SHEEP AND SHEPHERDS.

"A SHEPHERD'S life, properly understood, is the richest in the world," is a quotation from the sayings of James Gardner, which Miss Adelaide Gosset has chosen for the first page of her very attractive book, Shepherds of Britain (Constable, 7s. 6d. net). James Gardner, who was born in 1840 and died in 1900 from an accident, was a shepherd and collie-dog trainer who belonged to one of the oldest shepherd families in Scotland, and has left behind him the memory of a man of exceptional powers which he, at all events, thought were well enough employed in his own calling. And certainly Miss Gosset's book, with its wealth of anecdote and illustration, and the opportunities which it suggests for the naturalist, the archaeologist, and the plain student of the ways of beasts and men, emphasizes Gardner's claim for the wide range of the shepherd's life. Gardner "was possessed of a rich fund of folklore, as well as a varied, accurate, and extensive knowledge of all animals he came in contact with." It is a pity that not more of the conversation of this remarkable man has been preserved for us, for, as we can see from his remarks on dogs set down by a friend and quoted in Miss Gosset's book, he must have been a talker to whom it was a privilege to listen. And the folklore of sheep and shepherds would fill a book by itself.

It would have been interesting, for instance, to have heard from so observant a man as Gardner all he could tell us to the counting of sheep by the score. An exceedingly interesting article by Mr. Walter Skeat on this subject, contributed to
"probably because in the peace-offerings of old it was the priest's portion." Miss Gosset adds that this is still the custom of some of the trade in Durham; "others make a mark like a leaf of bracken. They cannot give any reason for the mark being made. 'It is taught them when learning to kill.' But there survive actual cases of sacrifice. The Rev. J. E. Vaux, writing in 1865, says that the custom still remains in Kingsteignton, not far from Teignmouth, in Devonshire, of sacrificing a lamb. "On Whit-Monday a lamb is drawn about the parish in a cart decorated with garlands of bluebells, and other flowers, and persons are requested to give something towards the expenses of the ceremonial. On Tuesday the lamb is killed and roasted whole in the middle of the village." Does the custom still survive? Often enough old ceremonies of the kind appear to linger on until they are described in print, and print kills them.

What survives through everything else is the spirit of close intercourse between shepherd and sheep, and between the master of the flock and the dogs that help him to tend it. There is nothing more surprising to anyone unversed in the habits and customs of a shepherd than to be told that a shepherd knows every member of his flock by sight. The writer was talking on this subject in the spring to a Sussex shepherd in charge of a flock of perhaps a hundred and twenty. "Ah," he said, "yes, and if any of them was to get into a field among another flock I could go and pick him out." Many shepherds are deeply depressed when their sheep are sold at market. But the strongest link, of course, is between a shepherd and his dog. James Gardner, the shepherd whose saying on the shepherd's life Miss Gosset has taken for her first page, wanted nothing more for happiness, he would aver, than "the warmth of my home and the devotion of my dogs." Here are a few of his sayings on dogs.

"In every case a good dog bears a deep resemblance to its master. I have never known a deceitful man to have a faithful dog.

"When a dog bites a man, that man is sorely in need of chastisement.

"A shepherd's dogs should all be recognized as members of the family. Such an arrangement makes life much fuller and sweeter.

"When my dog wakes from a dream, I know from his look that I have been present in his dream.

"No insult would wound me deeper than a look of distrust from one of my dogs.

"When I am taken away, my dogs will deeply mourn my departure. Why should I not then mourn their death?—for, bear it in mind, they have done much more for me than I have done for them."