

# The More We Change...

by "SUNDOWNER"

NOT many farmers, I think, know how many lambs they lose, or acknowledge their known losses in full. If they admit five per cent I feel fairly sure that it is six or seven or eight, and sometimes ten, as I feel sure when a gambler confesses to a loss of ten pounds at the races that he has lost

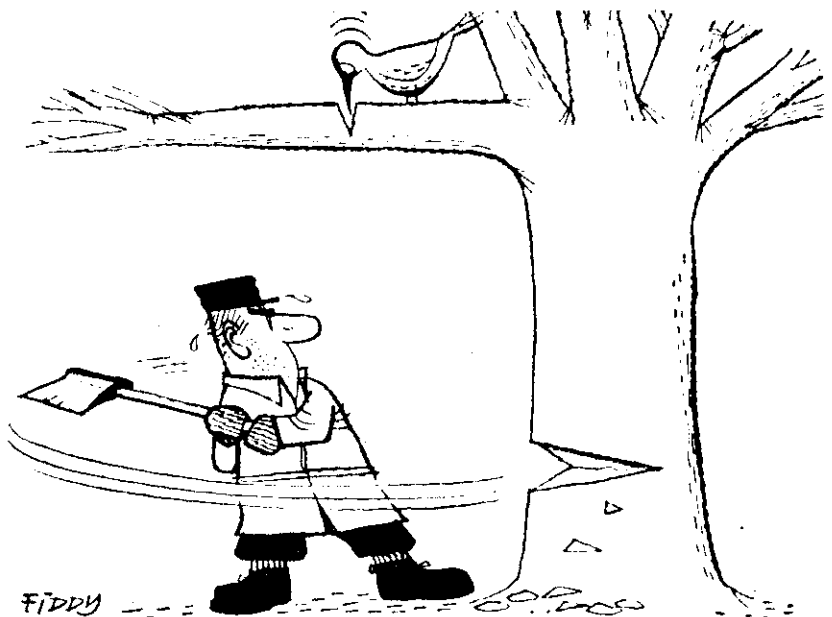
**AUGUST 26** fifteen pounds or twenty. The truth has to be sensational to make most of us stop playing tricks with it, and some of us are not safe then; though I find it easier to accept a very heavy lambing loss than a very small one.

With a flock as small as mine it is, of course, easy to check the losses and more difficult to conceal them. So far, with lambing about half complete, I have lost seven lambs (and one ewe) out of 40 born alive—a total of 17½ per cent. It has been an outstandingly favourable season, my ewes, though old, are in good shape, and they have not been short of feed or shelter. Though I have still 100 per cent left I should have thought, if I had not recorded each death, that my loss had been five or six per cent, and should probably have given that figure if I had been asked for one.

I have, in fact, lost twice as many as I should have lost with average luck, and three times as many as the unavoidable losses with healthy sheep and good husbandry. But I have not lost three times as many as two out of three of my neighbours, or twice as many. I have lost about the district average for my grade of sheep—far more than any of us should have lost, and twice as many as most of us admit, but about as many, my diary tells me, as everybody should expect who begins with the cast-offs of other farmers and regards them with a cast-off mentality.

THE more we change the more we don't change, and can't, as a witty Frenchman told us over 100 years ago. When I was a boy the cure for colds was a few drops of pain-killer in hot milk. The cure for sprains and bruises was a few drops of pain-killer rubbed in with oil. The cure for toothache was pain-killer on a wad of cotton-wool.

**AUGUST 27** Nothing else was tried, and nothing else was necessary. Then pain-killer gave way to a concoction we called electric essence, which was used in the same fashion for the same complaints;



FIDDY

though the essence found its way into stables and cowsheds more often than the killer did, I suppose because it was cheaper.

That is looking back 50 years, and a little more. But if we look back four fifties and a little more, with someone to direct us, we shall find farmers doing the same thing precisely in England as farmers were doing in Otago seven or eight generations later—apply-

ing the same cure for everything from scalds and bruises to boils and housemaid's knee. I have been reading a book sent by a friend in Hamilton, and find that as far back as 1748 farmers were buying "a balsamick Tincture" that not only "cured all Bruises, Strains, Burns, Scalds, and green wounds, but also stopped the most obstinate Bleeding at the Nose." It did more than

(C) Punch

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