

had ascertained its real origin. There should, however, we think, be some means of distinguishing between a pure-wool fabric and its imitations. The manufacturer can easily see the difference, the merchant knows full well what he is buying, but the average customer can scarcely tell wool from cotton, and falls a ready prey to the untruthful shop assistant, frequently buying inferior goods when willing to pay a better price for the genuine article. The customer deserves to be protected.

THE WOOL SITUATION.

After a period of depression that will long be remembered by dealers and manufacturers, the wool situation has brightened and prices are likely to remain for some time on the higher level they have now attained. The boom of 1899, which so affected the European market, was at bottom a speculative movement, and it was brought on at a time when wool supplies were plentiful nearly all over the world. This proved all the worse for the speculators, and the pill they had to swallow is a reason why the market has been so long in recovering even after it was felt that the surplus stocks were exhausted and the conditions pointed to a coming scarcity. In the markets outside of Canada the situation appears to be briefly this: Supplies from Australia, South Africa, and Buenos Ayres have greatly diminished, while the wool production of both the United States and Canada has remained stationary. The effect of this disappearance of the surplus stocks has been seen in the current colonial wool sales in London, where prices have advanced about 20 per cent. in spite of the over caution of operators.

In the case of Australia the shortage is caused by an almost unprecedented drought, which in some sheep districts has been more intense than ever this year, and from which sheep have been dying by the thousand. Immense quantities of sheepskins, said to be 250,000 a week, accompanied by thousands of bales of dead wool, came into the markets of the Australian cities, a sad proof of the havoc of the drought. In 1895 there were 120,432,019 sheep in the commonwealth, the highest number ever reached, but last year they were reduced by the drought to under 91,000,000, a loss of nearly 25 per cent., while the number to-day must be still less. The ensuing clip will be the smallest in twenty years. In South Africa the supply is reduced by the effects of the war and the consequent neglect of sheep husbandry as well as the demands of the British army and Boer commandos on the wandering and uncared for flocks. The South African supply was 278,816 bales in 1898 and 217,008 in 1901, while it will be still smaller this year. In the River Platte region the shortage last year was from an opposite cause to that of Australia, namely, floods, which destroyed many

sheep and reduced the supply for that season by 25,000 bales.

In the annual review of the National Association of Wool Manufacturers for 1902, just issued, there are some interesting facts and figures on the wool situation in the U.S. In that part of the States lying east of the Missouri river, sheep raising has been on the decline in recent years, west of that line sheep raising is well maintained, though in some states, such as Utah, the country is overstocked. The report expresses the opinion that most of these western states "have reached the limit of their production." In the eastern states sheep raising has been slowly and steadily on the decline for years, but in Texas, heretofore famed for its wool clip, the decline has been recent and sudden. In 1899 the number of sheep in this state was estimated officially at 2,786,688, while now it is estimated at 1,440,000. This remarkable falling off is attributed to the fact that most of the public domain heretofore devoted to ranching has been cut up into farms, thus putting an end to sheep raising as a range industry.

It is unfortunate that in Canada only the Government of Ontario compiles returns of the sheep raising industry. Taking the returns for 1901, recently issued, we find that during the year there were slaughtered or exported 729,148 sheep, valued at \$3,103,513, or an average value of \$4.26 per head; and there were left on hand in the province 1,761,799. This shows a larger slaughter than any previous year since 1896 and 1897. The number on hand is also smaller than in 1899 and 1900. The clip of wool, however, appears to be well maintained, being last year 5,834,007 lbs., being a little more than any preceding year since 1893, when it had reached 5,896,891 lbs.

The average weight of the Ontario fleece appears to be somewhat on the increase, being 6.14 lbs. per fleece last year, as compared with 6.06 lbs. in 1900, and under 6 lbs. in the preceding eight years. The average weight per fleece of Ontario wool is greater than the general average of the U.S., though below some individual states, the average fleeces of Oregon and Washington, for instance, being 8½ lbs.

MANUFACTURE OF HATS IN CANADA.

A subscriber, writing to The Journal of Fabrics recently, estimated the yearly importation of hats into Canada as one and a half million, and says the capacity of Canadian hat factories is only sufficient to supply the city of Montreal. This would appear to indicate that there is a fine field for expansion in this line of manufacture, for in addition to supplying the home market Canada might do something in the way of export. There are, however, difficulties in the way. We fancy