

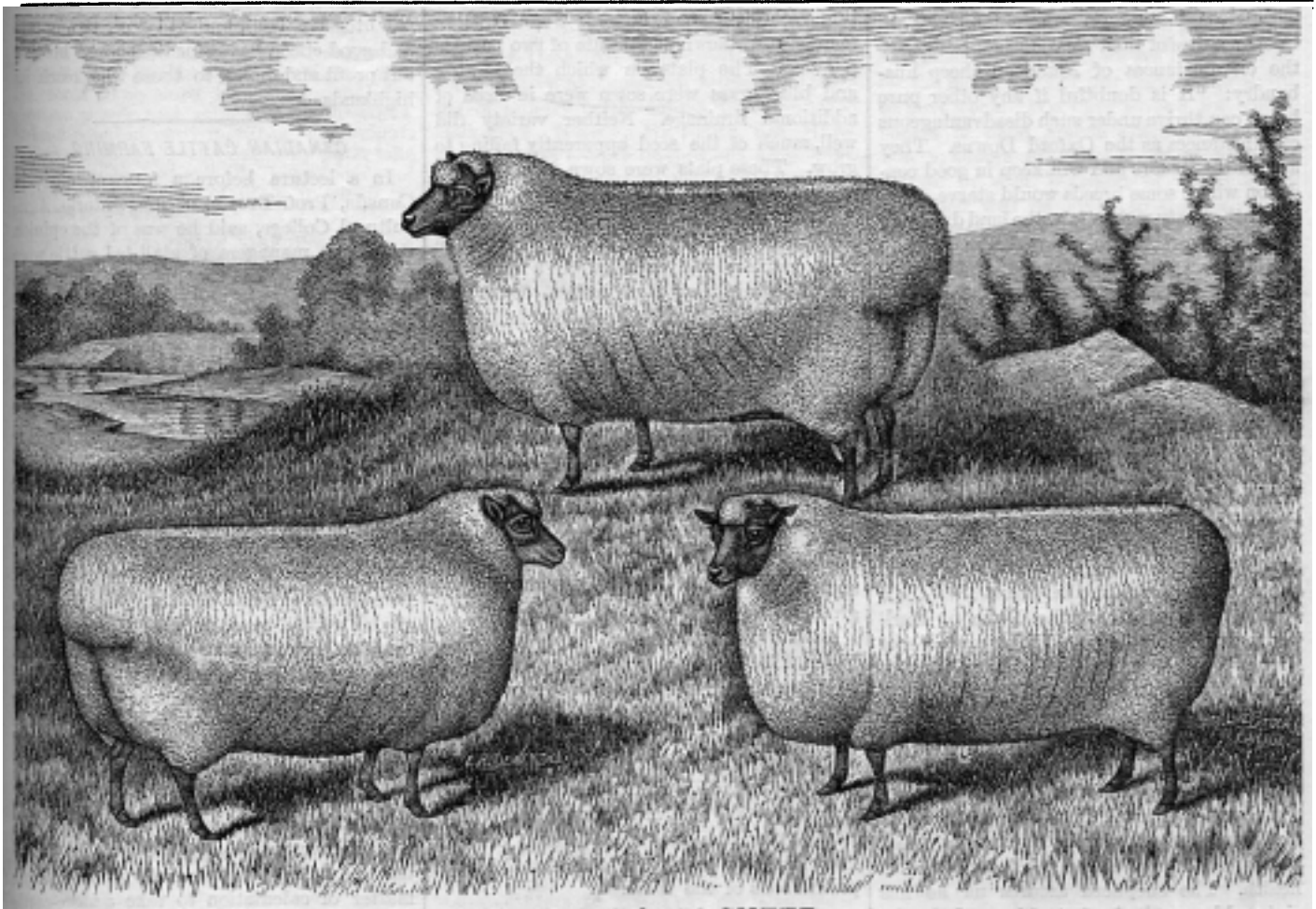
# THE BREEDER'S GAZETTE

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## OXFORD DOWN SHEEP.

OWNED BY COOPER, MADDUX & Co., OXFORD PARK, READING, OHIO.

### OXFORD DOWNS.

Until a late date Oxford Downs were but little known among the breeds of sheep in America, and even now there are many among the farmers of this country who are unacquainted with the history, appearance, or the merits of this breed, which originated in Oxfordshire, England, about 1830, from the cross of a Cotswold ram on a Hampshire Down ewe. This was followed by judicious breeding. According to the London *Field* the breed was originated by Druce, of Eyn-

ham; Gillett, of Southleigh; Blake, of Stanton Harcourt; and Twynham, of Hampshire. In the early days of the breed there may have been an introduction of Sussex Down blood.

The result of their efforts, as seen in the Oxford Downs of today, is a breed of large, prolific, easily fattened sheep, giving a heavy fleece of wool, close in texture and of fine quality. Their faces and legs are dark brown, the eyes bright, the head well covered, with no black wool behind the ears. In carcase

they should have a full loin, rump and leg, shoulders well covered, well-sprung ribs, and back straight, firm and well-covered, and a head well up, giving an active bright appearance. The proportion of lean meat is large and of most satisfactory flavor. The ewes are good nurses, early making their lambs fat. Shearling rams have been known to clip 20 lbs. John Treadwell, a noted English breeder of Oxford Downs, says of their fattening and weights:

"One great feature of an Oxford Down is

that, if well kept, it will be fit to sell fat at any time from ten or twelve weeks up to twenty-two or twenty-three months old, and it keeps on gaining in flesh from a fat lamb at forty or fifty pounds dead [dressed] weight, up to a Christmas wether of 200 or 240 lbs. dead weight. They come to great weights as ewes and rams when arrived at maturity. I myself have had ewes as heavy as 256 lbs. dead weight, and once a ram of 337 lbs. dead weight."

As to the hardiness of this breed, those who have had long and intimate acquaintance with them say that they are unsurpassed. Geo. Adams says upon this point: "I think the Oxfords are the best of sheep at hurdles, or to lay thickly together, or in large numbers, as they possess, with uniformity of character and hardiness of constitution and large frames, a good fleece, aptitude to fatten, and mutton of superior quality." John Treadwell remarks that "they are kept upon both arable and grass farms, and do well with close folding on arable land." T. S. Cooper writes of their especial adaptability to the circumstances of American sheep husbandry: "It is doubtful if any other pure breed can thrive under such disadvantageous circumstances as the Oxford Downs. They are hearty feeders and will keep in good condition where some breeds would starve. Provided the pasturage is fair, the land dry (with open sheds erected in exposed situations to shelter them from violent wind and storms) and the snow not too deep, the Oxfords will pick up a living in mid-winter;" and "When circumstances render it necessary to confine them closely, the Oxford Downs will suffer less than any other breed of equal size."

Freeland is a representative Oxford Down ram, now eight years old, and is yet strong and vigorous. He has won many money prizes and medals—more, we are assured, than any sheep of his age in Europe—some of the more important of which were seven first prizes at the principal agricultural shows of England in the years 1875-76; a special prize given by the Duke of Marlborough; champion at Hants and Berks Society's show in 1876, and several money prizes of from four guineas to ten pounds sterling. This noble animal is now and will remain in the flock of Messrs. Cooper, Maddux & Co., of Oxford Park, near Reading, Ohio. In answer to inquiries about him they write, under date of Dec. 23, 1881: "Freeland is now eight years old, as strong and vigorous as ever, and a perfect picture of health. The shepherd assures us he has sixty odd ewes in lamb to him, and that he was the surest getter he used this season." With a show of justifiable pride they add: "We would be pleased to hear of a ram of any other breed that has won as many prizes as Freeland has, and is the sire of as many prize winners as he is."

There can be little question that the Oxfords will prove a most valuable addition to the number of good breeds of sheep in this country, and we have no doubt that intelligent breeders of pure strains will rejoice at their appearance as candidates for public favor; for it has been repeatedly shown that

an increase in the number of rivals in the field has ever resulted in greater and more determined efforts to reach perfection, and that this creates increased interest in the vast army of farmers in whose favor the breeder finds much of the hoped-for reward. In this business competition is certainly the life of trade—and the more there is of it, within reasonable bounds, the better for all concerned.