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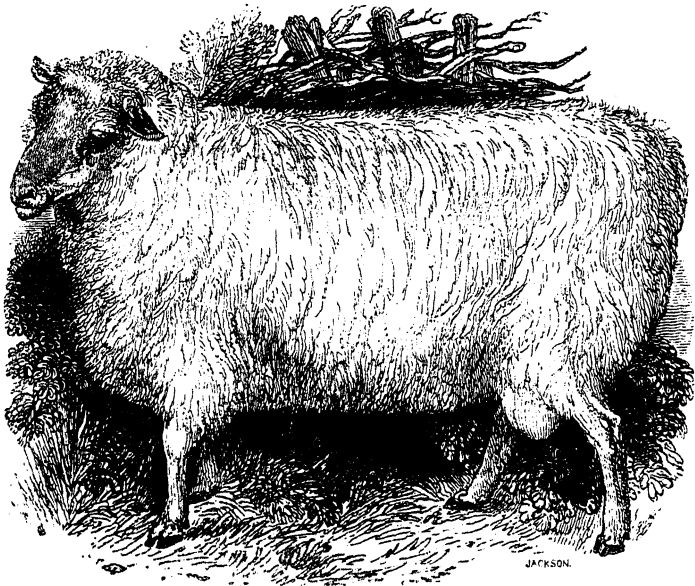
# S H E E P:

THEIR

BREEDS, MANAGEMENT, AND DISEASES.

TO WHICH IS ADDED

THE MOUNTAIN SHEPHERD'S  
M A N U A L.



THE LEICESTER RAM.

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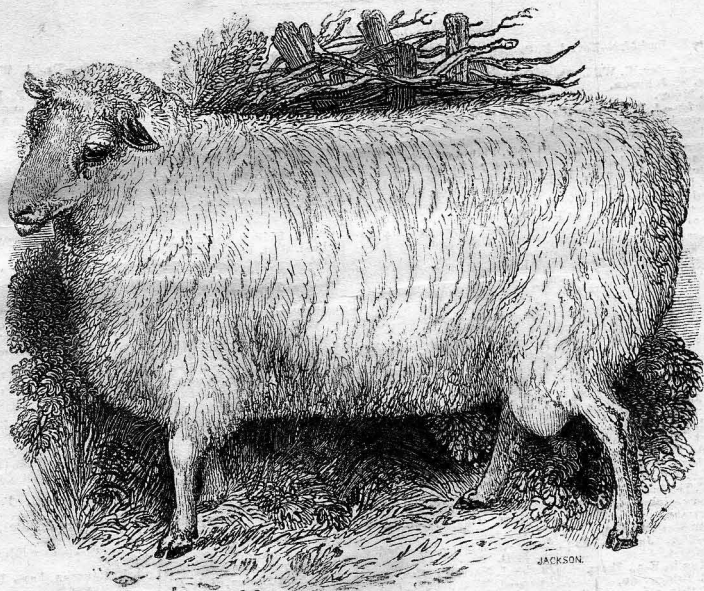
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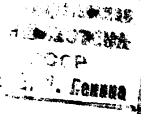
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## P R E F A C E.

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THE cultivation of the sheep and the manufacture of the fleece have, from the earliest period of history, formed the most important branches of the agriculture and the commerce of Great Britain. Many years did not pass after the subjugation of our island by the Romans, ere the most valuable and expensive woollen robes, and worn on days of ceremony alone, were furnished by the British factories. The language of Dionysius Alexandrinus, quoted in the present volume, could be justified only on the supposition of very superior excellence: "The wool of Britain is often spun so fine, that it is in a manner comparable to the spider's thread."

It was not in the larger factories alone that the conversion of the fleece of the sheep into fabrics of various kinds was carried on; this formed a constant and a large portion of the domestic employment, and that not only in the cottage, but in the palace. The mother and the sisters of that patriot monarch, Alfred, whose name will be venerated as long as British liberty remains, devoted much of their leisure time to the labours of the spinning-wheel. So universal, in fact, was this employment, and, consequently, so numerous the animals from whom the material was obtained, and the fabrics that were devoted to domestic use, that the sheep and its wool were early and unequivocally acknowledged to be the foundation of the national prosperity and wealth. Wool became the substitute for money. Did any domestic contention exist, so many pounds of it were demanded from each vassal—was any foreign enterprise attempted, the wool furnished the sinews of war—or, was a monarch to be released from captivity, the ransom was calculated by the number of sacks of wool. In all the middle periods of British history, the fleece was the expression and the measure of national prosperity or calamity.

If, in process of time, other branches of commerce should be opened, and particularly the introduction of the silk manufacture begin in some measure to lessen the demand for woollen goods, and the establishment of the cotton trade cause a complete revolution in the consumption and the value of the staple commodity of the kingdom, still the sheep and its fleece are objects of paramount importance. No fewer than 32,000,000 of these useful animals graze on our pastures. Exclusive of the value of the carcase, that of the fleece alone cannot be less than seven millions of pounds sterling, employing nearly 350,000 individuals, and ultimately yielding manufactures to the amount of at least twenty-one millions of pounds annually.

The recollection and the deep impression of these things must be pleaded, if apology is necessary, as an excuse for the laboured detail, given



in this volume, of the history of the sheep from the earliest period to the present day—and also for the minuteness with which the different qualities of the fleece and the different manipulations of the manufacture have been described.

To the discovery of the serrated construction of the fibre of wool, so beautifully explaining its felting property, the author does beg leave to assert his unequivocal claim. More than one physiologist had maintained that a structure like this would best account for the property of felting; but the author of this work was the first who had seen and given ocular demonstration of its existence, and of the increasing number and firmness of the serrations in proportion to the felting property of the wool on the one hand, and their decrease in development and in number where that quality failed. The microscope of Mr. Powell fully and fairly brought this out. It was one of extraordinary power. In other microscopes which the author has had especially constructed, the serrated edge remains, but not that difference of serration which would enable the examiner to pronounce *unhesitatingly and accurately* on the character of the wool. He pledges himself, however, to follow up the inquiry—an inquiry which will be successfully pursued by some observer at no distant time; and, when he is enabled honestly to do so, he will publish a collection of the microscopic appearances of different wools, with an especial regard to their felting and manufacturing qualities.

The medical treatment of sheep is comparatively a new subject. The author has to acknowledge many very important communications from old and valued friends. He does flatter himself that some addition has been made to the stock of veterinary knowledge as it regards this animal; and he trusts that the time is not far distant when the good common sense of the British Farmer, and the determination of a wise and patriotic government, will cause a knowledge of the diseases, and general management of these useful animals, to form a prominent object in the education of the veterinary surgeon.

W. YOUATT.

June 15th, 1837.