

FOREIGN WOOL

The importation of wool, as of any other commodity, depends upon conditions of supply in the place of its production, as well as of the demand in this country. The increased proportions of both conditions in the last century have naturally raised the figures from the minimum of 1,291,400 pounds in 1824 to the maximum of 350,000,000 pounds in 1897. Tariff laws are partly responsible for the enormous fall to 70,000,000 and 77,000,000 pounds for 1898 and 1899, respectively, and the business had only begun to recover itself by 1900, when a little over 128,000,000 pounds were imported. However, the annual importation has increased steadily since 1825, the average percentage of advance being about 53.93 per cent in each succeeding period of five years to 1900. The figures for the five years ending 1890 were 63.74 per cent; for the five years ending 1895, 33.38 per cent; and for the five years ending 1900, only 15.35 per cent of increase, the fall being obviously attributable to the changes in tariff legislation during those periods. The greatest actual increase in pounds occurred in the period ending 1890, when an excess of 216,295,081 pounds were imported, although the percentage of advance was only 63.74.

The relative importance of the foreign sources of wool supply differs in very much the same particulars as do the actual amounts received in a given period. Thus, while in 1890 Argentina headed the list with nearly 14,000,000 pounds of class III. wool, with Asiatic Turkey second, with over 12,000,000 pounds, and Russia third, with over 10,000,000, all these countries showed a falling off in actual amounts and in relative importance in 1900. In the latter year China headed the list with nearly 31,000,000 pounds; Scotland came second, with a little over 10,000,000, and India third, with a little over 9,000,000 pounds. In the other grades of wool the case is somewhat different. Thus in class II. England led in 1890, with nearly 6,900,000 pounds out of a total import of nearly 7,660,000; and also in 1900, with nearly 5,700,000 pounds, out of a total import of about 9,900,000 pounds, her closest competitor being Ireland, with about 1,660,000 pounds. In class I. wools, the returns for 1890 show Australia in the lead, with about 11,900,000 pounds, followed by British Africa, with a record of about 1,103,000 pounds; the total imports for the year being about 15,500,000 pounds in all. In 1900, we find that Australasia still holds first place, with a total import of nearly 23,000,000 pounds, an advance of about one hundred per cent, while Argentina follows with over 11,000,000 pounds, leaving British Africa with a record of only about 626,000, or a fall of nearly fifty per cent; the total importation for this class being, roughly, 37,000,000 pounds. The wools designated as classes I. and II. represent the qualities used by the general wool manufacturer, and which, as a consequence, compete with domestic wools. Class III. includes the coarser grades of wool, which enter principally into the manufacture of carpets.

In 1900 nearly 140,000,000 pounds of foreign wools were used in manufactures, about 36.5 per cent of that amount being coarse carpet wools, included under class III. In addition to this raw wool, over 9,000,000 pounds of worsted yarn were used in the mills, which represented, on an average, two pounds of wool to one pound of yarn, giving a grand total of over 70,000,000 pounds of class III. According to returns for that year, another quantity of raw wool, amounting in all to nearly 33,000,000 pounds, was purchased for carpet yarn manufacture, of which, as estimated, nearly one-third must have been actually used.