

REPORT ON THE CANTERBURY AGRICULTURAL AND PASTORAL SHOW, 1885.

THE Metropolitan Show held in Christchurch this year was a fairly successful one, but, owing to certain regrettable causes, was not quite of such a representative character as might reasonably have been expected. The entries of sheep show a slight decrease on those of last year, but the general quality of the animals shown was of a high class; and this was specially to be remarked in the merino class. Both sections—the fine and strong combing—were well represented by sheep from the flocks of Messrs. R. Campbell and Sons, W. H. Teschemaker, R. H. Rhodes, and W. Lyttelton, in the former section, and of the executors of the late A. McMaster in the latter section. The champion ram, bred by J. Gibson and shown by Messrs. Campbell and Sons, was a grand sheep of perfect symmetry, with good bone, and a fleece showing all the requisite points of density, evenness, and length of staple in a high degree—in short, a ram that would be a credit to any show. The difference between sheep that had been housed and fed and those fed only on grass was naturally very marked, and it is greatly to be regretted that breeders are more or less compelled to pamper their animals, and consequently to increase their risks, if they wish to stand a chance of winning honours at the important shows. The long-continued practice of highly-stimulating food and the hothouse forcing system must tell on the constitutions of the descendants of these indoor animals, and cause loss and disappointment to men who use the progeny for ordinary breeding purposes. The strong combing section was remarkable for the success of the sheep bred by the late Mr. McMaster, whose flock must be of a nice level character. The English Leicesters are always a favourite breed in Canterbury, and were fairly well represented, Mr. Threkeld, as usual, carrying off the majority of the prizes. This breeder's ram and ewe hoggets were very nice sheep, level, and showing quality; in another year they should be seen to advantage. The Border Leicesters, which appear to have decreased in popular favour, judging from the poor entry, were of rather uneven character, and a few were scarcely up to show condition; but the competition was close in some of the classes. A few years ago the Lincolns were a very important feature of the show, but the demand for them has steadily decreased in favour of finer-woolled breeds; but in spite of this neglect the breeders of pure stock have not relaxed their efforts to keep their flocks up to a high standard, and the sheep exhibited this year showed a decided improvement on last year's show. Mr. Withell was the most successful breeder, his sheep being in good condition, of great substance, and carrying very heavy fleeces. The Romney Marsh were represented by one pen only, and the Cotswolds exhibited were the property of one owner, and call for no special notice.

Undoubtedly the feature in the show of sheep was the wonderful increase in the entries of Southdowns. This year a separate class was provided for them, and the number of entries was only exceeded by those in the merino class. The reason this breed has so suddenly come into favour is due to the development of the frozen meat trade, as Southdown rams have been in great demand for the last two seasons for crossing purposes, as the meat of this cross is finer in the grain, the fat and lean in better proportion, and generally of a better quality than in the ordinary three-quarter bred sheep. The sheep shown were of a high class; most of them were good conditioned, symmetrical, and very healthy looking. It was very pleasing to see that in the class for three hogget ewes the judges highly commended all the entries after awarding three prizes, showing that with the blood we have at present in the colony the excellence of the breed is likely to be sustained.

The Shropshire Downs were represented by only one ram hogget. This is much to be regretted, as the breed is a valuable one to small flock-owners, being very prolific and yielding a meat little inferior to Southdown. The Hampshire Downs were, with one exception, exhibited by Messrs. Dudley and Northey, and some of them were very fine sheep, carrying more wool and averaging a heavier weight than the Southdowns, and but slightly inferior to them in quality of mutton; they should prove a useful sort to cross with half- or three-quarter-bred ewes to get sheep for freezing purposes. In England this breed came into great favour a year or two ago, and was looked on as one of the most profitable kind for crossing with the coarser sheep, and no doubt farmers out here would have reason to value them if they gave them a fair trial. The fat sheep would have been a credit to any grazing country, all well fattened and ripe without being overloaded with fat. The merino wethers bred by Mr. L. White were a grand lot of sheep, heavy weights and unexceptional quality. The fat lambs were certainly not as good as they might have been.

Amongst the extra exhibits were three pens of hoggets bred by Mr. Little from half-bred ewes by half-bred rams, which created a great deal of interest. A breed of this kind has long been talked about, and in a few instances attempted, but either the breeders have not had the requisite patience to carry their experiments far enough or have not made the best use of their sheep; at all events the type has not yet been fixed or the breed established. The hoggets were large boned, rather leggy, but carried a good fleece of long-stapled fine wool, and of an even quality; those that were shown appeared to better advantage, as they were well fattened, good quality, and quite heavy enough for ordinary use. It is to be hoped Mr. Little will continue his experiments, and that he will succeed in fixing the type of this class of sheep, which cannot fail to be a valuable one if it is possible to get them up to good weights, like those exhibited, when only thirteen months old.

Among the cattle the Shorthorns continue to hold their popularity, no other breed coming near them in the number of entries; the total entries show a slight falling off compared with the last two years, but the character and quality are still of a high class. In the any age class Mr. Dean's imported bull Duke of Gunterstone carried off the champion medal; and, with so many of his stock on the ground, nine of which won prizes, it was easy to see he deserved it. A handsome bull of Mr. Boag's was placed second, and if he does not grow too coarse should be a valuable animal to his owner. In the two- and three-year-old classes the Gunterstone family came prominently to the fore with two bulls, which promise to grow very handsome. The cows and heifers were as good as