

Just from
Weather in Spring?
Snow Season?
Early Clipping Season.

It was already dark and raining by the time the dogs had heard August's whistle and had started the sheep down to a lower pasture on the far side of the ridge. Though the storm looked like a bad one the shepherd decided to move the sheep slowly so that the two dogs and he could keep them from straying or far worse, from stampeding off one of the many ledges which lay on both side of them. The sheep were anxious. They sensed the storm but they did not panic, though an occasional sheep would increase the tension with a ^{small} quick jump into the air. August's trouble was that he had not moved his sheep early enough or quick enough, for the storm had ^{begin to blow} closed in on him faster than he had anticipated. The light rain, the premature darkness, the sudden coldness were only indications of what was coming. The clouds on the peak directly above boilded over the rim and came scaling down the mountain side like a flock of blue partridges. The wind swept down out of the pass with the clouds bending to the ground the poppies and other wild flowers which grew along the upper pastures. The picas and marmots stopped their whistling and took shelter among the granite rock slides. The rain began to come down heavier, then it turned to hail. The shepherd and his dogs could not longer maintain control of the flock. The panicked sheep had a shape like ^{an} organic thing, like an amoeba expanding as the animals scattered at the first violence of

He could have a margin for change

the strange foreign sound of fear coming from August's high-pitched, rasping indian voice, which made even the dogs fearful. The flock, now smaller, was eager to force ahead. Occasionally a sheep would jump and vanish into the storm. The dogs would half turn for it, but the shepherd's voice with its terrible new sound kept them at their posts. They forced the sheep on. They found the path again and followed it down to the ridge where they crossed over down into the pasture. ~~Thereafter~~ As the shepherd walked the ridge, driving the animals before him, he could hear behind him the sounds of sheep — the deep throated bawls of the mothers and the piping sounds of the spring lambs which had not been strong enough to make the hurried descent. He could not help but hear them. He felt like the dogs in wanting to go back, but he shut his ears to the sounds as he crossed over the ridge urging the flock below. The pasture offered only a slight protection from the wind and none from the rain and the hail. There were trees though, at the bottom of the pasture. To get the sheep to that shelter would be all that he could do for them, so he pushed them even harder managing to keep them together until they reached the trees where they stopped. Some collapsed to the ground almost immediately while others stood silent and still like dirty, melted wax images too tired to even make a noise. The shepherd bunched them as close as he could. The dogs held them there though there was no fear of the exhausted sheep would escape. August took his pack from his shoulders and hung it to the stump of a tree branch. He reached into the pack, took out a sliver of dried meat and a few cold tortillas which he began to eat immediately as he squatted indian fashion under the tree. It was dark with the approaching evening as he finished his ~~hasty~~ meal, gave two of the dogs orders to hold the sheep, took his staff and another dog and started back up the pasture from where he had come. He could not hear nothing coming from the ridge above. He knew some of the sheep would still be there. His camp was up there too and so was his pack mule.

the storm, then from sheer herd instinct coming together into one bleating mass bogged down for sheer body weight. The shepherd could not get them to move faster. He prodded them and slapped them with his staff. He screamed at them until the wind drowned out his voice. The dogs could not hear his whistles. They nipped at the sheep, barked futilely and did their best to keep the sheep together as they moved slowly toward the safety of the wind shielding side of the ridge below them. Though they balked at every turn the animals were driven on until at last they were descending over the last ridge to safety. None of them stopped for the strays or cripples left behind them.

It was already raining when

And to show their authority to make them
nipped at the sleep companion.

* * * *

The last of the storm still lingered into the early morning hours so that when dawn came the mountain top was still hidden beneath black clouds. There was no feeling of morning. August could not even hear the familiar predawn cries of the mountain jays or the sounds of the animals up among the rock slides. There was no dry fuel for burning, but then there was no food to cook for the shepherds camp was still high above of the far ridge. It was not raining any more, but it was cold. August's wet blanket steamed from the body heat contained within, and movement within that blanket would so uncomfortable that instead of just reaching over his head for the pack with the jerky and tortillas he stayed huddled where he was. He had brought back with the help of the dog maybe thirty sheep far more than half of what he had lost. Even as he urged the flock downward he could hear the cries of those still up on the mountain range. Now the sheep were still and noiseless, grouped together under the protection of the pines and aspens, hot steamy breath, shivering, fur matted and still wet.

It came with a suddenness like a curtain thrown back, an instant flare of brightness and then there was light, ^{the} ~~the~~ whole valley ~~was~~ ^{filled} with. ^{As if} the very force of the rays ~~themselves~~ ^{themselves} had pushed them back, the clouds parted and the mist began to dissolve into the growing blue. It came with such abruptness that all of the sheep looked up together at it then turned away because of the brightness. The flock began to ^{move} ~~move~~ as the sheep ^{began} ~~began to feel~~ the first warmth of the sunlight on their fur. The shepherd instantly reached for his staff, grabbing it to pull himself to his feet with it. He threw the wet blanket to the ground, pulled the damp pack from the tree and adjusted quickly on his back. The dogs who were already guarding the flock responded instantly to the shepherds whistle.

The clouds were dark with a strange green color to them. It was already beginning to rain when August whistled ~~for~~ the dogs to start the sheep down to the protection of a lower pasture on the far side of the ridge. The shepherd knew that he could not get them to the pasture before the full force of the storm struck, but he could not hurry them ^{up} sheep. He could ~~lose~~ just as many to a stampede. He gently prodded the sheep with his staff to keep them moving forward while he signaled to his dogs to keep the animals bunched in to prevent strays or stampede. The dogs obeyed quickly, and sensing the storm themselves barked with excitement. To show their authority they nipped at the hooves of the sheep to make them conform. The storm had taken August, the shepherd, completely by surprise, for it had been heavily overcast all day with little change into the afternoon. The storm which had built up on the far side of the peak a thousand feet over their heads had been concealed until the last minute, when with the fury of Spring winds, began to boil over the peak, scaling ~~like partridges~~ down the mountain like partridges. Now almost the entire mountain peak above them lay hidden beneath the grey-green cover of rain. It was not yet raining heavily over them ~~xxxx~~ but thunder and occasional lightening was closing in making the sheep more restless, harder for the dogs and the shepherd to contain. The wind was beginning to build, blowing ~~back~~ up the heavy, dirty wool against sheep backs. The poppies and other flowers that grew along far mountain ranges were bending to the ground. Butterflies were blown like flower petals before the wind. As the rain began to come down heavier becoming hail, the picas and fat marmots stopped their whistlings and scattered to shelter among the granite rock slides. The shepherd began to force the sheep to move a little faster, but the animals would become bogged down ~~xxx~~ as they crowded closer for protection against the hail. He slapped their backs hard with his stick; the dogs barked louder and nipped with even more ferocity. They were not moving at all. The rain and hail had not only blinded the sheep; it had ~~hidden~~ greatly obscured the path to the pasture below. Suddenly lightening struck near them. ~~Thick thick xxxxxxxxxx~~ The sound, the thick sweet smell of it sent the sheep jumping and running in every direction. When the dogs turned for them others in the flock jumped and fled into the mist. The shepherd ^{shouted} ~~screamed~~ at the dogs to come back to tend the remaining sheep. They turned, but came back only reluctantly, for it was against their nature to let sheep range out of the flock. And there was something else,