

## MOSS

The stockman spoke and while he talked he sheared.  
He told about the sheep and we took note  
as he kept cutting all the while he spoke  
until the ewe emerged without a coat.

When he was done we walked across the yard  
to lean lined up against the pasture rails.  
He introduced us to his collie, "Moss,"  
and fifteen skittish sheep with twitching tails.

In fear the woolly critters raced away  
uphill through brush and trees till out of sight.  
The stockman said the dog would work them home,  
then hold the flock from taking further flight.

Without a turn he whistled to the dog  
who sprang at once to run a curve uphill.  
He disappeared full speed into the bush.  
For long expectant minutes all was still.

Then suddenly the sheep came into view  
with Moss in full control of path and pace.  
Tight-bunched, stiff-legged, haltingly, they came  
to huddle at the designated place.

Twice more the sheep were loosed, the dog dispatched.  
Each time the whistling ceased it was the same.  
At demonstration's end I met the man.  
With his consent I greeted Moss by name.

My voice and hands were quick to give full praise  
and during pats and scratches tail to head  
we struck an instant bond. The stockman saw  
and shared his dog: “ ‘E likes you, mate,” he said.

To let all know she was about to sail  
the *Earnslaw* bellowed out one husky blast.  
It left just time enough to say goodbye  
and hurry off to board among the last.

At Walter Peak Station visiting  
across the lake from Queenstown was I when  
I met a Border Collie, made a friend,  
and learned the mix of sheep and dogs and men.

by Lee Netzler