Little, James
The story of the Corriedale



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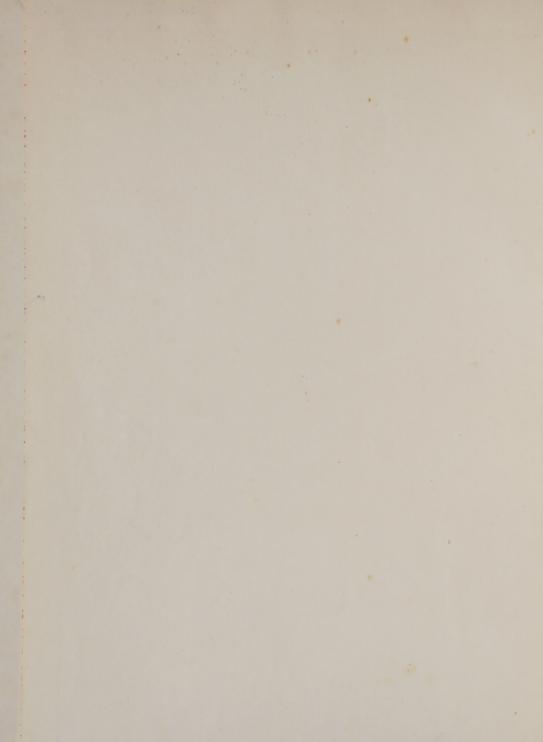
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THE STORY

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THE CORRIEDALE

ALSO

A FEW SUGGESTIONS AS TO THE POSSIBLE CAUSE OF BLACK SHEEP.

BY

JAMES LITTLE

CHRISTCHURCH

Printed by Willis and Aitken Limited 125, Worcester Street, 1917

2021

(This Copy from Booklet in possession of Otago Early Settlers' Association, Dunedin.)

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OBITUARY

Mr. W. S. Davidson

Noted Corriedale Breeder

A cable gram received from London last night announces the death at Edinburgh on Thursday of Mr William Soltau Davidson, who had been general manager of the New Zealand and Australian Land Company for the past 45 years, and a director of the National Mortgage and Agency Company for 40 years. He was about 80 years of age, and had been in indifferent health for about a year.

It has been stated that Mr Davidson, when at the Levels
Estate, South Canterbury, in 1874, originated the Corriedale
breed of sheep. This, however, is not strictly accurate. The
name Corriedale was adopted by the breeders in New Zealand
because successful experiments in crossing the merino and longwool
breeds and maintaining an in-bred halfbred type, without reverting
to either the merino or the libng- wool of the original cross, were
carried out on Dr. Webster's Corriedale estate by the late James
Little about the year 1868. Mr Davison was, however, closely
identified with the company which did so much for sheep breeding
in the dominion.

Mr Davidson practically started the dairying industry as it is known to-day, for in conjunction with Mr T. Brydone he established the first dairy factory at Edendale.

The New Zealand and Australian Land Company, of which Mr.

mandived . H . H . TY

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A cable gram received from London last might manages the death at Milhburgh on Thursday of Mr William Colton Davidson, who had been general manager of the New Realand and Australian Land Company for the past 45 years, and a director of the Matientl Mortgage and Agency Company for 60 years. He was about 60 years of age, and had been in indifferent health for about a year.

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The New Yorkers and Australian Land Company, of which Wr.

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Davidson was general manager, did good service to New Zealand in another way, as it and the National Mortgage and Agency Company, with Mr. T. Brydone, inaugurated the frozen meat industry. The first shipment of meat for that purpose was slaughtered on the Totara Estate, railed warm to Port Chalmers, and refrigerated on the ships Dunedin and Marlborough.

Mr. Davidson was one of the directors of the Colonial

Consignment and Distributing Company which was subsequently merged
into Vestey's. He was very well known in Timaru district in
the early days, and was manager of the Levels Estate before
he went Home in the early eighties.

CORRIEDALE SHEEP

Whose was the brain that conceived the idea? Who was his own draftsman and who commenced breeding Corriedales in 1868 and selling rams bred on Corriedale Station 1870?

Thus, five years before I came to Allandale, and before anyone else had thought of such a think, I was selling rams of the Romney Marsh Cross.

This was how the whole affair started. I imported from Home 22 Romney Marsh ewes and 9 rams (Romney) for Dr. Webster, but when his neighbouring squatters met him they ridiculed the idea, stating that the native tussock would not carry the pure bred Romeay Marsh. At that time there was no English grass on either Balruddery or Corriedale.

Dr. Webster told me that his neighbouring squatters assured

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Drusas stations and model on his content and the content and the content of

him that he had made a great mistake in bringing these sheep to this country.

My answer was that, with his consent I would start a half bred flock provided I could get a few other breeders to start in the same way so that we could exchange rams to prevent the sheep becoming in course of time too sib.

When Dr. Webster mentioned my proposals to his neighbours and station managers, they and their shepherds went dead against them, ridiculing them in no unmeasured terms, and as far as I was concerned, nothing but derision was heaped on my head.

But, as luck would have it, I became most successful with the Rommey Flock, winning a great many prizes and selling rams at big prices, especially in Canterbury.

This gave Dr. Webster more confidence and in course of time he gained courage. He told me he would give me 600 ewes to experiment with.

When we docked the lambs I kept what I thought the best of the ram lambs to put to the 600 ewes. These had a distinguishing mark and were put to graze all the winter with the other half breds out of Merino ewes. Before lambing, however, they were to be drafted off so as to lamb by themselves, and at docking time they were earmarked and branded and were grazed with the half breds out of the Merino ewes until shearing time. They were then drafted by themselves and compared with the half breds.

They were shorn separately, the wool was weighed and compared by the wool classers, with the wool from the half breds

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They were about capacately, the wool was weighed and compared by the wool classers, with the wool from the lad! breds

and in the inbred hoggets. It was found that their wool had a slight advantage in both weight and quality, and the sheep had a most decided advantage in conformation. It was found also that they had fewer of the bad points of the Merino as a mutton sheep.

Let us give honour to whom honour is due. It is evident
that had the experiment proved a failure Dr. Webster stood alone
to bear the loss, consequently, his name should be handed down to
posterity as having financed what in those days was thought by one
and all without exception to be an absurd and disastrous innovation.

As time went on, Dr. Webster, being completely satisfied allowed me to put inbred rams to the whole of the "Corriedale" half bred ewe flock.

On the demise of Dr. Webster, however, all his stud flock was dispersed.

This caused a break in my career as a Corriedale breeder.

I bought Dr. Webster's Lincoln Flock, together with the pick of
Geo. Sutton's flock of ewes, rams and hoggets, also the best of
his old sheep for all of which I had to pay a high price.

By this time I had leased the Allandale Estate in North
Canterbury of 9000 acres. I bought 2000 merino ewes from
Horsley Downs, also a consignment from Mr. Robinson of Cheviot
Hills. I also got the late Mr. Tabart to procure for me twenty
2-tooth ewes from the Allan McLean's stud (Ashburton).

It was about this time that I started the Lincoln Cross to

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which I gave the name of "Corriedale" simply because it was on the "Corriedale" Estate that the inbred half bred ewes were first thought of or saw the light of day.

After I had got two or three crosses of inbreeding for two
years running I entered them at the Christchurch Show as Inbred
half breds or Corriedales. As there was no one to compete with
me I could not get a prize. I obtained leave from the Association
to put on my pens a large card with "Inbred, half breds", printed
thereon.

I should like to know if there is anybody alive who can remember this. It is so many years ago that there are really and truly very few to tell the tale, and that is my reason for trying to put these matters ship-shape before I go to my long home.

The late Mr. Stringfellow of Chertsey, Ashburton, was the first to step into the arena, and his enterprise proved very successful. Mr. Stringfellow was one man in a thousand. No one ever heard him complain, prize or no prize. He was always the same, never a word of resentment or an unpleasant look. As the world goes he was a grand old man. I cannot help thinking that he (Mr. Stringfellow) was very much in lucks way in having Mr. Lyttelton, of Rokeby, Rakaia, as a neighbour. Mr. Lyttelton had then only just arrived from Australia with the pick of his Merino flock to breed Merino Rams for New Zealand. I never saw his flock, but have often admired his few bales of wool as displayed for sale in the sale rooms in Christchurch.

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I cannot say what name his sheep carried in the Merino world, but there is one thing certain, they seemed to blend very well with the Lincolns.

I got one ram from him and for two years' running gave it the pick of my 2-tooth ewes. This provided an excellent change of blood, which by line of breeding lasted for many years.

From a financial point of view, if "Allandale" wool did not top the market it was close up, and the "Allandale" brand was familiar to all buyers from every country.

I hald diplomas and gold medals as under: - from two Christchurch Exhibitions also from France and from Panama. At the time of going to print the Panama medal has not yet arrived because of adverse circumstances happening to the Canal.

As regards the sale of rams I have for two or three years consecutively sold as many as 600 rams which were scattered from the Bluff to Auckland and all over the Globe. This refers to flock rams. In stude and high-priced rams I received orders from Australia and South America, also Terra del Fuego, and Punta Arenas.

Mr. James Stringfellow divided the sphil with me; our sheep, for the most part, going in the same boat. This continued until the great "Romney Upheaval" which took the running for a few years which breeders of all other classes of sheep had to give way for the time being to popular feeling. I don't think there is any industry more uncertain than ram breeding. I counce say that ness into sheep caucied in the Merine world, but Uners is one tining certain, they account to blend your well with the Lincolns.

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I remember a good many years ago I found that orders were not coming in as usual, and at the time of the Annual Christchurch Show, I found half of my rams were still on my hands, whereas as a rule I usually had them all bespoke or booked. As the Ram Fair approached I found the Springs on the place had completely dried up, and any few offers I had were so absolutely low that I could not think of doing business. Under the circumstances I thought it best to try and make arrangements with the Belfast Co. and have something up my sleeve preparatory to the Ram Fair. When the Fair came I gave each of the Christchurch salesman and equal lot of sheep to offer for sale; only a few were sold, and the offers for the balance were in some places only a few shillings. I withdrew from sale what remained and put them on the train for Belfast Works. There they were tinned for mutton, and I got the price for skins and fat. But mark me, the Corriedale did not stand alone. Things were equally bad with Lincolns, Shropshires, Southdowns, and others of the English breeds. If I mistake not Mr. Threkeld's English Leicesters were turned out without eliciting a single bid at Auction. This is merely to show that "all is not gold that glitters" in ram breeding.

But to come back to the story of the Corriedale's; it came to pass that by this time nine or ten had come into the arena to try their luck. Mr. Murphy, the Secretary of the Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Association put a paragraph in the

A as asociate, about to no illist occur and up to Med hours I work rule I mountly had them all bespoke or broked. . As the sem Walk not think of dalay bashness. Under the chromataneer I thought seed to try and more errorsements with the Schingt Co. and have sometaing up my alrove preparatory to the list fair. when the fair care I gave each of the Christongrob salesmen and equal let of sheep to offer for sele; only a few were sold, end the offers for the belence were in some places only a few shillings. Selfast works, There they were timed for antien, and I pet the price for skins and fat. But mark me, the Corriedals did net stand alone. Things were equally bad with littlecolne. Sarphilice, Southloans, and others of the mellish breeds. harred oron archaelal dalland a bledenit rill for exatala I vision al shift . moldon to bid alonin a politica toodile too comboord may al "anaddlin Jant Lion for at Lie" Jant work of

But to come beat to the wanty of the Corriedals's; it came to pass that by this time or ten had come into the arens to try their luck. Mr. Murphy, the Secretary of the Centerbury incloudtural and Pasteral Association put a paragraph in the newspapers stating that he considered the time had arrived when the inbred half-bred should get a recognised name. At the same time he asked all interested to suggest a name.

The N.Z. & A. Land Coy. proposed "Southern Cross" and of course I sent in "Corriedale" as it was on that Estate that inbred half-bred first saw the light of day. I never heard that any of the others proposed a name, consequently it became a controversy between the Land Company and myself, which lasted for fifteen years, before they threw up the sponge. Mr. Orbell, of the Levels Estate, was then Manager, and was the same gentleman who, when managing Makataramea, told Dr. Webster that my proposition of inbreeding would end in disastrous failure. By this time, however, he was posing as the inventor of the breed.

As time went on nothing further was done, but the name "Corriedale" was fast spreading abroad. It was now all over New Zealand, and everybody was satisfied but the few connected with the N.Z. & A. Land Co. and their "Southern Cross", but at that time they had immense influence.

I was under the impression they endeavoured to pack every Show Yard Committee from the Bluff to Timaru and did their best to get their tentacles into the Christchurch A. & P. Association, and especially on to the various Stock and Station Agency firms.

During all this time nothing was done defintely until all the N.Z. & A. & P. Associations agreed to hold an Annual Conference to discuss matters in general.

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If I am not mistaken the first of those conferences was held in Christchurch. I believe the late Mr. Stavely was put up by the Land Company to bring before Conference for discussion the question as to whether "Corriedale" was a proper name, or if it was a name that should not be recognised. Sir Geo. Clifford considered that the sheep had earned the name, and he could not see what good purpose could be achieved in changing it. Mr. J.B. Reid endorsed the above remarks and considered it was a most appropriate name, and went on to say that it was Mr. James Little, now of Allandale, Waikari, who, when managing the Corriedale Estate for Dr. Webster, first conceived the idea. That being so he was of opinion, there could not be a more appropriate name than "Corriedale", and in this respect he was of the same opinion as Sir Geo. Clifford. When it was put to the vote it was ultimately carried that all inbred sheep should be distinguished by the name "Corriedale".

After this I considered that the Land Company had got a nail in their coffin which would settle the matter. But that was not so. If I am not mistaken the next conference was held in Wellington, where the matter was brought up a second time by some friend of the Land Co. It was again carried in favour of "Corriedale" and for the third and last time it was brought up at Dunedin. Sir John Roberts was in the chair. He had been a personal friend of Dr. Webster, and knew all the circumstances connected with the inception of the breed of the sheep, having had some thousands of them himself.

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broad of the sharp, having had some thousands of that hisself.

For the fourth and last time the name "Corriedale" was carried against "Southern Cross". This nearly ended the controversy as everybody knows.

As time passes the above true story will be told from one to another, and what with additions and subtractions it will in course of time become a legendary tale founded on fact.

Although my age is now considerably over the allotted span

I have taxed my brain and memory to the utmost (although late in
the day) to leave the history of the start and progress of the
"Corriedale" in black and white to be handed down to posterity
and now placed on record.

In addition to the foregoing, I may state that I have experimented in a small way in other breeds of sheep such as a Shropshire ram over the Corriedale ewe, which in my humble opinion produces a more profitable progeny than the pure Shrop, in both wool and mutton.

I also found that a dash of the English Leicester in the Corriedale Strain from Lincoln Merino, improved the Conformation and I found they fattened sooner. All things considered I found life too short to get to the bottom of everything. I thought I had learned a good deal in my time, but I also found to my chagrin that the more I learned the more plainly I found out how little I did know

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INTERESTING OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

VAGARIES ATTENDANT ON SHEEP BREEDING

That the question of Black Sheep, which has not yet been solved to any one's satisfaction, and it looks as if it would continue so to the end of time.

To look back into ancient sheep lore, I fancy they must have been all black. The first evidence that I have been able to find is from "Jacob's" flock, which must have been all black. As a slight proof of this, we are told when he ring-barked the willow trees the rings must have appeared white, as the Bible tells us when "Jacoh's" flock and herds came to drink they looked at the ring-barked willows, and in course of time their progeny came all ringed and spotted.

Herein lies the two-edged sword. This much we all know - there is no known breed that is exempt from having black lambs more or less.

Here comes the crucial point.

Let us ask ourselves - is it inherited from their black ancestors, or is it caused by looking at an unwelcome black object which they may have perseived in a fright shortly after their conception - say a black dog or black pig, etc?

To come nearer to my own day, I have often heard my father tell a story of what occurred when he was a boy twelve years of age, which would make it nearly one hundred years ago since it occurred. It happened in what was then a wild-outlandish part in the South of Scotland. Everything was in a very primitive state; there

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were no boundary fences or hardly such a thing as sheep yards.

They did all their drafting in the open by what they called "shodding",

by means of well-trained men and dogs. There is little, or none, of

it done at the present day.

In the large surrounding district there was one well-known farmer and breeder who had outclassed all his competitors. sold a Tup or Ram to a neighbour at a very high figure. was a near neighbour who bargained for, say, twenty of his best ewes to be put to this great ram by paying a high price per head before sending his ewes. The ewes had to be run out in the open, and my father had to look after them from daylight in the morning until dark at night. They were then put in a small yard overnight. My father had a splendid black dog, as black as a stove. neighbours' sheep from daylight to dark were continuously on the alert to get back across the boundary on to their own country. but the aforesaid dog was continually in front with a steadfast eye on them all the time. When lambing time came almost every ewe had a black lamb. Here was a fine kettle of fish. What made the evidence so conclusive was the fact that the ewes belonging to the owner of the ram produced white lambs. This was no doubt due to the fact that his ewes being content on their own country. saw, comparatively speaking, but little of the dog.

The first case that actually came under my personal observation

were no boundary reason or hardly such a thing as sheep yards.
They did ell their eredting in the open by what they colled Shodding",
by seems of well-trained sen and dogs. There is little, or none, of
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. world are and its because to be to be to be to be to be to the country of the beauty sold a Top or sen to a not shown at a very bick figure. There yes a near neighbour who barried for, say, thanky or has lent mending his even. The even had to be run out in the open, end. vil . Adelinavo Bray Llama at Jug mod some you'l . Adelin Ja Stehn isther had a spinnish black dog, as black as a stove. eye on them all the tire. When leading time ours almost every one had a black land. Here was a rine kettle of fish, hat nede the the owner of the rem produced white heales. Into wee no doubt ann, comparatively a calife, bet little of the dom.

nolly average of the total of the contract of

was of a very similar nature. It happened when my brother John and I were small boys, our father's house was so situated that in the forenoons the sheep came down from the high ground or hills, and came all around the house, and my father had a pig that was running loose amongst them when they were lambing. One day, we picked up an object, stillborn. It had the skin of a pig, and only one eye, and it was perfectly straight in the middle of the forehead.

The next instance happened under my personal observation. It took place after coming to New Zealand. Dr. Webster imported through the late Robert Wilkin of Christchurch, two pens of 1st and 2nd prize two-tooth Lincoln Ewes from the Royal Show of England, costing a small fortume to do so. I knew the game at home, and I knew that those ewes had been nurtured from their infancy more than many thousands of the human race, consequently I thought they would have to continue the high life, or they would go to the dogs. put up a shed to shelter them in the cold nights and stormy weather. When lambing came along and my favourite ewe came due to lamb. I had her shut up of a night, and late one evening she was alright when I visited her. In the early morning she had started to lamb and before very long she gave birth to a pair of lambs, but, to my great chagrin. they were both as black as "Nicky-Ben" is said to be. I thought I would fall down through the earth. I whipped them out of her sight. and cut their throats, and got a twin lamb on her, which she nursed rightly or wrongly. I attributed the mishap to my dogs. imported a black slut, and she had a black son. These dogs were always at my heel wherever I went.

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During my sojourn in Allandale and Dalmeny, I could not help taking notice of a neighbour's flock, which every year seemed to increase in the numbers of black lambs. The owner eventually sold the run with the stock. No doubt during those years the small settlers bought drafts from this flock, and it became no unusual thing to see two or three small pens of black sheep in Hawarden Saleyards. No one seemed to pass a thought on the matter, while I silently looked on with suspicion.

I am perfectly convinced that it is one of the principal things that should be guarded against in breeding sheep.

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