

Sheep, *n. sing.* and *pl.* [A. S. *scap*; Ger. *schaf*.] (*Zövi*.) The common name of the genus *Ovis*, belonging to the *Cavicornia*, or Hollow-horned Ruminant family. Naturalists are by no means agreed as to what was the original breed of this invaluable animal, which is, in modern farming, almost equally important for furnishing the farmer with a dressing of manure, and the community at large with mutton, clothing, and other necessities of life. Of the several varieties of wild *S.* which have by naturalists been considered entitled to the distinction of being the parent-stock, may be mentioned: 1, the Musmon (*O. musmon*), still found wild in the mountains of the larger islands of the Mediterranean and European Turkey; 2, the Argali (*O. ammon*), or

wild Asiatic *S.*, which are the tenants of the highest mountains of Central Asia, and the elevated, inhospitable plains of its northern portions; 3, the Rocky Mountain *S.* (*O. montana*) (Fig. 2350), which is found on the mountains of N. America; 4, the Bearded *S.* of Africa (*O. trageloptus*), found on the high lands of Egypt and in Barbary. The leading fact in the geographical history of this genus is that it occurs both in the New and the Old World, whereas the goat tribe are naturally unknown in America. It is usually regarded by naturalists as being not only specifically, but generically, distinguished from the goat tribe; but some authorities, on the other hand, are inclined to believe that the generic separation is founded chiefly upon characters which have arisen from the influential power of man. In a state of nature, the *S.* is scarcely less active or energetic than the goat; its dimensions are greater, its muscular strength at least equal, both in force and duration. It is also an Alpine animal, and among its native fastnesses, bounds from rock to rock with almost inconceivable swiftness and agility. The main characteristics of the four unsubdued races of *S.* mentioned above are as

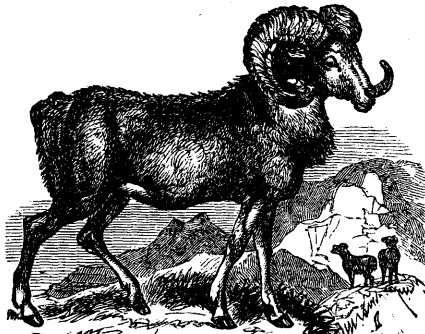


Fig. 2350. — ROCKY MOUNTAIN SHEEP,
(*Ovis montana*.)

follows:—The *Musmon* measures about three feet and a half in length, and its height, at the highest part of the back, is about two feet six inches. The neck is large, the body thick, muscular, and of a rounded form. The limbs are robust, and the hoofs short. The horns of the male are nearly two feet long. The body is protected by a short, fine, gray-colored wool, of which the filaments are spirally twisted, and by a stiffish silky hair, of no great length, yet sufficient to conceal the wool beneath. It is gregarious in a state of nature, and seldom descends from the highly-elevated portions of the mountains on which it dwells. The general opinion of naturalists is that it is from this species the domestic breeds have been obtained.—The *Bearded S.* of Africa has the hair on the lower part of the cheeks and upper jaws extremely long, so that it forms a double or divided beard. The hairs on the sides and body are short, those on the top of the neck somewhat longer, and rather erect. The whole under-parts of the neck and shoulders are covered by coarse hair, not less than fourteen inches long; and beneath the hair, on every part, there is a short genuine wool, the rudiments of a fleecy clothing. The tail is very short; the horns, which are about two feet long, approach each other at their base, and diverge outwards.—The *Argali*, or Wild sheep of Asia, measures about three feet in height at the shoulder, and five feet in length. His horns are nearly four feet long, and placed on the summit of the head, so as to cover the occiput. They nearly touch each other in front, bending backwards and laterally, and then forward and outward. The female is of smaller size, and her horns are nearly straight. The name of *Argali*, applied to this species, is the Mongol name of the female; the male is called *Guldschah*.—The *Ovis montana*, or Rocky Mountain sheep of America, is larger than the largest varieties of our domestic breeds. The horns of the male are of great dimensions, arising a short way above the eyes, and occupying almost the entire space between the ears, but without touching each other at their bases. The hair in this species resembles that of a deer, and is short, dry, and flexible in its autumn growth, but becomes coarse, dry, and brittle as the winter advances. There is no country where more attention has been paid to the improvement of the breeds of sheep, both foreign and domestic, or where more success has been attained, than Great Britain. The many varieties of sheep which tenant Great Britain and Ireland may be conveniently divided into two classes; the first consisting of sheep without horns, and the second of sheep with horns. Of the first class are, the *New Leicester sheep*, the characteristics of which are fineness and fulness of form, an early maturity and a propensity to fatten, a diminution in the proportion of offal, and the return of most money for the quantity of food consumed; the wool not so long as in some breeds, but considerably finer.—The *Cotswold sheep*, which have been long celebrated for the fineness of their wool, and which have been gradually improved by crossing with the Leicester sheep. Their mutton is fine-grained and full-sized.—The *Dartmoor sheep*, which have white faces and legs, some with and some without horns, small in the head and neck, and generally small-boned, carcass narrow and flat-sided.—The *Southdown sheep*, which takes its name from a tract of down extending more than sixty miles in length,

through parts of the counties of Sussex, Surrey, and Kent. The wool is short, close, and curled, and free from spiry projecting hairs. The flesh is finely grained and of good flavor.—The *Romney-Marsh sheep*, which have long but coarse wool, much internal fat, and much hardihood, and require no artificial food during the hardest winter but a little hay.—The *Cheviot sheep* are a peculiar breed, which are kept on the extensive range of the Cheviot hills. They have the face and legs generally white, and the body long; their wool is short, thick, and fine; they possess very considerable fattening qualities, and can endure much hardship both from starvation and cold.—Of the *Horned sheep*, the chief varieties are:—The *Dorset sheep*. They are a good folding sheep, and their mutton is well flavored, but their principal distinction and value is the forwardness of the ewes, who take the ram at a much earlier period of the year than any other species, and thus supply the market with lamb at the time when it fetches the highest price.—The *Shetland sheep* are small and handsome; hornless, hardy, feeding on even sea-weed, and with soft and cottony wool.—The *Hebridean sheep* is the smallest of its kind, even when fat weighing only twenty pounds.—The most important breed of sheep as regards the texture of the wool is the *Merino* (*O. hispanica*), in modern times brought to the greatest perfection in Spain, though their originals probably formed the flocks of the patriarchs thousands of years ago, and have been the stock of all the fine-wooled sheep. Unlike the British breeds, they have wool on the forehead and cheeks; the horns are very large and heavy, and convoluted laterally; the wool is fine, long, soft, twisted, in silky spiral ringlets, and naturally so oily that the fleece looks dingy and unclean from the dust and dirt adhering to the outside, but perfectly white underneath; the form is not so symmetrical as in many English breeds, and there is generally a loose skin hanging from the neck. They readily form cross breeds, called *demi-merinos*, which have been brought to great perfection in France, whence, as well as from Spain, they have been imported into America.—Of the other remarkable varieties of the genus *Ovis* in different parts of the world, we may mention the *Fat-tailed sheep*, common in Tartary, Arabia, Persia, and Egypt, the tail of which is so loaded with fat that it alone frequently weighs 20 pounds.—The *Many-horned sheep* of Iceland, and the most northern part of the Russian dominions, which has three, four, or five horns, sometimes placed with great regularity, and sometimes differing in proportion and situation.—The *Cretan sheep*, chiefly found in the island of Crete, but kept in many parts of Europe on account of the strangeness of the appearance of its horns, which are remarkably large, long, and spiral; those of the male being upright, and those of the female at right angles to the head.—The *Fat-rumped tailless sheep* met with in all the deserts of Tartary, and which have long legs, a somewhat arched visage, horns, in the male, like those of the domestic sheep, large pendent ears, and a tail so enveloped in fat as to be scarcely visible.—The *African*, or *Guinea sheep*, a native of all the tropical climates, both of Africa and the East. The distinguishing characteristics are—a rough, hairy skin, short horns, pendulous ears, a kind of dewlap under its chin, and a long mane, which reaches below the neck.—Different names are given to the sheep, according to its sex and age. The male is called a *ram* or *tuss*. After weaning, he is said to be a *hog*, *hogget*, or *hoggerel*, a *lamb-hog*, or *tuss-hog*, or *teg*; and if castrated, a *wether-hog*. After shearing, he is called a *shear-hog*, or *shearing*, or *dimmort*, or *tuss*. After the second shearing, he is a *two-shear ram*; and so on. The female is a *ewe* or *gimmer-lamb* till weaned, and then a *gimmer*, or *ewe-hog*, or *teg*. After being shorn, she is a *shearing-ewe* or *gimmer*, or *theave*, or *double-toothed ewe*; and after that a *two-* or *three-*, or *four-shear ewe* or *theave*. The age of the sheep is reckoned, not from the period of their being dropped, but from the first shearing.