

Now I knew that rain-storms would come, in the next forty years; and that all the wolves weren't dead yet; and that the dogs were increasing, rather than otherwise, both in ill-manners and numbers; and that "bad luck" was only an irreverent name for adverse providences, which we are quite sure would still be sent us, if it were only for the purpose of salutary chastening. So I did not "go into" the sheep business. Still, I watched with increased interest Skittles' movements. He had not really as yet found himself with an overplus of sheep. He wanted always a few to pasture on his own little farm. And those one-horse butcher wagons on half-springs, that go scudding about the country, and twenty or thirty years ago brought the farmers the only money they ever saw (except the wool clip), till "after harvest," would stop at Skittles' gate. And they would go away with a fat sheep, or a couple of fat lambs in. And the very next week, Skittles' wife would have a new dress, or his daughter a new bonnet.

I was going past one morning (his barn was very close to the road), when Skittles was selling a fat sheep to neighbor Tettington. It was harvest, and Tettington wanted mutton for his cradlers, and had none of his own that he wanted to kill. They had apparently agreed about the price—so much for "the pick" of the flock. Tettington had caught one, as they had them crowded into a corner; and then thought he saw a better one. He gave Skittles the first one to hold, while he made another seizure. It was "two plunges for a pearl;" and was unfortunate. The second one was not as good as the first—so Skittles saw, the instant it was seized; so when the sheep made a rush, as they always do when one of their number is laid hold of, he deliberately tumbled down on his back and let his sheep bound off with the rest, making some great exclamations about "that sheep knocking him down." Of course Tettington took the second best sheep, paying the very best price for it.

As might be expected, this plan of always selling off the best sheep, reduced the quality of the flock faster than it did their numbers; and not to speak of his hopeless-

ness of getting a flock large enough to begin his grand speculation on, sheep-breeding seemed likely to come to an end through sheer deterioration in quality. Something must be done. Winter was coming on; and it was poor policy to begin wintering sheep on good hay, of which the pelts only could be counted when spring came. He reversed his summer process therefore, and killed off some twenty-five of the poorest of his flock. The skins were not bad, though small, and they were the only part of the sheep that could be turned into money. The thin half-transparent carcasses were a subject of facetious remark in the neighborhood; for after trying to sell some of the thin mutton, he had finally given away as many as he could.

At this time, a curious genius was carrying on business as a butcher in Gorton. I cannot stop to tell all about him now, but will glance at him again sometime. His name was Derby. Now Derby was at Skendle with his wagon; and had some rather choice beef and mutton to sell. Skittles saw him there, and told him very confidentially that he had a carcass or two of venison that "he would just as soon take beef for, pound for pound," as he didn't care about venison. Derby fell into the snare, and Skittles hurried home to get the venison ready. He stowed away all the sheepskins out of sight, and removed the heads from two of the longest and thinnest sheep, and had them stretched on the clean barn-floor when the inexperienced butcher arrived. They only weighed 25 pounds a piece, and he had only therefore to sacrifice 50 pounds of a good hind-quarter of beef. Nor did he discover the cheat till a hotel-keeper to whom he offered the venison discovered it for him!

All this did not put me greatly in love with sheep-farming. I therefore let that pass.

A long-legged specimen of young Canada, a few miles west of us, advised me to turn money-broker. He said the Mexican and Spanish "sixpences," so common then, when they were well-marked on both sides, could be split, so as to make two. He had often passed them; for if one side were good, it made no matter what the other side was. I had only to put a small