

THE STORY OF WOOL.

PROFESSOR G. E. DAY.

The next time you visit a fall fair, be sure you do not come away without going to see the sheep. If you are fortunate enough to visit one of our larger fairs, such as at Toronto, London, or Ottawa, you will find the sheep pens a very interesting place. Here you will see many different kinds of sheep; some large, some medium size, and some small; some with white faces, some with brown or gray faces, and some with black faces; some with their faces so covered with wool that they can scarcely see out through it, and some with no wool at all on their faces; some with horns, and many with no horns,—in fact, the longer you look at these beautiful creatures, the more you will find to interest you. There is one thing about sheep that makes them look very different from all our other farm animals, and that is the warm coat which they wear. This coat is so thick and so warm that the sheep can stay outside in the coldest weather without minding the cold in the least, while a horse, or a cow, or a pig will shiver and look very uncomfortable indeed. Now, the horse, cow, and pig have coats, too; but their coats are made of hair, while the sheep's coat is made of wool, and wool makes a much warmer coat than hair.



Fig. 90.—Look of wool, showing coarse crimp.

Did you ever think of what is the difference between wool and hair? If you part a sheep's wool with your hands, you will find that it is made up of a great number of very fine wool hairs, or fibres, which grow out from the skin of the sheep so close together, and so long, that they form a coat which the wind cannot blow through. After handling the wool, you will find that your hands are quite greasy. This grease, or oil comes from the skin of the sheep and is called "yolk." It keeps the wool fibres soft and smooth, and keeps them from tangling or matting together. It also

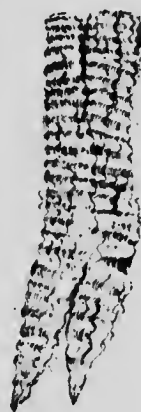


Fig. 91.—Look of wool, showing medium crimp.

helps to keep out water, so that a sheep can stay out in quite a heavy shower of rain without getting its coat wet through. Then, again, if you look at these wool fibres closely, you will see that they are not perfectly straight, but that they have a wavy appearance. In some kinds of wool these waves, or bends, in the fibre are much closer together than in other kinds. Look at the two fibres shown in Figs. 90 and 91. In the first fibre there are very few waves while in the second the waves are close together. The finer the fibre is, the more waves it has, while wool with coarse fibre has very few waves.