

capable of wider expansion, but whether this is so or not need not be here discussed. Suffice it to say it is abundantly evident that our stud sheep, which are the foundation of the flocks, are of the highest standard quality; therefore with ordinary care there is no reason to expect other than a steady improvement in the quality of our flocks.

With regard to ordinary flock sheep the case is rather different, due in great measure to the necessary evolution taking place in the business of sheep-farming, as a result in the first place of the development of the mutton and lamb trade following on the establishment of the freezing industry, and, later on, of the rapid expansion of closer settlement, which has created a large community of farmers who are forced, by reason of the value of their land and the limited area of it, to specialize in the fattening of sheep and lambs, and must therefore leave to others the breeding of their ewes and rams. Assuming, for the sake of argument, that, as a natural sequence, under these circumstances some deterioration may take place, the points of weakness to be detected and rectified may be considered. What may be expected as the outstanding symptoms? Hereditary traces of many breeds, absence of uniformity both in size, character, and type, shrinkage in wool-production, and much of this showing almost every conceivable grade from fine combing to coarse hair of various colours. It would be evident, therefore, where such conditions have prevailed that degeneration must have extended back over several generations; and if the ewes were the progeny of those bred on the same holding for several generations it would be reasonable, seeing that the rams in a sense represent half the flock, to inquire what rams had been used. In the large majority of cases where deterioration in a flock had taken place it would be found that the indiscriminate selection of rams had been the crux of the whole matter, and there is little doubt that the principal factor had been the extensive use of inferior or unsuitable rams. It is noticeable that some flockowners will not pay a reasonable price, even from, say, £3, for a decent ram, preferring to buy an inferior animal of almost any breed or breeds for 15s. or £1. In such cases, if deterioration is to be avoided, owners would do well to change their methods and to carefully watch their flocks.

It is said, and with considerable truth, that "half the breeding goes in at the mouth." While it cannot be altogether gainsaid that the intelligent feeding of any stock is a most important factor, it is a fact nevertheless that, no matter how well fed, unless sheep are bred on proper lines the final result must be retrogression.

An important factor in the sheep industry is the steady diminution of the Merino flocks in the South. Merino ewes are becoming more