WŌŌL AND THĒ WOŌL TRADE. The term *wool* is now applied almost exclusively to the fleece of the sheep. The distinction between wool and hair is more easily understood than described. When the wool brought to bear in the comparison is that of sheep, the distinction is tolerably well marked; but in various other animals it seems often difficult to decide whether hair or wool be the proper appellation for the external covering; and hence perhaps the reason for the appropriation of the term wool principally to the coating of the sheep. Wool compared with hair is generally softer, more flexible, and more disposed to undergo the *felting* process, which imparts to it so much value in manufactures. Many of the wilder animals, such as the beaver, the racoon, the wild cat, and the otter, produce both hair and wool, the hair forming the long and conspicuous outer fibres, and the shorter fibres of wool lying hidden beneath. The goats of certain regions of Asia Minor, Tibet, and South America, yield woolly fibres of great beauty, which not only equal those of the sheep, but greatly surpass them; this wool, however, as we shall see farther on, is too costly to come prominently into competition with that of the sheep.

In a commercial and manufacturing point of view, a notice of wool may consistently be confined to that of the sheep; and for an account of the varieties of sheep, and of the wool they bear, as preliminary to the present article, we refer to the article Wool, which immediately precedes.

The history of wool in its unmanufactured state, as regards the legislative enactments to which the commodity has been subjected, forms, however, a distinct subject, and is full of instruction in reference to the principles of commercial economy. It enables us to trace the gradual growth of just opinions on such matters, and the many conflicts by which these changes were wrought. Wool, as an article of wealth, has been singularly exposed to these contests; for the agriculturists and manufacturers for ages took different views of what measures in reference to the wool trade were for the national benefit, influenced perhaps by what they deemed their own interests. The reason lies in this circumstance: that whereas the silk and cotton manufacturers work upon materials brought wholly from abroad, the woollen manufacturer employs materials both of home and of foreign produce; and as this applies to foreign as well as to English manufacturers, there have arisen four distinct points upon which the legislature has from time to time had to decide, namely—the free exportation of British wool; the restrictions on such exportation; the free importation of foreign wool; and the restrictions on such importation. The reasons which have led the two great class interests to take opposite sides in the question, and the effects which that opposition has had on the wool trade, will be seen from the following brief details.

In the time of Edward I. a duty was imposed on the exportation of British wool; and great complaints were made on his increasing the duty in 1296 from 20*s.* to 40*s.* per bag. Lynn, Newcastle, Kingston-upon-Hull, Boston, Yarmouth, Ipswich, Southampton, Bristol, and

London were appointed ports from whence wool might be shipped, and at which customs' officers were authorised to receive the dues. When the king had terminated some of the wars in which he had been engaged, he lowered the duty from 40*s.* to half a mark per bag; but the high duty was again imposed at a subsequent period. In 1337 we hear of the first enactment for prohibiting the exportation of British wool, a measure coincident with the attempts of Edward III. to encourage the woollen manufacture in England. Subsequently the same king obtained grants of wool as the means of defraying the expenses of his wars; and the gross absurdity of his former restrictions could not be better shown than by the fact, that while he ostensibly prohibited the export of British wool, he sent his own quota for sale abroad, as he could there obtain a higher price for it than at home. Throughout the remainder of his reign Edward had frequent contests with the Commons and the merchants respecting his grants of wool, the duty payable on wool sold, and the prohibition to exportation; the contests being not between agriculturists and manufacturers, but between the king on one side and all his subjects on the other. By a statute of 27 Edw. III., the towns of Newcastle, York, Bristol, Lincoln, Norwich, Westminster, Canterbury, Chichester, Winchester, Exeter, Caermarthen, Dublin, Waterford, Cork, and Drogheda were appointed *staples* for wool; that is, places where alone wool could be sold. Mayors of the staple were appointed to seal every sack of wool sold; a customs' duty of half a mark per sack was charged to denizens, and of 10*s.* a sack to aliens; and the power of exporting was limited to merchant strangers, or to Hanse town merchants.

During the reigns of Richard II. and Henry IV. there were repeated grants or subsidies of wool to the king, petitions from towns concerning the places for the staple, alterations in the customs' duty, and licences granted to particular parties in respect of exportation. The same, indeed, may be said respecting the next two reigns; but by the time of Henry VI. the merchants of the staple appear to have acquired a kind of monopoly, which was often made a subject of complaint. Edward IV. enacted that no alien should export wool, and that denizens should export it only to Calais; and in the next three reigns the policy pursued, however mistaken, seems to have arisen rather from a hope of encouraging woollen manufactures in England than to fill the coffers of the king. In the reign of Edward VI., the landowners of England, finding the sale of wool profitable, began to inclose common lands as sheep pasturages with so much eagerness as to cause great complaints to be made; and this may perhaps be taken as the commencement of a new order of proceedings, so far as the cultivators took up a position really or apparently opposed to the interests of the people. It was not, however, till the time of Charles I. that the absolute prohibition of exportation was determined on seriously; and this seems to have been, in the first case, not so much a measure demanded by the manufacturers, as a source of revenue to the king by granting licences to favoured persons. After the Restoration, in 1660, however, the prohibition became distinctly enacted.

From 1660 to 1825, the export of wool was strictly prohibited. The consequences of this prohibition soon showed themselves. The wool-growers, shut out from a foreign market, suffered from diminution of price; all kinds of extravagant expedients were resorted to, to increase the consumption of wool; a system of wool-running, or smuggling, became very prevalent; and many pamphlets appeared from parties taking opposite sides of the question at issue. The agriculturists, thus restricted in respect to wool, insisted on the prohibition of the import of Irish cattle, as one means of maintaining their rents; this disturbed the course of trade between England and Ireland; and the attempts made, at the instigation of the woollen manufacturers, to compel the use of woollen goods, excited the hostility of the silk and linen trades; and thus the whole commercial system became disarranged. Numerous pamphlets were published in the last century, of the following general tenor: from English wool-growers, to show that Irish wool ought not to be imported into England; from English manufacturers, to show that Irish wool ought not to be sent to foreign countries; from Irish graziers, to show that both of these restrictions were unjust; and from foreigners, to show that the non-exportation of British wool led to retaliative measures on their part. The agricultural and manufacturing classes felt that they were by legislative measures thrown into antagonism; and there arose from time to time complaints on both sides. A slight sketch of what occurred in 1781 will convey a correct idea of the usual state of party feeling concerning the wool trade, for a period long subsequent, as well as long previous, to that date. The price of wool being low, meetings were held in Lincolnshire and elsewhere, under the auspices of the great landowners; at which petitions to parliament were agreed to, praying that British wool might be exported, and that Irish wool might be excluded from England. Thereupon the Yorkshire manufacturers met, and came to resolutions that the exportation of wool would be ruinous to the trade and manufacturers of England; that the manufacturers would be obliged to leave the kingdom for want of employment; and that the importation of Irish woollen yarn ought to be interdicted. The worsted manufacturers were particularly vehement, for they had a notion, whether correct or not, that no other country produced long combing or worsted wools equal to that of Lincolnshire; and that if they could keep the whole of this wool in England, they might perhaps retain a monopoly of the worsted trade.

The union with Ireland, in 1800, was another cause of disagreement in the wool trade. By one of the resolutions of parliament preparatory to that measure, it was determined that the two countries should be placed on an equality as regards bounties, prohibitions, &c., on the natural produce of each. One effect of this would be to legalise the transit of wool from England to Ireland; and the manufacturers in a body opposed it, but without success. Thus was effected one step in the attainment of increased power on the part of the English wool-growers; and another step was made in 1802, by the imposition of a duty of 5*s.* 3*d.* per cwt. on the importation of all foreign wool. This latter measure of course enhanced the comparative price of English wool. It had long been urged that foreign wool was indispensably necessary to the manufacture of some kinds of goods, and towards the end of the last century the imports became considerable. Year after year the quantity increased, and by 1800 it reached 4,000,000 lbs. in the year, being about $\frac{1}{25}$th part of the quantity required in the manufacture. This alarmed the landowners, who thereupon procured the imposition of a duty of 5*s.* 3*d.* At various times the leading agriculturists made laudable attempts to improve the quality of English wool, by introducing the Spanish merino sheep; but they still found that when their wools came into the market with those from Spain and Saxony, the latter, notwithstanding the import duty, commanded a more ready sale for the manufacture of the finer cloths. Hence an increase of the import duty was constantly urged upon the government, and such an increase was made to a small extent in 1813, by fixing the duty at 6*s.* 8*d.* instead of 5*s.* 3*d.* per cwt. But this not satisfying the landowners, renewed demands were made; and by the year 1816 parties were placed in a curious antagonism, which may be thus represented:—

Landowners' Claims.	Manufacturers' Claims.
Restricted imports of wool.	Unrestricted imports of wool.
Unrestricted exports ,,	Restricted exports ,,

The landowners wished to keep out foreign wool, that their own might command a higher price; and at the same time wished for an unrestricted foreign market for their own wool. The manufacturers, on the other hand, wished for a free import of foreign wool, because it was best adapted for their work; and at the same time wished to prevent the export of British wool, as a means of monopolising woollen manufactures. Each party argued consistently with liberal policy in one instance, but displayed the narrow spirit of monopoly in the other: there was a right and a wrong on each side—a liberal and an illiberal; and the two parties were so far pretty equally matched. In most of the subsequent measures taken by the two parties in reference to the wool trade, the peers and commoners belonging to Yorkshire generally took the manufacturers' view of the question; while those in the sheep-rearing counties took the opposite view; and petitions and resolutions were poured forth in abundance by both parties. In 1818 the matter was brought on in parliament by the agriculturists, and lost by only a very small majority; but in the following year the country was taken by surprise by a government proposition, which was carried by a large majority, to increase the import duty on foreign wool from 6*s.* 8*d.* to 56*s.* per cwt.

The depressed state of the woollen trade, partly consequent on this impolitic tax, was one of the moving causes to the disturbances in the north between 1819 and 1821; and the attention of the government was repeatedly directed to this matter by the opposite statements of different parties. In 1824, Mr. Robinson, after alluding to the peculiar tinge of monopoly shown in the arguments of both parties, proposed to admit the export of British wool at a duty of one penny per pound, and the import of foreign wool at an equal duty—thus showing to both parties the same meed of fairness. Neither party seemed very well pleased with the proposal; but ministers brought it before parliament, and carried it into a law. In the following year (1825), Mr. Huskisson carried some of his measures, which still further opened the woollen trade.

In 1828 the wool-growers induced the House of Lords to appoint a Committee of Inquiry; but the evidence taken before it appears to have convinced the government that it would be wrong policy to re-impose the import duty as a protective measure; and there has not since then been any renewal of the obnoxious duties.

Many of the legislative enactments here alluded to depend evidently on some peculiarity in foreign wool which fits it for manufacture; and this was strikingly illustrated in the evidence before the Lords' Committee, in 1828, where several eminent manufacturers stated that they could scarcely find a sale for any woollen cloths if made wholly of English wool. This led to many laudable efforts to improve the character of both our long and short-woolled sheep.

We will now briefly trace the progress of the wool-trade, in relation to the produce of English fleeces, and the importation of others from abroad.

In the year 1800 Mr. Luccock estimated the quantity of wool produced in England and Wales thus:—

Short wool	202,737 packs.
Long wool	131,794 ,,
Skin wool	58,705 ,,
	393,236 ,,

Mr. Hubbard's estimate for 1828 was—

Short wool	129,917	packs.
Long wool	263,847	,,
Skin wool	69,405	,,
	463,169	,,

a pack being equal to 240 lbs. It has often been asserted that the attempts to improve the quality of English mutton has deteriorated the *quality* of the fine wool, but increased the *quantity* of the long wool; and this seems to be borne out by the numbers here given. Mr. Bischoff gives a table to show the quantity of foreign wool imported every year from 1741 to 1841. We will give a few of the years.

	lbs.		lbs.
1771	1,829,772	1811	4,739,972
1781	2,478,332	1821	9,770,103
1791	3,014,511	1831	31,652,029
1801	7,371,774	1841	49,710,396

These numbers sufficiently show how prone English woollen manufacture is, when left to itself, to derive aid from the use of foreign wool. All the finer wools used to be brought from Spain; but in 1765 the elector of Saxony imported into his dominions a few Merino sheep, which have had a most surprising influence on the trade in wool. The Saxony Merinos, instead of degenerating, improved upon their Spanish progenitors, and the wool afforded by them has almost driven the Spanish wool out of the English market. In 1800 the imports of wool from Spain were fourteen times as large as from Germany; whereas in 1840 those from Germany were seventeen times as large as those from Spain.

The inquiries made within the last twenty years, into the history of the wool-trade, present many points of interest. How many sheep there are grazing in the United Kingdom at one time, and how much wool is obtained from them, are matters on which no trustworthy figures have been given. All is guess-work. In 1860 Mr. P. L. Simmonds gave a curious comparison of estimates made at different times during the present century, relating, in most instances, to the number of sheep supposed to be living at one time, but more especially to the supposed weight of wool annually obtained from them. These estimates are eleven in number. The quantities, or round numbers, are as follows:—

Year.	Computer.	Sheep.	Wool.
1801	Luccock	26,000,000	94,000,000 lbs.
1828	Hubbard	?	111,000,000 ,,
1834	M'Culloch	32,000,000	? ,,
1835	M'Queen	48,000,000	247,000,000 ,,
1845	Low	35,000,000	157,000,000 ,,
1851	Southey	55,000,000	275,000,000 ,,
1852	Poole	32,000,000	128,000,000 ,,
1857	Ashworth	?	143,000,000 ,,
1858	Baines	?	200,000,000 ,,
1860	Wray	55,000,000	275,000,000 ,,
1860	Simmonds	50,000,000	250,000,000 ,,

Mr. Leonard Wray, in 1860, made an earnest attempt to arrive at the truth; the opinions expressed to him by wool-growers and wool-staplers were most discordant; but he arrived at a hypothetical result very similar to one which Mr. Southey had put forth in 1851. Mr. Simmonds has given a curious comparison of the wool-producing powers of various kinds of sheeps' food, only possible since the wide development of the study of agricultural chemistry. According to this comparison, equal weights of the following kinds of food will lead to the production of the following weights of wool:—

Potatoes, raw, with salt	6½ of wool.
Mangel-wurzel, raw	5¼ ,,
Wheat	14 ,,
Oats	10 ,,
Rye, with salt	14 ,,
Rye, without salt	12½ ,,
Barley	12½ ,,
Peas	10½ ,,
Buckwheat	10 ,,

Peas, wheat, and rye with salt, thus appear to be the best. What is the best *mutton*-producing food for sheep, as contrasted with *wool*-producing, we have no concern with here. There are six different qualities which manufacturers look for in wool—*fineness*, or equable thinness of fibre; *fullness*, or closeness in the growing of the locks on the sheep; *freeness*, or absence of entanglement in the fibres; *soundness*, or strength of fibre when pulled in combing; *length*, or a fitness in the length of fibre for each particular kind of manufacture; and *softness*, or a certain degree of silkiness to the touch. According to the degree in which wool possesses any or all of these qualities, so is the price which it will command in the market. During the latter half of the last century, English wool commanded from 6*d.* to 1*s.* 1*d.* per pound. During the first quarter of the present century, the price varied between the wide limits of 7*d.* and 3*s.* Since the freedom of import and export, the price has depended more consistently on the actual quality. While English wool, very little applicable to the manufacture of fine cloth, sells at 10*d.* or 1*s.* per pound, Saxony or Merino wool will often command 2*s.* to 4*s.* The good Saxony fleeces are always smaller in weight than the coarser English; the former varying from 2 lb. to 3 lb., the latter from 4 lb. to 5 lb. About half the home supply is used for worsted goods, and half for cheap woollens; the best woollens now depend wholly on the use of foreign wool.

One of the most notable present features in the wool trade is the competition of Australia. We have said that Germany nearly drove Spain out of the market; and now Australia is eclipsing Germany. It is found that the climate and soil of Australia, and the kind of labour obtainable, are favourable to the growth of wool. This has been done with very little encouragement from external sources.

Wool is largely imported from the British possessions in South Africa. India, it is believed, could easily supply us with 200,000,000 lbs. of wool annually, by the display of a little energy. Chinese sheep, brought to England and America, have proved very profitable, producing large fleeces of wool suitable for cheap goods. Australia could greatly increase her present supply, did not gold-digging frequently disturb the course of pastoral industry. The United States do not produce enough wool for their own manufactures; they import good wool from Europe, and cheap wool from South America. It affords a curious instance of the tendencies of trade when unshackled, that the United States' mills work up Australian wool which has come to them *viâ* England—a distance altogether equal to two-thirds of the circuit of the globe.

The total quantities of wool—whether sheeps', lambs', or Alpaca, imported in recent years, will conveniently be shown by taking certain dates, three years apart:—

	lbs.		lbs.
1843	49,243,093	1852	93,761,458
1846	65,255,462	1855	99,300,446
1849	76,768,647	1858	126,738,723

It will suffice to take one year, 1860, to show the trade a little more in detail:—

	lbs.
Wool from Australia	59,165,939
,, Northern Europe	38,840,961
,, East Indies	20,214,173
,, South Africa	16,574,345
,, Other countries	10,705,233
	145,500,651

Of this quantity, however, rather more then 30,000,000 lbs. were exported, leaving about 115,000,000 lbs. of foreign and colonial wool to be used up by our woollen and worsted manufacturers.

It will be desirable here to say a few words concerning the prospective supply of that peculiar kind of wool called *alpaca*. Under ALPACA WOOL it was stated that Australian sheep farmers were beginning to attend to this subject. We will here briefly notice what has been done since that article was written. It is to Mr. Charles Ledger that we owe most of what is known concerning the wool of the *alpaca*, *llama*, *vicuña*, and *guanaco*, animals which pasture on the high table-lands among the Andes. Those four kinds have slight differences; and by cross breeds between the animals it is believed that wool will be obtained of finer quality than any yet known. The Peruvians use llama wool for sacking, cordage, carpets, bed coverlets, &c., and alpaca wool for various textile fabrics. Mr. Outram, of Halifax, first overcame, in 1835, the difficulty of spinning alpaca wool by machinery; and Mr. Titus Salt, of Saltaire, made those further improvements which established alpaca among the staple manufactures of Yorkshire—especially when combined with cotton warp for strong but cheap goods, and with silk for waistcoatings and ladies' dresses. A demand having been thus created, the supply has gradually increased. Alpaca comes to England in small bales, from 60 lbs. to 150 lbs. each. 1835 was the first year of considerable import; it amounted to about 100,000 lbs.; this increased to 1,200,000 lbs. by 1845; and from 1851 to 1860 the imports averaged about 2,500,000 lbs. yearly. The price has fluctuated considerably, from 8*d.* to 3*s.* 9*d.* per lb.

Mr. Ledger, for many years a resident in Peru, conceived the idea of transferring alpacas to Australia, as a commercial speculation. In 1853 he went to Melbourne and Sydney, to ascertain whether the climate and soil of Australia were suitable for his purpose; and he found spots which possessed in an admirable degree all the requisite qualities. He returned to Peru and made arrangements for gradually buying and rearing a large stock of alpacas: undergoing great hardships while travelling repeatedly over the Andes. It was not until 1858 that he could get his flock into the Argentine States; for the government of Peru placed all kinds of obstacles in the way of their exportation. At length, in November 1858, a flock of 276 alpacas, llamas, and vicuñas arrived safely at Sidney. In May, 1859, he began a tour of inspection, at the instance of the New South Wales government, to select the best place for a breeding and pasture ground. He fixed on the Maneroo district, about 260 miles from Sidney. The first shearing, in November of that year, was too early, and the wool was pronounced in Yorkshire to be too short-stapled for the best goods. The flock was transferred to Maneroo; and the numbers are gradually increasing. Mr. Ledger has made a calculation that, allowing for accidents, deaths, bad years, &c., he very earnestly looks forward to

3000 alpacas by 1870; and if this estimate be borne out, the increase after that would be very rapid. The New South Wales government, regarding the subject as one of great colonial importance, have made liberal arrangements with Mr. Ledger; for Yorkshire will eagerly buy all the alpaca that Australia can produce; and especially will this be the case if the quality can be maintained at a high standard.