

SHEEP AND WOOL.

Sheep Husbandry in the Columbia Region.

We publish this week three several communications, from experienced Wool Growers, that cover the entire ground of sheep husbandry and wool-growing in the Columbia Valley. The editorial comments that accompany each are all that is needed and the subject could not be left to better hands. We have sought to furnish practical information concerning one of the great and most productive industries we have and so have secured these expressions from practical men who have made a success of it. Hon. John Minto, who is a self-made man, well-known as a pioneer and whose name is familiar in our political history, resides at Salem and is a practical breeder of Merino sheep; Hon. A. J. Dufur represented Oregon as Commissioner for Oregon at the Centennial; while he resides at present at East Portland, enjoying well-earned repose, his sons have large flocks in Wasco county and make a sure success as wool-growers; the last paper is furnished by a gentleman whose practical knowledge of sheep and wool covers the entire ground of discussion.

SHEEP AND WOOL IN OREGON.

History of Importing and Breeding Sheep, and of Wool Growing in Oregon. With its Present Status.

BY HON. JOHN MINTO.

The first sheep brought to Oregon, were driven from California by an American named Lease, in 1838, and there is some reason to believe that he made a second drive in 1842. They were light bodied, dry fleeced, kempy, and inferior sheep. In 1844, Mr. Joshua Shaw, and his son A. C. R. Shaw, brought the first few across the plains from Missouri. In 1847 a Mr. Fields brought a lot of good sheep across the plains. In 1848, Mr. Joseph Watt, of Amity, brought 330 head, considerably infused with Saxony merino blood, and among them were 5 rams and 2 ewes that were pure Saxony and six high grade Spanish merino ewes. In 1851 Hiram Smith brought some full blooded Spanish merinos, I never was informed as to the number. In 1854 Dr. Tolmie, of the Puget Sound Agricultural Company drove into the Willamette valley, some 1,500 head, descendants of Lease's California sheep that came in 1838, among which were some pure, or nearly pure, South Downs, Leicesters and Merinos. In 1858 Martin Jesse brought in 20 head of Macather Australian Merinos that were imported into San Francisco by J. H. Williams, U. S. Consul at Sidney in 1857. In 1859 R. C. Geer, of Waldo hills, imported Southdowns of the famous Jonas Webb breeding. In 1860 Rockwell & Jones imported French and Spanish Merinos from Vermont. Later in the same year Jewett & Lane brought in some pure and some graded French merinos. In 1861 Donald McLeod brought 150 thoroughbred Spanish merinos from Vermont across the plains. In 1864 John D. Patterson imported and sold in Oregon, French and Spanish merinos. Mr. John Cogswell imported New Oxfordshires and Hampshiredowns about 1861, and about the same date Hon. Ben Stark imported a single Cotswold ram. Since that date the late Joseph Holman, Mr. Wilson of Ohio, Thomas Cross, Mr. Wilkins, S. G. Reed, and others have imported Cotswolds and Leicesters from the Atlantic side, and James Cameron and others have imported from New Zealand and Australia. Of later date there have been importations and sales of merinos by Jewett and Munson, Peter Saxe & Sons, Severance & Peet, and Mrs. Blacow. Nearly all the sheep imported to Oregon of late were Spanish or American imported merinos, except those sent here by Mrs. Blacow, which were of the largest and highest kept style of French merino.

The resident breeders of merino sheep in Oregon at present are, Thompson & Sons and Dr. Baldwin, of Wasco county, who imported their own sheep; A. J. Dufur and Sons of Dufur, same county, who have stock of my breeding, and those from the firm of Mills & Luelling, of J. D. Patterson's importation crossed with rams imported by H. Hammond, of Vermont. In the same county are Lewis brothers, who have Australian and French merinos, I am informed. In Umatilla county are Ross & Sutherland, at Pilot Rock, whose flock is crossed with Severance & Peet's stock of Spanish merinos, were imported by Put Smith, of Walla Walla a sort of free rover in the sheep line. Near Walla Walla is located "By" Geer, a live Oregonian though he lives across the line. His stock is from the flock of the late T. G. Naylor, (Jewett & Patterson's importation) and from my neighbor T. L. Davidson's stock,

(Rockwell) Jones, McLeod, Patterson and myself contributed towards Davidson's stock.

In Western Oregon, in Douglas county, Fendel Southerlin has lately commenced with French merinos from Mrs. Blacow's stock; Judge Thomas Smith is also there, whose stock was the McLeod drove from Vermont, and I think Senator Stearns has some of the same stock crossed by Jewett & Munson sheep. In Polk county D. M. Guthrie breeds largely with French and Spanish merinos, there are a few thoroughbred merinos kept in Linn county by Mr. Knox, of Knox's butte, and by Mr. Thomas Froman, near Albany. In Marion county T. W. Davenport has a flock founded on the Naylor stock and some of mine, crossed with blood of Severance & Peet's importation. Thomas Cross, J. L. Parrish, Hon. F. R. Saxith and myself have stock begun with the earliest importation from Vermont and Australia and added to by such later importations as were thought to be a gain.

The breeders of long woolled sheep are: Mr. Wilkins & Sons of Lane county, who have the New Oxfordshires. Mr. James Richards, of Waldo hills, this (Marion) county, keeps Cotswolds; so do, I believe, Mr. Withcombe, S. G. Reed, and Robert Imbric, of Washington county. The Southdowns and Hampshiredowns are no longer kept here of my knowledge, and of late years there has been less and less interest manifested here in the best long woolled families, as flocks of them once held by Cornelius of Washington, Baker of Yamhill, and Keys of Benton, have disappeared. It is not that these breeds cannot be kept in Western Oregon and made to produce combed wool of the very best quality. The awards of first class medals by the World's fair of 1876, and more recently of Paris, and within a few weeks past at the wool exposition held at Philadelphia, proves that Western Oregon can excel, both in long combed and in fine clothing wools; but our experience proves that combed wool sheep require constant care on the part of the owners, to keep them in the proper condition. There are a few locations in Western Oregon of which this is not true. There are a few ranges of limited extent that are better adapted to long woolled sheep than to any other. There are also farmers who so keep their flock under conditions generally not favorable, that they bring to market a very good article of combed wool. But such are exceptional men at present. The general condition of the climate of Western Oregon, and the pasturage furnished either naturally or by the help of the farmer, are such that there is a steady deterioration from an average standard of Cotswold, Leicester, or New Oxford sheep. The flock grows gradually more and more leggy in appearance, the wool becomes shorter, drier and less lustrous, and in many cases the sheep, while comparatively young, lose considerable of this wool before ordinary shearing time.

For these general reasons, those who take interest enough in the sheep they keep to use any pure blooded sheep for the purpose of improvement, or even maintaining the measure of profits received from their flocks, look, in a large majority of cases, towards the merinos. This is so, to such an extent, even in Western Oregon, that I think that I am safe in assuming that at this time the amount of merino blood in the sheep of the country is equal to that of all other breeds together, common stock included. That is; I believe, the sheep of Western Oregon will grade nearly or quite, half-blood merino.

Owing to the rapid extension of wheat-farming, and an increasing use of sheep as gleaners and weeding wheat-fallows, where they are in many cases kept without water and on short feed during the following season, even the Merino blood is not sufficient to counteract the tendency to deterioration and dryness of fleece, and flocks so treated are retrograding. Also wheat farmers who thus use sheep have, as a rule, not yet adopted the plan of liberal feeding in winter, to make up, in part, for short, dry feed in summer.

Wool growers in Eastern Oregon and Washington, and, in fact, in all the country between the Cascades and the Rocky Mountains, are advancing more rapidly than those west of the Cascade range in the improvement of their wools. This advance is nearly all in the direction of the American-Improved Merino; so much so that I believe there are ten merino rams purchased for use there to one of any or all other breeds. The Southdowns and different families of combed-wooled sheep have been tried there sufficiently often to prove that the climate and other conditions of sheep husbandry in that section of country are still more unfavorable for long-wooled sheep than is the case, as I have presented it, west of the Cascade Mountains in the Willamette Valley. It is found, in practice, that in a flock of mixed breeds the long-wooled keep on the outside of the others in search of feed. Observation proves that when the short-jointed, round-bodied Merino grade, weighing 130 pounds live weight, has fed to its satisfaction and is ready to lie down, the long-wooled weighing 180 pounds, has not had feed according to the requirements of its nature and size, and in consequence is restless at camping time. During feeding hours such sheep require the constant care of the herder to prevent them from leading the flock to travel faster and farther daily than is good for it. Then, when the season renders it difficult for a me-

dium sized sheep to get a fair living—a condition suitable to growing fine wool of the best quality—the combed-wool sheep is not getting the amount of feed necessary to keep its wool in healthy growth, so both wool and sheep are deteriorating. On fresh range this is not the case, and for a while a very good staple of long-wool can be grown on such range, but the causes I have indicated very soon begin to operate, with results that fully justify the wool growers for breeding more and more towards the clothing-wool sheep.

The present wool crop of the Columbia river valley, including East and West of the Cascade range, will very nearly grade as "medium clothing staple." There are, of course, entire clips that would sort into combed, coarse delaine and noils. There are flocks of long-wools that have been kept under the most favorable conditions. There are still larger numbers of flocks of this same kind that have been bred towards the Merino, that a large proportion of "medium to fine delaine wool," according as the flock has taken the first, second or third cross towards fine wool. These exceptional lots of combed and delaine wools receive no discrimination in their favor in our local markets. The custom here is to buy wool by the reputation of the districts where it is grown, as "Douglas county wool," "Willamette valley wool," or "Eastern Oregon wool." But the observing reader will see occasionally, as in a late Journal of Commerce, quoted by the American Stockman, December 9th: "Valley, Oregon, lambs' wool (1st fleece) held in San Francisco at 31 to 32 cents; Eastern Oregon lambs, 26 to 27 cents;" while California Northern (Humboldt and Mendocino counties) are quoted 25 to 26 cents. Those wools, I suppose, are sorted and graded in San Francisco, and the Oregon grower, for the most part fails, under present methods of market, to get the full benefit of good breeding.

One main cause of this is that sheep and wool growing are but in their beginning in Oregon, and very many who are engaged in it are merely learners in the business. While some are apt to learn and soon become skillful in the management of flocks, and consequently are successful, many, and perhaps most, are merely making a living. Others are slowly failing of success at all, as they cannot adapt themselves to the occupation; but out of all this will come knowledge with experience; the men and the flocks are growing that will make this Northwest Coast region one of the first wool-growing, and, ultimately, one of the first wool manufacturing portions of the earth. God has given the conditions favorable for both occupations and man will use them to the full of their adaptations. At the late National Show of Sheep and Wool, held in Philadelphia, at which Oregon wools made a good record, W. F. Markham delivered an address before the "Convention to promote the sheep and wool industry," in which he said: "Along our Northern border is a region embracing Oregon and Washington Territory, warmed and moistened by the winds and currents of the Pacific Ocean, presenting the same peculiarities of climate and vegetation to which are credited much of the vaunted excellence of the long-wooled sheep of England." Mr. Markham is right; the climate is here, though it is not so wide in its influence as he states. It covers, however, the two counties of California I have mentioned, the Western third of Oregon, the half of Washington and the West end of British Columbia. But from East of the Cascades to Western Kansas and from Middle Texas to Alaska, is all clothing-wool country, for which the Improved American Merino is the best known breed. The portion of coast moistened by the winds of the Pacific, now occupied by wheat fields, needs, as I have indicated, something approaching English methods of husbandry, both as to wheat and sheep, to make it carry combed-wooled sheep. The lands of the coast that are most favored by these "moistened winds," however, are yet under forest and brush wild growth. A little observation will convince any one that the timber belt along our streams, the foothills, narrow valleys and bench lands of our mountain ranges, that carry grass and clover green through the entire season, are sorer for the production of such plants as the rutabaga and mangold wurtzel, than the lands of the main Western valleys, whereon natural dryness prevented timber growth, and kept it ready for the plow of the pioneer and the pasturage of his ox teams. But the millions of acres of brush and timber lands are here, Mr. Editor, waiting only for the mind and muscle that is bound to come and utilize them. Meantime, those who are here are fully occupied securing results in what seems the easiest and quickest manner. I have tried to show the present status and tendencies of our wool growing as it is connected with improved breeds of sheep. I have explained the means of improvement and how it came here and is inviting the choice of the wool grower. The field is a wide one, and in time, I have no doubt, will be fully occupied.

WOOL GROWING IN WASCO COUNTY.

BY HON. A. J. DUFUR.

The following statement of facts is an authentic record of the experience of Dufur

Bros., who have a choice flock of well-bred Merinos, that are more than usually valuable. Mr. Dufur values them at \$3 a head, and they evidently pay a large interest on that, but sheep, well bred, can be easily purchased at a much less price. The Dufurs have an excellent range on Fifteen-Mile Creek, south of The Dalles, and in addition to that they have a valuable swamp land claim 20 miles West, on the benches of the mountains, covering thousands of acres of swamp lands, that afford excellent late Summer and Fall pasture. They are exceptionally well fixed, and besides have natural talent for keeping sheep to the best advantage, which is an essential to successful sheep husbandry. Those who lack this can hardly succeed under any circumstances.

EAST PORTLAND, Dec. 21, 1880.

Editor Willamette Farmer:

In perusing your excellent description of the great Columbian basin in the *FARMER* of the 3d inst., my mind involuntarily runs back to time when railroads were unknown in Oregon, and the *FARMER*, with a few of its most devoted patrons, were making an effort to bring before the public the vast natural and undeveloped resources of our adopted State.

Having been closely identified with the agricultural interests of Oregon for more than twenty years, and still believing, as I ever have, that no State in the Union possessed as many advantages for the legitimate accumulation of wealth, and the re-establishment of independent homes, as does this State; and knowing that the *WILLAMETTE FARMER* is read with interest in almost all of the older States, where one of the all-important questions in the overcrowded districts is: "Where can we find safe investment for independent homes?" I will, with your permission, give your readers my views and experience in wool growing and sheep husbandry in Eastern Oregon and Washington Territory. It cannot be expected that a detailed statement will be made in one short article of all the eligible locations for sheep husbandry in a territory of country so extensive that some of our Eastern States might be overlooked as a little patch of territory not worth settling on. And as it is too frequently the case in describing a country for a writer, with a single stroke of the pen, to declare it to be the finest place in the world for everybody and everything, I shall, in this communication, simply give facts and figures as far as my own experience goes in sheep husbandry in Eastern Oregon.

I might, with propriety, refer to the fortunes realized by such men as Frazier, Moore, Field, Rogers, Smith, the Grants, Waldrons, Thompsons, Fargars, and hundreds of others who have come under my observation in Eastern Oregon, or the grand failure of several others I know of who seemed to think they could make a fortune by investing in sheep and running them with dogs without food or shelter, let the cold be ever so severe or the snow ever so deep; but this would not give the practical business men of the East a correct idea of the necessary expenses to be incurred, and the probable profits to be derived from carefully conducted sheep husbandry in the Eastern districts of the great Columbia basin.

My experience has proved to me that a certain amount of forage, with cheap shedding and dry straw bedding is one of the best investments the wool grower can make in wintering in Eastern Oregon. It is true that hundreds of bands are carried through without extra feed or shelter, but I have invariably found that the loss in numbers, the condition in flesh, and the shrinkage in weight of fleece at shearing time has more than doubled the expense of furnishing a few pounds of hay and the light expense of shakes, boards and straw to make wind-breaks, sheds and dry bedding to protect the flock from the cold winds, rain, snow or frosts that occasionally occur in all countries that I have ever seen. It is true we frequently have winters when sheep will not touch hay if it is fed to them, but I have found that from two to three weeks is about an average time for which the flock master should provide feed and shelter for his flock. In the winter of '76-7 I find we fed about 16 days; in '77-8, 13 days; in '78-9, 2 days; and the sheep that winter would have done much better to have been left entirely on the range. In '79-80 feed and shelter was required about two weeks, and the present winter bids fair to let us off with not more than six or eight days. As our last wool and lamb crop was about an average with former years, it may not be uninteresting to some of your readers to learn the expense and profit of running a band of 1,500 ewes we had selected as about three-quarter blood Merinos:

EXPENSE ACCOUNT.

To 4 tons of salt at \$20 per ton.....	\$ 80.00
To 8 tons of hay at \$10 per ton.....	80.00
To 10 tons of straw at \$5 per ton.....	50.00
To 7 cts per head for shearing.....	105.00
To 39 wool sacks at 62 1/2 cts each.....	24.37
To man and board for herding.....	480.00
To two extranes one month during parturition.....	80.00
Total.....	\$969.37