

After nine days the skins, well and truly tanned, are passed on to a shaving-machine, rather like an electric razor, which removes the last remaining traces of flesh from the skins. After another wash in running water the wool is dyed to the shade required. The length of time depends on the colour. Pastel blue is only a matter of saturating for an hour, but heavier colours, such as burgundies and rusts, require soaking overnight. The fixing of a deep colour such as black, sometimes takes two days. The dyes, imported from England, are the same as those used for colouring cloth.

"How do you dry them?"

"Well, sun-drying would take weeks. That's far too long, so we speed up the process with this big churn, called a hydro-extractor. Inside it's got a perforated drum, into which we pack thirty to fifty pelts. Then the power is switched on, and the drum, spinning at 800 revolutions to the minute, throws out most of the water. Centrifugal force, you know."

This packing and spinning naturally crinkles the skins, so rollers smooth them, and the remaining amount of water is sun-dried out within a week. But by then the skins are stiff and hard, and difficult to work.

So they have to be made pliable again.

That's the job of the staking-machine, a weird apparatus resembling an ant-eater. Its hinged jaws fly backwards and forwards, making great bites at the unfortunate pelt. The pelt soon yields and becomes soft as it is grasped between a roller in the top of the jaw and a U-shaped groove beneath.

Now all that remains, as far as the preparation of a carpet-pelt is concerned, is to trim and give an even pile to the wool with an electric clipper.

If the pelt is going to make slippers, however, it is given a suede finish by a revolving drum coated with sand-paper, and then dyed—red, green, or blue. The wool is mechanically combed, fluffed up, and clipped again. Surplus wool is sucked away to containers, and later sold for packings in mattresses and upholstered furniture.

And that, said Mr. Bowie, was all, as far as he was concerned. We'd find out

how the tanned, dyed, and clipped skins were made into carpets in Wanganui.

The rug and carpet factory, contrasted with the tannery, seemed a most sophisticated establishment. No water sent your feet skidding, no smell of tanning lay heavily upon the air. No machine even remotely resembled an ant-eater. Only the incessant *whirr* of electric sewing-machines blended with the "Whistle While You Work" radio session.

Here the skins arrived from the tannery in colours ranging from rust to green, burgundy, blue, rose, off-white, fawn, and black. It was a simple matter to grade them into matching qualities for rugs and carpets.

Girls with razors trimmed each skin into a rectangle, 32 in. by 23 in. You would imagine it would be only a simple matter then to sew them together, to the size of carpet required. But, a deplorable oversight in the eyes of the carpetmakers, the sheep chooses to grow no wool in a little area just below where the legs join the body. These callouses have to be cut away, and a triangle of woolly pelt is fitted, then sewn in. The skin is now a uniform woolly rectangle, and several of these, according to the size of rug or carpet, are fastened together with overlocking stitches on electric sewing-machines. Each sewing-machine has a reel of 9,600 yards of thread. A good

