

## SHORTER ARTICLES AND CORRESPONDENCE

### OTTER SHEEP

THE following account of the "otter" sheep occurs in Vol. III, p. 134, of President Timothy Dwight's *Travels in New England and New York*; New Haven, 1822. It is more explicit than any I have seen before, and may be of interest to naturalists. The date of the journey in which this account appears was about 1798.

Mendon, the township mentioned, is in Massachusetts, about eighteen miles southeast of Worcester.

"In this township, if I have been correctly informed, an ewe, belonging to one of the farmers, had twins, which he observed to differ in their structure from any other sheep in this part of the country; particularly the fore legs were much shorter, and were bent inward, so as distantly to resemble what are called club feet. Their bodies were, at the same time, thicker, and more clumsy. During their growth they were observed to be more gentle, less active, less inclined to wander than other sheep, and unable to climb the stone walls with which this region abounds. They were of different sexes: The proprietor, therefore, determined on an attempt to produce a breed of the same kind. The attempt was successful. The progeny had all the characteristics of the parents, and although they have since multiplied to many thousands have exhibited no material variation. I am further informed that the breed has been crossed with a breed of sheep common in this country; and in all instances to the date of my last information, the lambs have entirely resembled either the sire or the dam; and have never exhibited the least discernible mixture.

"These sheep are called the Otter breed from a resemblance to the animal of that name. Their flesh is said to be good mutton; and their wool not inferior to that of common sheep, either in quantity, length, or fineness. But their peculiar value consists in the quietness with which they continue in any enclosure. In a country where stone walls are so general as in many parts of New England, it would seem that sheep of this description must be almost invaluable."

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