

# SHEEP RAISING IN AMERICA

**S**HEEP raising is one of the chief activities of the American rural domain, and it is one that has shown a constantly expanding scope year after year, seemingly without much regard to the good years and bad which are so visibly reflected in many of the other occupations of the farming community. It is interesting to note that sheep are associated with man in the earliest records of the human race. They were first used only for milk, and later the skins were used for clothing. Up to about a century and a half ago wool was the primary consideration in sheep raising, but about the time mentioned an Englishman began the first systematic and intelligent improvement of mutton sheep and it is a question whether this is not now the most important branch of the industry both at home and abroad.

The mutton sheep was rather slow in invading America. The wool-producing Merino (which came originally from Spain) was monarch of all he sur-



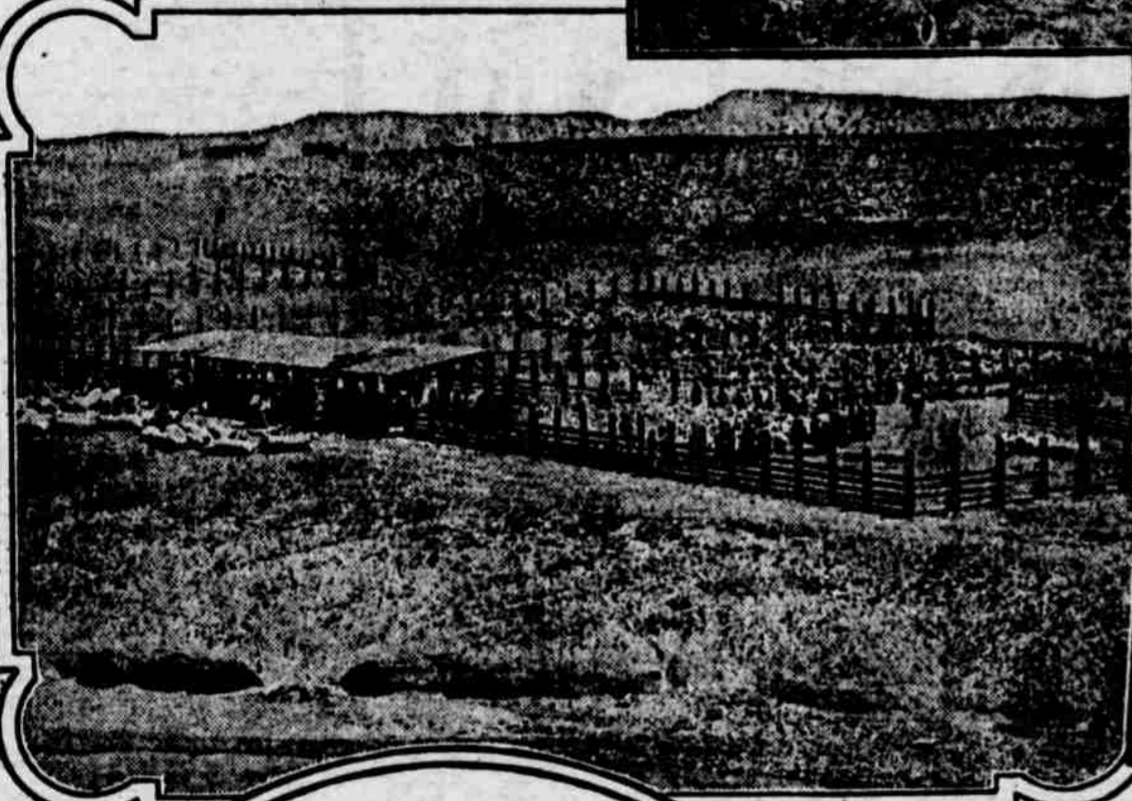
A YOUNG SHEEP RAISER



SCENE ON TYPICAL NEW MEXICO SHEEP RANCH



A SHEEP HERDER RIDING THE RANGE



SHEEP RANCH IN NEW MEXICO PROSPEROUS SHEEP RAISER'S HOME



A WESTERN SHEEP RANCH

veyed on this side of the Atlantic for many years and many a farmer paid almost fabulous prices for sheep having no adaptation to anything except wool production. Perhaps this state of affairs was due to the impression that so long held away that the American people were pre-eminently a nation of pork eaters and had little appreciation for good mutton. Whatever justification there may have been for this in the past it certainly ceased years ago. A depression in the price of wool some score of years ago was very influential in bringing about a change of conditions, and once started the new movement in behalf of mutton sheep swept all before it. Indeed, in some years a single market, such as Chicago, has shown a gain of fully a million sheep over the twelve months preceding. Canada sends great numbers of mutton sheep to this country as well as considerable quantities of wool.

The experience of later years has proven that the rich lands and abundant feeds of the United States are well suited to the economical production of superior mutton and the furthermore mutton sheep if properly selected can grow a large part if not all of the wool demanded for American manufacturing. Experts declare that there is no greater error than the impression on the part of many people that sheep are suited only to inferior land. To be sure, sheep, unlike some other animals, can get along on scanty vegetation, and consequently will graze profitably on semi-arid land, but on the other hand they render an especially large return for a liberal ration of good foods. As showing how much more appreciation of this fact there is in other countries than in the United States it may be cited that recent statistics showed that there were not to exceed 25 sheep per thousand acres of land in our leading agricultural states, whereas in England the high-priced agricultural lands sustain an average of 850 sheep per thousand acres, and in Scotland there may be found as high as 1,250 sheep per thousand acres.

The champions of scientific agriculture in the United States are just now striving earnestly to impress our farmers with the fact that it would be better to convert their surplus grain products into meats, such as mutton (at least to the extent of supplying home demands) than to export the corn and other grains as such. For example, it is claimed that to raise \$1,000 worth of corn takes from the soil producing the crop about \$200 worth

of fertility, but the same amount of corn converted into mutton is claimed not to take from the land more than \$50 worth of fertility, whereas if sold in the form of wool it will not take from the land more than \$3 or \$3 worth of fertility. With mutton as the primary consideration, however, sheep raising will return a satisfactory profit year after year without very much regard to the price of wool.

In later years the western territory known as the range became the great breeding ground for sheep, and as far back as a dozen years ago this locality produced about one-half of the total number of sheep in the United States. As our readers know the crowding of the cattle out of many sections of the range by the sheep has been attended by much bitterness and controversy. There are three principal species of range sheep. The old Mexico sheep are the direct descendants of the original Spanish Merinos, brought over two hundred years ago by the Spaniards in Old Mexico. They have long legs; a long, thin body, and the wool is fine and thin. They are hardy, excellent travelers and will keep in good condition on the poorest and driest of ranges. Often they outsell all other sheep, for the meat has an excellent flavor and the hide is thin, firm and soft. These original Mexican sheep have been largely graded with Merino rams in New Mexico and southern Colorado. The New Mexico sheep, as they are denominated, are small-bodied sheep, and although they never grow very large they get very fat. They bring good prices, for the same reasons that obtain in the case of the Mexican sheep above mentioned. Merinos are also to be found on the range in great numbers, many of them having been bred from Merinos brought from the east. The lambs are short-legged and not as good travelers as the southern sheep, but they need not be, for Wyoming, Idaho, etc., have, on the average, better ranges than are to be found in New Mexico, and it is in these northern states that the Merinos hold sway.

Almost all range sheep are affected with scab, though it is frequently so held in check as to be scarcely noticeable. As a remedy it is the general practice to "dip" all range sheep, and this operation, as carried on extensively on a large sheep ranch is decidedly picturesque. Oftentimes it is deemed necessary to give the same sheep several dippings at intervals of ten days, and occasionally this dipping is done in zero weather. On the large ranches there are specially constructed dipping vats with runways for the sheep as they approach and leave the vats, etc. Various ingredients are used in the preparation of the dips, among the most popular being lime, sulphur and tobacco.

As is well known, the American market has become the most discriminating in the world on beef products and is rapidly coming to demand a corresponding superiority in mutton. Consequently farmers and ranchers realize the necessity of selecting the best sheep. The value of improved blood in sheep has come to be realized.

A difficulty in mutton production has always been the scarcity of stock sheep, particularly sires, having sufficient merit to fill the standard of excellence. The ideal sire, it may be added, should be impressive, resolute and of noble bearing—distinctly the head of the flock in every sense of the word. This requires, of course, good constitutional and vital powers.

It has likewise come to be regarded as essential, as above pointed out, that a mutton sheep should have a good fleece as well as a good carcass. This combination has been proven both practical and profitable, and it is no longer regarded necessary to grow one sheep for a fleece, another for a carcass and another for a lamb. An intelligent, up-to-date stockmaster combines them all in one class. Some of the best mutton sheep are producing as profitable fleeces as those kept exclusively for wool and their lambs are decidedly superior. As is well known, one of the first essentials in a good fleece is compactness or density, this quality not only insuring a better yield of wool, but also affording better protection against storm. This indicates a hardier animal and one better able to withstand exposure. It is desirable to have a close, even, dense fleece, with no breaks, cover all parts of the body, including the head, limbs and under parts, and the tendency in latter day breeding is toward carrying the fleece more completely over the head, face, limbs and under parts.

The far-sighted sheep raiser is also coming to guard against neglect or undue exposure of his flock, periods of sickness, or indeed anything that will impair the vitality of the animals, for it has come to be pretty well understood that such influences diminish both the length and strength of fiber and fineness, whereas, length and strength of fiber are essential qualities in a good fleece. Well-fed sheep always produce the best wool and the greatest quantity of it, and expert opinion is to the effect that a fleece almost invariably begins to decline in value after a sheep has passed the age of four years. The best grade of wool is invariably found on the rear part of the shoulder, and wrinkles or folds of the skin about the neck or other parts of the body are detrimental, inasmuch as the wool that grows within these folds is unlike other parts of the fleece and there is a consequent lack of uniformity.

The proper feeding of sheep is one of the chief responsibilities connected with the industry. In some localities the "self-feeder" is extensively employed, but in other localities it is not in much favor. Properly cured alfalfa has come up wonderfully in popularity as a food for sheep and many sheep feeders have purchased extensive areas of alfalfa for use in this connection. Many of the large feeders in such states as Nebraska, Colorado and Minnesota have no shelter for their flocks, but it is generally conceded now that properly constructed sheds are an advantage, although, of course, involving considerable outlay in the case of large feeding yards. Some of the most progressive sheep men now recommend feeding three times a day, although others still cling to the old idea that it is not necessary to feed more than twice a day. Along with all these other requisites for success in sheep raising there is the necessity for the good shepherd of judgment and experience. Even on the range where sheep are supposed to be able to shift for themselves there is a tendency to employ a better class of men as sheep herders.

The Genuine Article.

"I don't know about this picture, Bobby," said the visitor, as he ran over specimens of the youngster's camera work. "I am afraid a dog with a propeller instead of a tail is something of a fake."

"That ain't a propeller," said Bobby. "That's his tail. He kept waggin' it while his picture was being tookened."—Harper's Weekly.

## FLYING FISH OF CALIFORNIA

Innumerable Numbers of Them Along Southern Coast and Around the Catalina Islands.

Los Angeles, Cal.—Along the coast of southern California there are almost innumerable numbers of flying fish. Especially in this case around the Catalina Islands, which lie about 30 miles off shore.

In point of size, these fish range from 6 to 16 inches. They skim along the surface of the sea, and, at brief intervals rise above the waters and indulge in short flights through the air. In length and height these flights vary, much depending upon the state of the weather, the



A Flying Fish.

wind, and the size of the waves. Sometimes they will fly from five to ten feet above the surface.

With the wing-like fins they throw themselves swiftly forward and upward and then dart ahead, sustaining and propelling their course through the air. All this is done with great rapidity; then the creature suddenly drops back into the water. An instant later it is ready for another flight. These brief excursions in the air are generally made just ahead of vessels and along the sides as they advance through the sea. Sometimes there are great schools of these creatures rising, darting ahead, following and falling and rising again, just like a flock of birds.

It is a very curious and interesting spectacle to watch these schools of fish from the deck of a vessel.

They are more frequently seen early in the morning than during any other time.

It often happens that these fish drop on the deck of the vessels and are captured. The flying fish are not deemed edible.

## TREE IS A FREAK OF NATURE

Grows Around an Old Gunbarrel Left in the Crotch Many Years Ago.

Murfreesboro, Ark.—A curious natural phenomenon of Pike county is a wild cherry tree on the Ellsworth farm two miles north of this place. The tree is about sixteen inches in diameter and twenty feet to the first limb.

About ten feet up, at what was probably one time the fork in the tree, since grown into a solid trunk, an old musket is grown into the tree. The barrel sticks out at one side, the stock protruding from the other. On the stock is cut the initials "J. P." The general belief is that some one left the gun in the old crotch of the tree and forgot it, and in the years



Gunbarrel in a Tree.

that have elapsed the tree has closed on it completely.

Mr. Ellsworth, the owner of the farm, has refused fancy prices offered for the tree by several curio collectors.

## QUEER VISITATION OF FATE

Wealthy New Yorker, Who Cast Kinfolk Aside, Visited by Strange Frank of Fate.

New York.—By a strange prank of fate Arthur J. Mace, the wealthy manufacturer of refrigerators and toys, who refused to permit two crippled brothers to remain in his house in this city, now lies himself a hopeless cripple in his splendid mansion. Just a year after he ordered his brothers out he fell and broke his back and is paralyzed from the waist down.

The two brothers, Henry H. Mace and Edward H. Mace, have been sufferers from a peculiar nervous trouble since they were boys. It renders them practically helpless, and they are obliged to be constantly attended by trained nurses.

When they go out they have to be wheeled in roller chairs. Their lower limbs are useless for purposes of locomotion. These two brothers, however, have the income from \$300,000, so that they are amply able to maintain themselves.

NATURAL HISTORY.

"Do giraffes catch cold when they wet their feet, papa?"  
"Of course, my son—but not until the next month!"—Hester's Welt.

Bean Porridge Hot.  
"Would you call soup an edible?"  
"Yes, an audible edible."

Poverty hath its own reward. A poor man isn't asked to contribute to a camp fund.

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