

SHEEP, THEIR TYPES AND CHARACTERISTICS.

NO. II.

Sheep are commonly classified according to the characteristics of fleece. Thus results the terms Fine Wool, Long Wool, Middle Wool, so familiar in breeding and exhibition circles. Each of these grand divisions are subdivided into varieties more commonly designated by their peculiar habitat, the name of the breeder most intimately identified with their development, etc. The typical animals of these divisions are so unlike in size and general appearance as to leave upon the mind of the novice an impression that they belong to an entirely different race; while between certain of their numerous subdivisions the resemblance is so striking as to require the critical eye of the expert for determining their proper designation.

Variations in size and form and covering that distinguish the several breeds of sheep have resulted from the widely differing natural and artificial surroundings, breeding, treatment, to which their ancestry for a series of years have been subjected—indisputably emphasizing the facility with which this indispensable animal adapts itself to every condition in which it may be placed—indicating it as a most desirable adjunct of husbandry, in all its gradations, from the lowest to the most advanced stage.

Much of the confusion that overtakes the inquirer in his study of the breeds of sheep, and the numerous varieties of each, could be obviated by the employment of a more discriminating nomenclature. The necessity for properly designative and generally accepted terms is no where more apparent than in the literature and language relating to this industry. Localisms and misnomers are inadvertently adopted by writers and speakers, until the student is entangled in a labyrinth of terms from which he can extricate himself only by careful study and observation. Dr. Randall, to whom indebtedness is acknowledged for invaluable contributions to the literature and knowledge relating to sheep husbandry, recognizing the embarrassment that results from the thoughtless use of terms by writers and speakers, suggested and observed the following, which, though imperfect, if gen-

erally adopted, would go far toward making plainer the meaning of those discussing the various types of the sheep:

"The term *breed* is applied to those extensive and permanent groups of sheep which are supposed to have had, respectively, a common origin—which exhibit certain common leading characteristics—and which transmit those characteristics with uniformity to their progeny. * * The term *variety* is applied to different national branches of the same breed. * * The term *family* is used to designate those branches of a breed or variety found in the same country, which exhibit permanent, but ordinarily lesser differences than varieties. The term *sub-family* is occasionally used to designate a minor group, bearing about the same relation to a family that a family does to a variety."

The multiplication in late years of varieties, especially among the Middle Wools, the result of cross-breeding among themselves and, in some instances, with the Long Wools, render a rigid adherence to the rules here laid down next to impracticable; but so far as they can be applied they should be adopted, subject to such modifications as necessity and experience may indicate as desirable.

It is of prime importance that the inquirer keeps in mind the fact that everything, or anything, said to the credit of any one breed or variety is not necessarily in derogation of any other breed or variety. Sheep breeders, like the champions of some other domestic animals, too often fail to appreciate at their full value the merits of other types, by reason of their inability to look beyond their own favorites—which are to be labeled "best" before others are allowed to pass under judgment. From this class come those breeders of Long Wools who essay to write down the popularity of Merinos; and their comrades in delusion are those Merino fanciers who see in Cotswolds and Leicesters nothing but "lumbering carcasses" while living, and "masses of tallow" when dead. Mortals are not elevated to the skies by pulling angels down, nor are the merits of any animal advanced in popular estimation by defamations of its rivals. No sheep combines all that is desirable in a wool-bearing and meat-producing animal; though none are without some claim upon popular favor. THE GAZETTE, while seeking and laboring for the improvement of all, is the champion of no breed at the expense of its fellows.