

SHEEP IN MONTANA.

The very considerable reduction in the number of sheep in the United States, the very great losses in sheep in Australia, the present protective tariff, all supplemented by the increased activity of manufactures and trade, are potent factors in the present situation. It seems to me that even the most hopeless pessimist can hardly fail to feel encouraged as to the immediate future of wool and mutton. I feel convinced that both these products will command, in 1898, prices somewhat beyond the present selling rates. Out on our plans, those present rates are very satisfactory, giving us, as they do, double the money for wool and 50 per cent. advance in mutton. During the last four years, careful sheep-owners have been able to just about hold their own, even with wool at 8 cents per pound, and fat weathers at \$2.50 per head; but this year, the owner of 3,000 sheep should realize, at least \$2,000 beyond his receipts of years past. Three thousand head of sheep are, perhaps, about the average flock here; very few people run as few as 1,000. There are bands of all sizes; one of the larger "outfits" runs 40,000 sheep.

The sheep business is very different here from the same business in the Eastern and Middle states. We have some features not enjoyed by the farmers of the East, but they, on the other hand, have some decided advantages over us. How would an Ohio or Michigan farmer like to feel that he might, any day, lose 20 sheep? How would he feel if he knew that he might lose 500, even with the most careful herding? I lost 130 sheep in 10 minutes, some time since, from an attack by wolves. A neighbor lost, during a severe storm, 2,500 sheep. Our wool nets us about half the price which the Ohio man obtains for his. On the other hand, we have far less disease among sheep, we feed nothing the year 'round except during a severe storm, and then only the wild hay cut in the immediate region. It is, however, the custom to feed oats to rams during December. Our range is on unsurveyed government land for which we do not pay and, of course, to which we have no title; still it is not usual for others to infringe upon our acknowledged territory.

Five years ago, nearly all the sheep bred here were of the Vermont Spanish Merino blood, the purpose, of course, being to get a heavy crop of wool; but since that time, nearly every flock has been bred to coarser sires. At that time, say in 1892, there was, to my taste, not an edible sample of

mutton to be found. Many people settled down to the belief that mutton was poor food, myself among the number; while today, we have the most exquisite mutton, and the old opinion is wholly changed. We frequently have venison and antelope meat, but most people prefer the mutton fattened on the wild grasses of our ranges, to either. The most prominent breeds now in vogue here are Cotswolds, Stropshires, Oxford Downs and Lincolns. Sires of half or three-quarters blood of the above breeds are usually preferred to pure blood, as they are more hardy and produce a sheep with heavier fleeces than those springing from pure bred sires. At the same time, there must be some Merino blood left in the flock. There are many people in the sheep business who lack steadiness of character, who, therefore, pursue one pet idea after another to their cost. One year there is no sheep but the Cotswold, the next year they are wild about Delaines; one year they must have early lambs, the next year they want later lambs than their neighbor; one year they decide to shear two months earlier than usual. I believe that the man who carries a steady head, who has lambs come as near May 1 as possible; who has his sheep sheared early in June and above all, sees to it that good reliable men herd his sheep, and then carefully watches his herders, is the man who, in the long run, will come out best in the sheep business. A. S. W.

Apples are a drug. It will be to the interest of shippers to send no more in at present. Fair apples are bringing 40 to 50 cents, and poorer grades cannot bring any margin of profit whatever.

Pears are moving slow. Something very nice in either apples or pears, well packed, would bring a fancy price.

Washington creamery butter, in bricks, is 26@28c. Iowa creamery, in tubs, 27c. Washington storage, 20@22c; Iowa storage, 24@25c.

Inspector Brown, of Seattle, on Monday discovered five boxes of Japanese oranges from San Francisco that were infected with mealy bug at J. M. Hixon's commission store. These oranges had been fumigated at San Francisco and had passed inspection before being shipped to this port.

At Yakima potatoes, onions and apples have stiffened up considerably and prices will probably hold strong throughout the season, especially on potatoes and onions, which are much in demand for evaporating for the Alaska trade. Hay has also come up several notches and promises to stay.

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 : **LICE KILLED**
 : **BETTER WOOL**
 : **MORE WOOL**

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