

tunity of discussing this somewhat pet subject of mine (cross-breeding) at one of the farmers' clubs in the south of Scotland, and I found that a large bulk of the farmers were of opinion that the inbred half-bred was not the success that the advocates of the breed claim it to be. I found the majority of the farmers of opinion that these sheep did not breed so well as the first cross between Cheviots and Leicesters. They held that lambs bred from first-cross rams are much sappier and better-thriving animals than those from the inbred sheep; indeed, some went the length of saying that they would give 4s. a head more for those got by the first-cross sheep. The advocates for the inbred sheep, on the other hand, were equally strong in affirming that such was not the case, and they contended that the one sheep bred as well as the other. I mention this matter, however, so as to show the differences of opinion which exist in the Home-country regarding the merits of sheep bred in this way.

As the ultimate result of this experiment in breeding is still in the somewhat distant future, it is perhaps unnecessary for me to refer to the matter much further; it still remains to be seen how long it will take to establish the breed as a breed, and, after it is so far established, whether the advantages to be gained by the use of such sheep are equal to the expectations of those who are prosecuting the venture. I have sheep which for four generations have been bred in-and-in, and, although a considerable percentage of the lambs require to be rejected, I find that a fair proportion—perhaps one-fourth—turn out to be sheep very much the type at which I aim. These sheep I got from Mr. Tanner, of Hawke's Bay, and are originally the result of the merino ram and the Lincoln ewe. I am keeping them by themselves, so as to follow the breeding-up and see how it results; but I am also experimenting with the Merino-Leicester cross-bred from stud merino ewes by a Leicester ram. This mode of breeding with the long-woolled ram is, I think, to be preferred to the other. I do not approve breeding from the merino ram, as it is usually found that the progeny partakes of the characteristics of the frame of the sire. The merino ram gets a considerable percentage of his lambs thin in the wither and somewhat flat in the rib, whereas the cross from the long-woolled ram, as a rule, has a good flat wither and well-sprung rib. As regards wool, I find these half-bred sheep maintain their position fairly well, and I think the inbred animal is quite equal in this respect to the first cross. Very heavy culling is necessary in order to free the flock of sheep diverse from the type which is sought to be produced, and I expect for many years that this will be necessary. I hope, however, that in the course of years the desired type will be established, and that a good useful sheep will be produced. The chief advantage to be gained in the production of the cross-bred sheep is to enable sheep-owners continuously to use the one class, and not to be compelled, as at present, to buy in merino ewes in order to keep up the ewe flocks.

The come-back sheep, which is the progeny of the strong long-woolled ewe put to the merino ram, is a very poor feeder, and one which is much disliked by graziers. I have, during the past two years, with a view to avoid breeding back with the merino ram, used first-cross sheep with considerable success, and I find that these, when put to three-quarters or seven-eighths ewes, produce a most excellent, good-thriving, and ready-fattening sheep.

In conclusion, I may say that I regret that I have not had time to make a more exhaustive paper on this subject. I would have liked to have collected a good many facts and figures as to the actual weights of wool-clip, &c., and I regret that the time at my disposal has been such as to prevent my doing this. I trust, however, that the information contained herein, although hurriedly and roughly put together, will be of some little service to the gentlemen attending this Conference.

Sir J. HALL said he was much obliged to Mr. Roberts for the information he had given on this subject. It was just the kind of information they had been looking for. He had used the English Leicester, and was quite satisfied with everything except the size, and probably, as Mr. Roberts had stated, the Border Leicester would give quite as good wool and a better carcase. He got a larger proportion of lambs from the Shropshire Downs than from the Leicesters, and that was a very important point. He would be very glad indeed to have the experience or knowledge of any of those present on the subject.

Mr. BOAG said he had listened with very great attention to Mr. Roberts's paper, and found that it bore out the facts within his own experience. He had been long waiting to arrive at a conclusion as to which was the best and most profitable breed of sheep; but the opinions of the breeders were so varied that he had given up all hope of arriving at a satisfactory conclusion. He thought that the most profitable one was the Border Leicester. He had spent a great deal of time in experimenting, and had once sent Home to a friend and told him how divided they were in this colony between the merits of the Lincoln and the Leicester. His friend wrote back, but he thought his opinion was not worth much. He said that a number of breeders had gone out of Leicesters except himself, but they had all come back to the Leicesters again. They had said they could make more money in comparison with the feed consumed—that was, with regard to the Border Leicester. He (Mr. Boag) was very fond of the English Leicester, but it was a little delicate. He liked the Shropshire Down very well. The Romney was a good sheep, and the Lincoln was a good sheep, but the latter suffered a great deal in rough country. He was pleased to be able to give the opinion of a practical man—Mr. J. Macfarlane—who remarked on one occasion, "You can improve anything by crossing with the Leicester, but no breed will improve the Leicester." The Cotswold grew to an enormous size, and clipped a good deal of wool, but he did not care very much for them, and had settled down to the Leicesters only. The paper was very valuable to flockowners; it was very practical, and contained nothing but facts.

Mr. BRYDONE said his experience in cross-breeding had extended over a quarter of a century in New Zealand, and, as most of them knew, the company with which he was connected had probably about the largest flock of sheep in New Zealand. They had something like three hundred thousand cross-bred sheep in various parts of the South Island. They imported long-wools direct from Home