



EGYPTIAN SHEEP.

SHEEP.—Egypt is not a pastoral country, and but scant attention is paid to these animals. They are considered a sort of by-product. When attention is paid to them, however, they yield excellent profit. The ram lambs at five months sell at from sixteen to twenty shillings. No care is bestowed on selection, and breeding from “weedy” rams renders the stock deficient in quality. The duties of the shepherd are light, as the flock is always under his eye at

pastures. A very good idea of the Egyptian sheep can be gathered from the illustration.

But the time is rapidly approaching when all this may be changed ; for sheep-farming may be looked upon from its double advantage of their increasing popularity for food purposes and their value for the extension of a system of animal manuring, and thus supplying, by feeding off crops, one of the great wants of the country. To a great extent the poor class Egyptian has been a vegetarian, but, with the increase of riches and prosperity in the country, Mr. Wallace in his address speaks of the growing demand for animal food, especially mutton ; while he reminds his listeners that one of the ways in which an Arab honours his guest is by furnishing his feast with a whole roast lamb.

The Prophet Mohammed, in his sanitary laws to his followers, teaches them to partake of mutton, in his wisdom and knowledge of its superiority to the flesh of the ox, which is considered unclean, pointing to the fact that even in his day cattle were known to be affected with some form of tuberculosis, which might possibly be eaten and thus imparted to the unfortunate partaker of the unwholesome food.

A special choice of site for sheep farming is necessary, as a matter of course ; but portions of the country may easily be selected where they can be kept with advantage—in the Nubarea, for instance. For not only is the land itself undergoing change in its nature, but politically as well. Under

the present form of government and the protection to the cultivator which has been the natural result, the farmer is becoming freed from the risks of the past; for, unfortunately, in consequence of a certain inborn notion that has existed among the native Egyptian that everything he covets may be annexed, it has been found absolutely necessary by the grower of sheep to keep an exceedingly sharp eye over his tempting flocks, which have had to be dealt with as if they were in an enemy's land. Driven into folds at night, this has not been sufficient; for as there is a want here of that breed of savage dogs fostered for their protection by the Albanian shepherds, the Egyptian shepherd has to be supplemented by watchmen ready to stand sentry over the flocks by night.

Sheep feeding progresses well during the time of the growing crops; but as these pass away, that form of farming and feeding which may be looked upon as quite modern in its application has proved most advantageous to the keeper of sheep: we mean the plan which agitated the public mind to so great an extent a decade or two back—ensilage—when our country rang with reports of experimental building of costly silos, or the sinking in suitable places of cement-lined tanks in which the newly-cut crops of green cattle food were piled or stacked, rammed down for preservation, and made into what one facetious writer stigmatised as “cattle jam.” The idea of the inexperienced was that this treatment of the green grass or clover would result either in rotting or fermentation, with spontaneous

combustion to follow, as in the case of a too hurriedly made hay or corn rick in a moist harvest time. But the operations of Nature are as wondrous as they are puzzling, and it was found in our own country that the crop preserved in its silo could be kept for a reasonable length of time, and then cut out in an appetising state, ready for the cattle in a season of scarcity.

Answering so well in Europe, with its frequent rains and superabundant moisture, it is bound to be successful in comparatively rainless Egypt, where the clover can be cut at the exact necessary period and kept ready for use as required—a fact which is likely to give a great impetus to sheep-raising in such a pastureless country as the Delta.