

of sheep, that sheep would never be found in numbers there, to which the sheep replied by planting himself in the country to the extent of over a hundred millions. In New Zealand the country was not banned in a similar fashion, but the first settlers left the shores of their native country without the faintest idea that they might add to their profits extensively some day through the expansive business of runholding. However, the Australians who heard of the settlement and of the nature of the country very soon swarmed over the land and placed a premium on the sheep country. Before many months the east and north of the South Island was entirely parcelled out among runholders.

The run life which is to be seen to the present day, in spite of the vicissitudes of the business after sixty years, in various parts of both Islands is a pleasant breezy life, and at the present time when wool is wool, as the saying is, very profitable. The time has passed when it was the general belief that it can never pay to deal with sheep except in

if the run is managed on up-to-date lines, for having the ewes all together for the purpose of culling, in order to keep the breeding standard up to a high level, and at all these musters, regular and irregular, the neighbours attend after due notification to look after all possible wanderers from their flocks.

Taking the year's operations, commencing with the fall of the first snow of the winter, let us consider the working. It is about the beginning of April, the sheep are all up on the high lands, and the first fall never very severe has caught them. They are in the big basins of the mountain, the snow is too deep to permit them to crop the tussock, long as it is in those upper regions; nothing but a narrow strip of snow separates them from the lower spurs and the thick grass with which they are covered. But they seem incapable of the effort required to force their way through: it is evident that if left to themselves they will stay where they are until the snow melts. Now, as the snow may not melt till the end of the coming winter, the consequences may be very serious. All hands are called and an

yelping of the dogs make a dismal concert. Suddenly a rock looms up in front close by. You grasp it firmly, the snow rolls away and you are safe and panting and shouting out wrinkles to your friends, who present the appearance of dark headed swimmers struggling in the surf of the ocean as they are borne on by the sliding snow, protesting. At last the party is safe by one method of escape or another; in some instances men are helped by their mates at the right moment, and the occasion is honoured with a smoke after which the party plods along as before, until it gets to sheep.

Here the method is simple:—there are perhaps 5,000 sheep waiting for release: you take a dozen; the whole party attacks them shouting, all the dogs bark as if the seven sleepers were there to be waked, everything is done to make the small lot force their way through the snow. In due course they get through some ten yards, and they are completely exhausted. You take another squad and repeat the process, and so on, until there is a fairly long pathway trodden between two high walls of snow. At this juncture the imprisoned 5,000 have got the hang of things, and before you can realise it they have rushed into the new made path. Then you get fresh storming parties so to speak, and as the path is trodden longer and longer by this force major, the mild flock keeps coming gently and joyfully on, until at last the way is clear, and the 5,000 are at breakfast spread out among the tussocks of the lower spurs. The party goes quietly on to the next basin; and that is their work day after day until all the basins are clear. Sometimes it is necessary to divide the hands, in which case the usual rule is that never there shall be less than two in a party. There is one thing about this work: it is safe to take it for granted that the sheep, once free, will not go back into the higher basins, so that when the heavy falls of snow come later on it is not necessary to repeat the search of the basins. It is of great importance to get all this done in time, because even if the sheep are not lost, long delays mean prolonged starvation, and prolonged starvation means a break in the wool which brings down the price fatally.

Sometimes there is a bad year. The snow comes in abnormal quantities after the first fall, and covers the lower country which the flockmaster usually counts on as certain to be free: it is his winter country, a proportion of which must go with every run. The provision of this proportion is the great difficulty of the subdivision rendered imperative by the demands of an increasing population of settlers. When these abnormal falls come there is a tremendous loss. Twice the Minister of Lands has had to call upon Parliament to sanction remissions of the pastoral rents. These losses have on large stations totalled on these occasions, up to very high figures; in one case there was recorded a loss of 50,000 as may be seen in the reports of the proceedings of the Land Commission. It is a grave question whether some concessions are not necessary whereby the pastoral tenants may be encouraged to grow feed in mild seasons to keep the sheep alive in the exceptional visitations. Also there is an agitation for preventing overstocking, a question complicated by the prevalence of the rabbit in many quarters. There is among some observers an impression that it is the cold (which is intense enough to kill certain varieties of timber which have lasted through many winter seasons in the uplands) not the want of feed which kills the sheep at these times. All of which circumstances make the problem of dealing with the worst winters in these southern regions most



SHEEP AT WATER.

the enormous numbers that are the great feature of the run system, and as the result the small farmer makes sheep feeding or growing a profitable speciality. Nevertheless the sheep farming on a large scale presents the largest and most easily observable of all the systems of wool growing in the colony.

The year's history is of the simplest. The sheep are out in their mountain the whole time, with the exception of the shearing season when they are mustered and brought in to the wool shed where their fleeces are taken off by shearers at the rate of about 100 per man per day. There are other musters on every run; the ewes which are run separate from the wethers requiring to be brought in when the lambing is done, and the lambs are strong enough to be tailed and counted; and the same require again to be brought in this time late in the summer, so that their lambs may be weaned and taken to their own pastures. In the present day, moreover, when mutton is mutton just as much as wool is wool, there must be musters for getting at the sheep for export, (also the fat lambs) and the store wethers, for sale and,

expedition starts for the tops, spending a few days of strenuous effort. The sheep may not be in the first basins, and the party has to trudge on through the snow at great labour. Sometimes there is danger also. For instance the snow may take it into its head to slide. The party is at the moment crossing the face of a basin, the snow breaks up all round them and carries them down towards the lower ground at a pace more exhilarating than comfortable. During the descent you may get uncomfortably squeezed and for a moment, all too long, you are under the dismal belief that you have been flattened out. There is at the same time the uncertainty of the fortune in front. You are being carried along to be simply deposited on the broader smoother face below, or is it to be your fate to be hurled over a precipice and squashed by the blocks of tons weight going with you to the bitter end? It is an awkward question, and the time for thinking out the possible answer is not propitious, for you are rolled over and over, big blocks of snow passing over you with majestic disregard for your feelings. The shouts of your comrades to look out for a rock and the querulous