

NO HILLS FOR SHEEP

by "SUNDOWNER"

AFTER studying some figures sent to me by Mr. Stevens, of Lincoln College, I can no longer doubt that Japan has half a million sheep and that most of them are Corriedales. But it is still surprising information. The visitor to Japan does not see flocks of sheep. I think two out of three visitors see no sheep at all. There are, in fact, no flocks to see. There are two sheep here, and three there, five on

APRIL 15 a rare big farm, but only one on two farms out of three. There are, however, nearly a quarter of a million farmers, and if we allow these an average of two sheep each we get Mr. Stevens's half million.

From the Corriedale International Year Book, published in Uruguay, and supporting material sent direct from Japan, Mr. Stevens has compiled two astonishing tables. The first shows that the total number of sheep in Japan rose from 125,000 in 1939 to an estimated 550,000 in 1953, and that Corriedales at every stage were 90 per cent of the total. The second table must be given as it stands:

No. of Sheep Farms	Flock Size	Percentage of total
221,895	1	68.3
	2	23.2
	3-4	7.5
	5-9	0.95
	10-19	0.05

Since that gives me four times as many sheep as the biggest sheep farmer in Japan, and more than fifty times as many as the average farmer, I am not going to hide my own flock under a wool pack any longer. Or wear old clothes any longer. Or put up with Taranaki gates. I am a big man, a squatter, a rancher, the master of all I survey (when I look up hill).

AMONG the rewards of this Calendar is the fact that one good thing usually (or often; or sometimes) leads to another. Yesterday I had the letter

from Mr. Stevens. Today I have a letter from a reader in Cambridge (Mr. J. Adam), who was working among the farmers of Hokkaido less than a year ago. What Mr. Stevens has established statistically, Mr. Adam has seen recently with his own eyes: a farmer "considered to be very prosperous," if he has three or four sheep and two cows; sheep grazing on the roadside and cows hidden away in basements and barns; the "majority of the sheep population tethered," and quite happy because they have never run free.

It interests me that this is the situation in Hokkaido, the part of Japan that I did not see, even from the air, since I thought it possible that there might be wide open spaces there with conditions at least remotely like our own. But the open, or relatively open, land in Hokkaido seems to be peat, and its conversion into sheep and cattle country a problem for science and the future. Mr. Adam's work was to survey some of it for FAO.

It also interests me that there are so few corners in the world without direct or indirect contact with New Zealand. This Calendar has brought me letters from Mexico, from Texas, from China, from Indonesia, from Salvador, from Alaska, from Abyssinia, and even from Macquarie Island—all written by New Zealanders. I have not yet heard from Tibet or the Gobi Desert or the South Shetlands or Adelie Land, but this does not mean that New Zealand has no contact with these places. As far as I can remember I have not yet said anything about any of them that displayed more ignorance than some informed reader could tolerate. When I do I am sure that some New Zealander there now, someone who has once been there, someone who knows someone there, or recently left, or about to go, will write and rebuke me. We are young, we are few, we are isolated, we are insular, we are comfortable, we are

complacent, we are lazy, as every visitor sees and says. But we make little marks in strange places.

TWO or three days ago I had a Romney ram, with fire in his blood, and wool everywhere but on his feet and teeth. Today I have a bald, listless, tucked-up reminder of a ram, hand-shorn, and half ashamed and half unable to run with the flock. It occurred to me yesterday that I had not seen him for a couple of days, and a search revealed him lying under the macrocarpas, able, but just

APRIL 19 able, to get up and stagger away, and moving with maggots (when I caught and examined him) from his breast-bone to his groin. I shored him as well as I could, and dressed him with two pannikins of repellent, and this morning he came down with the ewes to drink. I am hopeful that he will live, since there was only one small area on which the maggots had eaten through the skin. A ram's skin is thicker than a ewe's, and no doubt takes longer to consume.

But I could not have believed, if I had not seen them, how many maggots a woolly sheep can shelter and still live. It was not hundreds I uncovered, but thousands, and when I stopped brushing there must have been two handfuls squirming on the ground on each side. Another day, of course, and the case would have been hopeless; but it is insulting as well as injurious to have an invasion like this in the second half of April.

WHAT is a farmer doing, Naomi Mitchison asked the other day in the *New Statesman*, when he leans on a gate? It depends on the gate. If the gates of England are like most of the gates of New Zealand, he is thinking about his elbows. If he is a worrier, he is probably thinking at the same time that the gate will not last much longer; that he will have to

APRIL 21 find a batten, a hammer, and a couple of nails; and that he should, but will not, buy some hinges. If he is easy-going he puts the bag he is carrying under his elbows and goes on leaning. If the gate fronts the road, he looks at the approaching cloud of dust and wonders whose car it will be; how long he will

stay if it is Smith; how much he will give away if it is Jones. But the real gates are not on the roadside. They are up a gully or on top of a spur, and the farmer who leans on them is an acrobat. They are one-sixteenth of an inch wide, barbed, rusted, and opened when there is no way through or round. They start no thoughts till a cow or a horse gets staked or torn on them, and then suddenly they are atomic. Mrs. Mitchison's gate receives 80 inches of rain every year, and probably grows moss. It would need all that, and a good deal more, to resist the fiery blast released when a colt comes home permanently maimed by a gift from Taranaki.

(To be continued)

American Discovery!

SHAMPOO that CURLS & WAVES while you wash your hair!



- NO MACHINERY!
- NO WAITING!
- NOT A WAVE-SET!

Just shampoo and set — that's all! Both operations done in one new wonderful shampoo. Two sizes 4/- and 6/9. If unobtainable send Postal Note to Box 210, Christchurch.

A WILFRID OWEN PRODUCT!



CURLENE
Hair-waving
SHAMPOO

Prepared in New Zealand for Marlene's Inc., Chicago, by Wilfrid Owen Ltd., Christchurch. C.S.13

IMMEDIATE RELIEF FROM ABRASIONS

Banish pain immediately from abrasions—apply JOHNSON'S BURN CREAM—pre-eminent too as a general purpose ointment in the home. At chemists everywhere. Dist. POTTER & BIRKS (N.Z.) LTD., Federal Street, Auckland.

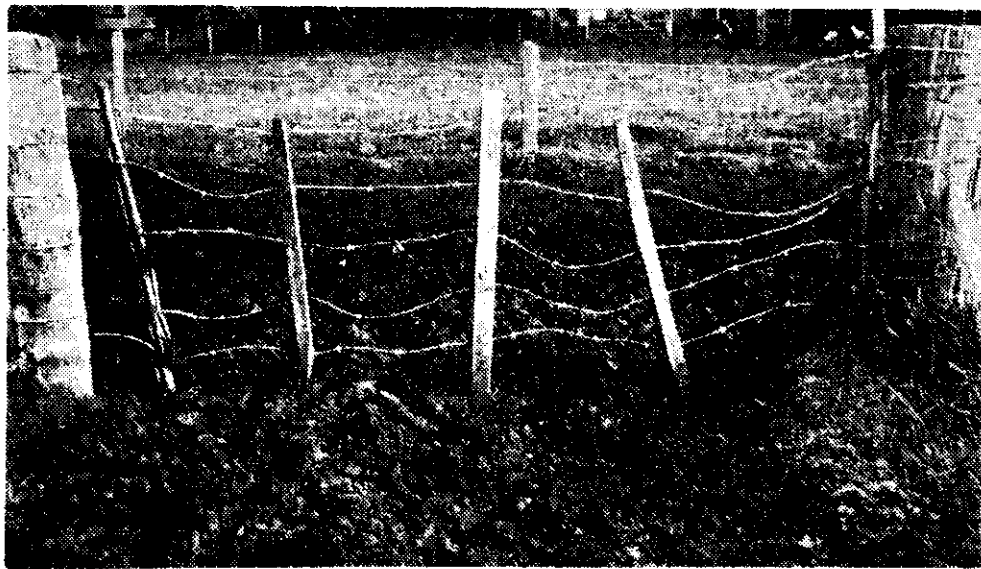
PROTECTION!



Safeguard your baby's precious skin by daily use of Cuticura Soap. This fragrant, super-fatted Soap, with its rich, deep-cleansing, mildly medicated oils, brings soothing comfort to hot, chafed, sensitive skin. Use Cuticura Ointment after the bath, and at every change, to soothe baby's soreness and deal sweetly with nappie rash. Keep baby's skin clear and healthy—buy your Cuticura today!

Cuticura
SOAP

Sole Distributors in New Zealand—FASSETT & JOHNSON LIMITED, 89 Courtenay Place, Wellington.



GIFT FROM TARANAKI

"One-sixteenth of an inch wide, barbed, rusted, and opened when there is no way through or round"