

# NEW SHEEP FOR THE WEST

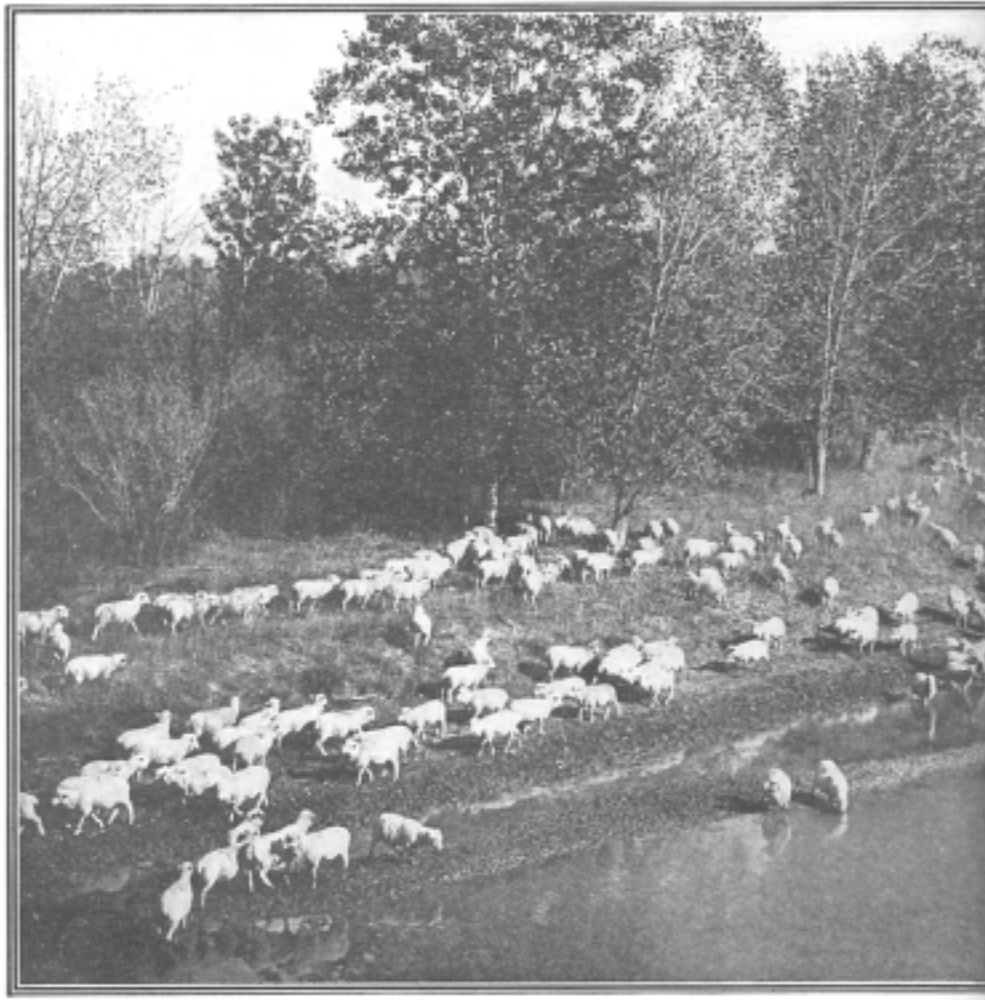
By

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**T**HAT beneficently paternal figure known as Uncle Sam, who is lying awake o' nights figuring out ways and means of helping his children to help themselves, is conducting an experiment at Laramie, Wyoming, with the idea of

developing a typical American sheep that will thrive amid Western range conditions and that will advance the nation's supply of wool and mutton enormously.

America has not taken the position it deserves among sheep-producing nations, because there is no breed of sheep that



SHEEP IN THE RANGE

Scarcity of water is one of the reasons for rapid

can be called typical and that will not deteriorate among natural surroundings in this country.

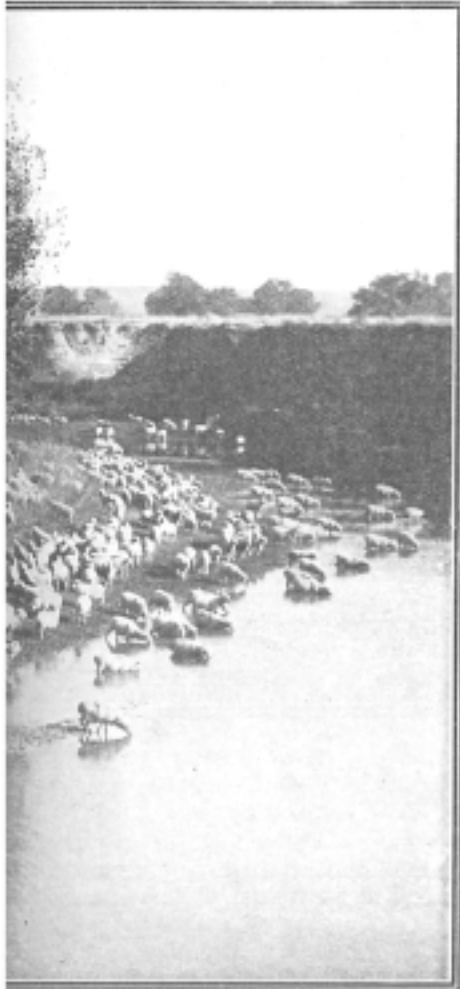
Here steps in Uncle Sam with a remedy. It is known that Nature is ready to adapt animal life to all circumstances, if given half a chance. So the government has established an experiment station at Laramie, Wyoming, in the center of the great Western sheep belt, and is endeavoring to produce a typical range sheep that will thrive among the comparatively harsh conditions of the high plains country and that will yield a maximum amount of wool and mutton.



ABANDONED PENITENTIARY AT LARAMIE, WYO., WHERE GOVERNMENT SHEEP BREEDING IS BEING CARRIED ON.

The importance of such an experiment is easily understood, when it is estimated by experts that raising the average wool clip of this country one pound a year would increase the value of that crop \$10,000,000. Doubling the wool clip, which is not impossible under scientific improvement of American sheep, would render many millions of dollars' worth of wool importations unnecessary and would practically put the nation in an independent position in that respect.

The sheep imported for breeding purposes generally come from humid regions. The Rambouillet sheep, for instance, will thrive in the seacoast states, where climatic conditions are not unlike those of France. But transfer the same sheep to the West and there is another story to tell. The dry soil, heavily mineralized and charged with alkali salts, is entirely different from the moist soil to which the sheep has been accustomed. The grass of the high plains region is short and scanty, and contains less water, more mineral matter, more protein, and less variation in nutritive qualities throughout the year. The sheep must "rustle" in order to keep off hunger, for this short, rich grass, which literally cures itself on the stem in the dry atmosphere of the West, is thinly distributed on the plains. The slow, heavy sheep from the humid regions, being used to little exercise, soon shows the effect of constant walking. It loses flesh and puts on heavier bone. The climate, too, begins to work changes in other ways. The air is dry and clear, and there is greater wind movement. The changes in temperature are sudden. There begins to be a marked variation in the wool production. While the nitrogenous grasses favor heavy wool production, and the cool climate increases growth, the dry-



COUNTRY.  
deterioration of imported sheep in the West



FINE FAT SHEEP AT THE LARAMIE EXPERIMENTAL STATION.



IMPORTED RAMBOUILLET LAMBS BEING FED ON A WESTERN SHEEP RANCH.  
They fail to live up to their pedigrees when compelled to "rustle" on the range.

ness of the air and the severity of the winters decrease the amount of "yolk" in the wool. The natural oils, which go to the fleece in a mild climate, especially where humid conditions prevail, are given to the body to increase the animal warmth. This decreases the weight of the fleece, and does much to account for the startling variations of the wool clip

in various Western states, the average fleece in the southwest going as low as six or seven pounds, while Western Oregon, owing to its mild, comparatively humid climate, sometimes averages nearly fifteen pounds to the fleece.

Sometimes the flocks on the Western range in this country must go for two or three days without water. Many of the

streams and water holes, too, are heavily impregnated with alkali. Most of the sheep herders in Wyoming, who know the evil effects of alkali upon the human system, are never without a supply of vinegar. By "cutting" the alkali water with a liberal application of vinegar, and then adding sugar, the herder fills his canteen with a drink which is not unpleasant and which mitigates the evil of alkali poisoning.

What can be accomplished by persistent breeding of high-class sheep was shown by a Wyoming ranchman, who, several years ago, became alarmed at the poor condition of his flocks. He spent several thousand dollars on fine imported bucks, and in ten years increased the clip from a third of his flock to more than fifteen pounds—something phenomenal for Wyoming. Such private experiments

have shown the plastic nature of the sheep, and have proved that it is possible to achieve astounding results under scientific direction. At the government experiment station at Laramie there are many splendid examples of the finest varieties of sheep. The finest were taken to the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition and won forty-six first premiums, besides several secondary prizes. All these sheep were fed under typical range conditions near Laramie. The physical changes that are being wrought in the government's flocks are recorded with the minutest care. It is desired to produce an animal that will retain its "rustling" qualities, but which, at the same time, will produce a maximum amount of wool and mutton and that will not have to be constantly "built up" through fresh importations.