

The total importations have increased from 45,000,000lbs. in 1842, to 133,000,000lbs in 1859; of which our own colonies and possessions furnished 82,000,000lbs. (I am giving you the last statistical account that we have furnished to April 1859.) From Germany and Spain there has been in that period a diminution of over 4,000,000lbs; but from other European countries, chiefly Russia, the low countries of Denmark and Portugal, there has been an increase of 20,000,000lbs. From our own colonies and possessions the increase during that time has been as follows, in round numbers—from Australia the increase has been during 20 years from 13,000,000lbs to 54,000,000 lbs; from South Africa, the increase has been from 1,000,000lbs to 14,000,000lbs; from the East Indies it has risen from 4,000,000lbs to 14,000,000lbs in the year, that is between 1842 and 1859. These figures show an increase so enormous that we cannot but be amazed that the price of home grown wool continues, in the face of such imports, to be remunerative. But if we attempt to estimate the total produce of the United Kingdom, the result will appear still more remarkable. The number of sheep in the three kingdoms may be taken at 30,000,000. The total produce of wool may be estimated at 20,000,000lbs. In 1842, the home-grown wool could not have exceeded 100,000,000lbs. A comparative statement of the supply will stand thus: In 1842, the home and foreign supply amounted to 145,000,000lbs; in 1859, the home and foreign supply amounted to 253,000,000lbs; making a total increase of 108,000,000lbs, which shows an increased supply in the growth of one of our great staples of manufacture to the extent of nearly 75 per cent, and this not followed by any diminution of price to the home producer. This has been caused partly by the increasing prosperity of the woollen manufacturers at home, and partly also by their increase abroad. France alone took from us, in 1859, 6,000,000lbs of British wool, and upwards of 12,000,000lbs of colonial wool. She took the larger portion of Irish wool, and France and other foreign countries cleared our market on the whole, in 1859, of 15,000,000lbs of wool, which was equal to three-fourths of the whole produce of Scotland and Ireland. The practical point to which I am anxious to direct your attention is the change that has taken place in the relative prices of different kinds of wool, and the importance of a knowledge of this to the British farmer. The competition to which we are chiefly exposed lies in the shorter and finer qualities of wool. From Australia, the East Indies, South Africa, and South America, we received, in 1859, upwards of two-thirds of our imported wool. And the state of that region, which will most probably continue to increase most rapidly in its produce of wool, is unsuitable to the production of the coarse long wools which are now in great demand. The British islands produce this kind of wool in the greatest quantity. A small portion

comes from the North of Europe and Ireland; but hitherto we have held in our hands almost a monopoly of this supply, and as nature has given us this advantage we ought to make the most of it. The short fine wools of this country, such as the Down or Cheviot, formerly sold at double the price of Lincoln or long combing wool. When the colonial wool trade had no existence, in 1811, Cheviot wools were worth 2s. 6d. per lb, when the Lincoln brought no more than 1s. per lb. But in proportion as the market has begun to be supplied with fine Australian wool, the relative values of the two have greatly altered. In July 1851, the Lincolns had reached within 2d. per lb. of half-bred Cheviots, and, in 1856, within 1d. per lb., and in May, 1861, the Lincoln long wool was the dearer of the two. The change in price as between the Down and Lincoln wools has been equally great. The two kinds of wool are used in the manufacture of different classes of goods. Cohourgs (this is information that I received from an eminent manufacturer in Yorkshire, having no personal acquaintance with the subject myself) are made from Australian, Merino, Down, and other fine short wools, of which there is a constantly increasing supply. Orleans and Alpacas are made from the lustrous long wools for which there is a constantly increasing demand, and a limited area of supply. In the short, fine wools there is no lustre whatever; in the long wool lustre is a most important quality. Alpaca and mohair are introduced to a slight extent to produce lustre in the cloth; but as the supply of that description of wool is only two per cent of the whole import, it will be obvious how little that will affect the price of home-made lustrous wools. There is a great and increasing demand for Orleans and mixed alpacas, and of lustrous goods in which the object is not merely fineness to the touch, but a lustrous appearance. Beside the British demand, there is an increasing French demand both for that kind of wool and for the goods manufactured from it. The French manufacturers already take the most of the long, lustrous wool of Ireland. I have been favored by my friend Mr. Foster, M. P. for Bradford, with specimens of the various wools at present used by the manufacturers of the West Riding, with the prices affixed to each, and which I now beg to lay on the table for the inspection of the Society. The practical conclusion to which I arrive is that the British wool-grower should develop as much as possible that kind of wool which is least subject to foreign and colonial competition, and for the production of which he fortunately possesses the most suitable soil and climate, and the supply of which can be best increased by good farming, liberal feeding, and with a large frame of mutton, as well as a heavy fleece of wool. For this purpose the best cross probably that can at present be adopted on suitable soils would be by using the improved Lincoln or Leicester ram, in which the desirable qualities of length, lustre,