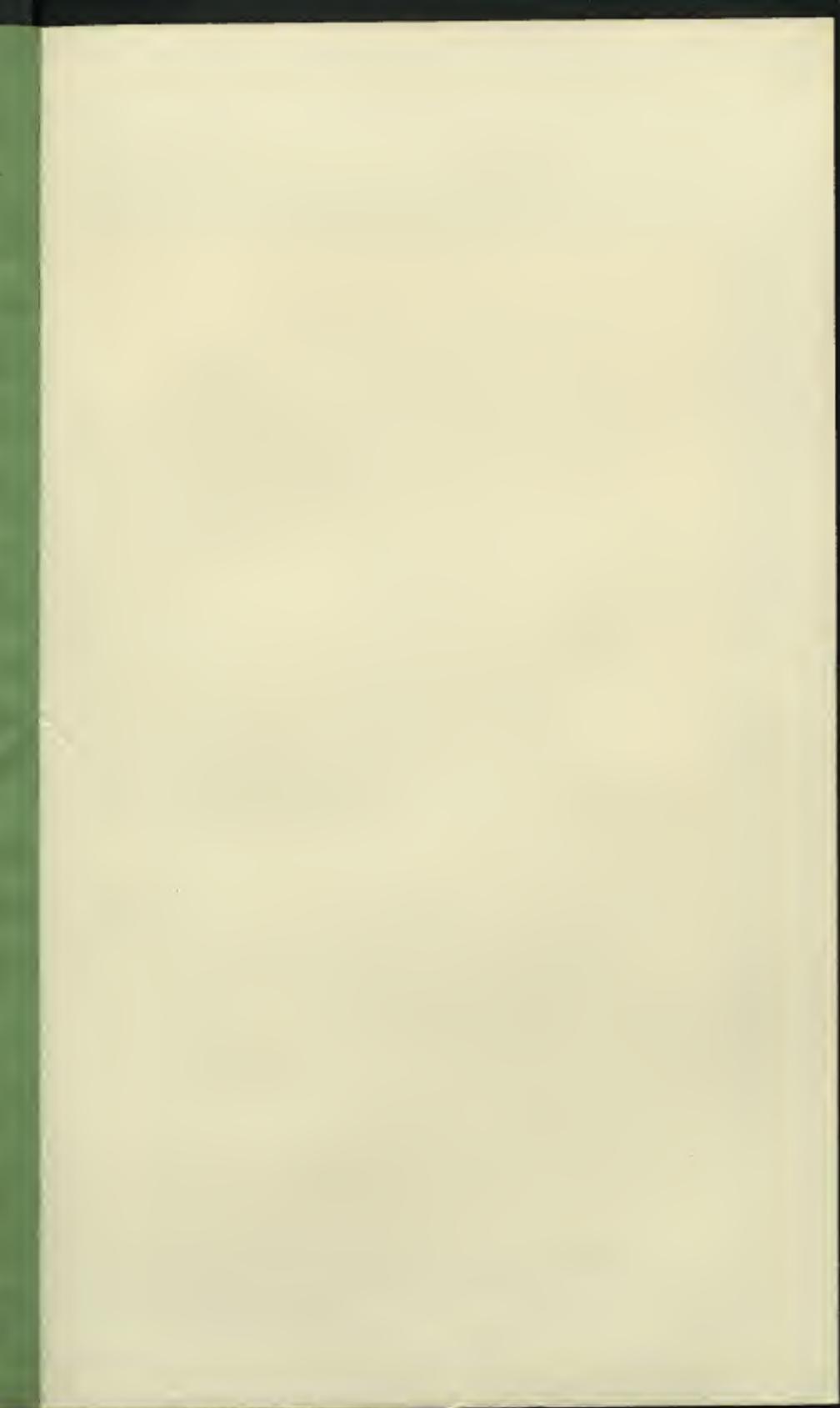
The best way of catching Sheep is to use a Crook, this is a very useful tool in the hands of a man who knows how to use it properly, they are easily caught while on the feed.

In conclusion, let me impress upon you the necessity of giving

the flock ample change of food, and that of as dry and nutritious a character as possible, especially in such wet times as we have of late years experienced, such has been the treatment pursued by those who have managed the flock in question, and their efforts have been rewarded with no mean success, as the following brief summary will show.

The flock has been established upwards of ten years, and during that time it has been awarded nearly two hundred prizes, besides silver cups and medals. On two occasions, viz. :—at the meetings of the R. A. S. E., at Wolverhampton in 1871, and Birmingham in 1876, it carried off the Challenge Cups (in the strongest competition ever known), with Rams, Ewes, Ram and Ewe Lambs, and Wethers, proving the uniform, general excellence of the flock. At the annual sale of Rams, the average price has on more than one occasion exceeded thirty guineas, prices ranging up to one hundred and seventy and two hundred guineas for a single Ram.



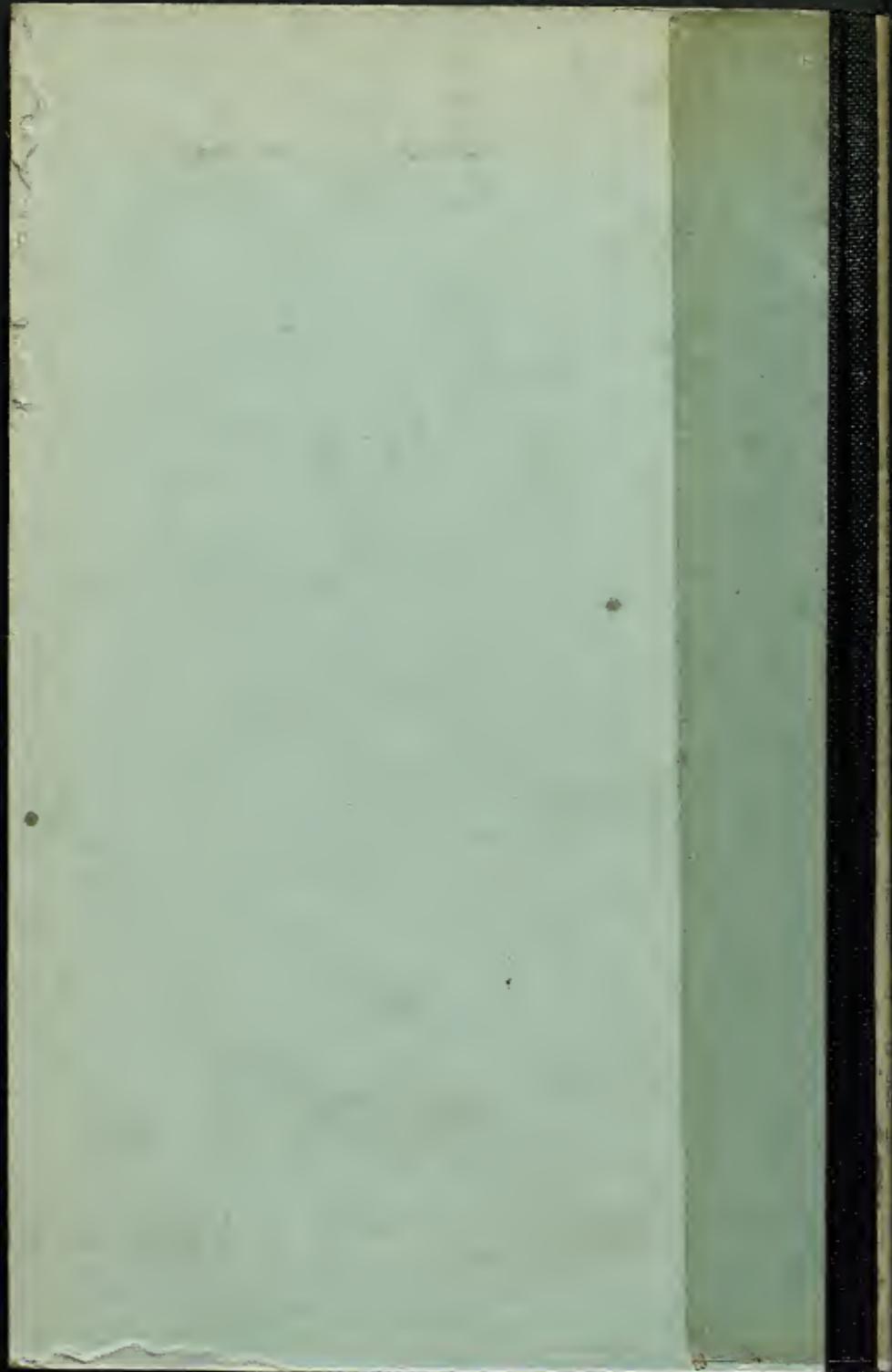


SOUTHAMPTON UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Date of Issue

--	--	--	--





ALBERT J. STARRS
110 YEARS
1874 - 1984