

ALPACA.

There is ample evidence that in remote ages the inhabitants of Peru were acquainted with the art of making cloth from the glossy fleece of the alpaca, as garments made of this material have been found wrapped round mummies which have been dug up from ancient tombs. It must have taken the native shepherds of the Andes many generations to completely subdue the alpaca from its wild state, and to rear it as a domesticated, fleece-bearing animal—its flesh useful for food and its skin for leather. The Spaniards at the conquest of Peru, who were acquainted with the management of the migratory flocks of merino sheep in their own country, were astonished at the minute and sagacious regulations that were enforced with regard to the rearing of Alpacas. Zarate, the Treasurer General of Peru in 1544, states that the wool of the Peruvian sheep is very good and fine, "particularly that of the species called pacas, which have very long fleeces." The Peruvians were well aware of the value to themselves of the graceful Alpaca, and they endeavored to restrict the animal to their own country by the most stringent penalties against its transportation abroad. The gentle and timid Alpaca is a beautiful animal, nearly six feet high, with a long graceful neck, an elegant and erect head, and very large black eyes. It is generally black, or tawny brown, with its hair falling on each side the body in long locks. The alpacas are kept in large flocks, which graze throughout the year on the bleak and nearly barren plateaux of the Peruvian Andes, ranging from 14,000 to 16,000 feet above the level of the sea. They are driven to the huts only at shearing time, which begins about the middle of December, each animal being shorn only once in two or three years. The alpaca trade is almost confined to the departments of Cuzco and Puno, and the Indian flock owners sell the wool to the merchants, who send it from Arequipa, through Mollendo and other ports



It is stated that the first alpaca seen in England was sent from Lima in 1809 to Mr. de Tastet, a gentleman resident in Essex, who subsequently transferred it to the Surrey Zoological Gardens, where it was on exhibition for several years. W. Walton, a wool stapler, wrote "An Account of Peruvian Sheep" in 1811, and he advocated experiments in acclimatizing the alpaca on the mountain farms of Wales and Scotland, where, he supposed, the temperature and the character of the herbage resembled those of its native place. Walton drew a pretty picture of the alpaca, stocking the waste lands, and becoming a favorite tenant of the park, where its fine figure, graceful attitudes, placid disposition, and playful gambols would excite interest. Thomas Stevenson attempted the naturalization of this animal at Oban, but without ultimate success. The Earl of Derby collected a fine flock of alpacas at Knowsley Park, where every care and attention

were bestowed upon them throughout a considerable period. These alpacas finally came into the possession of Sir Titus Salt, in whose park they were kept, and this gentleman, after careful observation, arrived at the conclusion that the species could not be so far naturalized as to make it worth the attention of breeders. A great many attempts have also been made to acclimatize the alpaca in France, and large numbers of them have been reared in the Jardin des Plantes, and the Jardin d'Acclimation at Paris, with the view and in the hope of their multiplying in the mountain districts of the Vosges, the Cevennes, and elsewhere, and thus becoming a source of wealth to that country. C. Ledger, who had lived in Peru and Bolivia since 1836, and was engaged in the alpaca wool and bark trades, succeeded in 1858 in the hazardous task of taking a flock of alpacas across the bleak mountain-passes of Bolivia, and embarking them for Australia. He arrived at Sydney with 276 alpacas, and although the Government bought them, and paid great attention to them, the attempt to naturalize the species did not prove successful. The alpaca can endure the intense cold of its native Andean heights, where it exists at an altitude only a little below the line of perpetual snow, but it would seem that it cannot be successfully naturalized in the more humid climate of Europe, nor in the warmer region of Australia.

Alpaca wool is long, soft and silky. If the animal is shorn each year the length of the wool is about eight inches, but if allowed to grow it will attain a length of twenty to thirty inches. Alpaca wool was shown at the great exhibition of 1851 measuring forty-two inches long. It is less curly than sheep's wool, but it is finer and stronger in proportion to its diameter, and the quality is more uniform throughout the fleece. It was in 1836 that Sir Titus Salt (then Mr. Titus Salt) bought a quantity of alpaca at 8d. per lb. from Hegan and Co., brokers, Liverpool, in whose warehouse it had lain neglected so long that at one time they contemplated returning the consignment to Tacna. Charles Dickens gives a trustworthy account in *Household Words*, in his own inimitable way, of this memorable visit of the Yorkshire manufacturer to Liverpool.

Mr. Salt after a prolonged series of experiments carried out with great determination, finally overcame the difficulties of preparing and spinning alpaca wool, and he succeeded in producing an even, strong, and true thread. In 1836 cotton warps were first introduced into the Bradford trade, and alpaca—by reason of its softness and elasticity, and exemption from spiral, curly and shaggy defects—combined admirably with cotton warps in the manufacture of fine goods, which almost attained the glossy brightness of silk. Expensive, superfine dress goods were made at one time from alpaca weft and silk warp, but these bright, costly materials are no longer in vogue, and the yarn is now used for medium priced dress fabrics, alpaca linings and light coatings for hot climates.

The quantity of alpaca imported into Great Britain between 1836 and 1840 averaged 560,800 lbs. yearly at 10d. per lb. In 1874, 4,186,380 lbs. were imported at 2s. 8d. per lb. Alpaca reached the highest price in 1866, when it sold at 3s. 4d. per lb. In 1888 the price varied from 11d. to 1s. 2d. per lb., and in 1896 it varied from 1s. 2d. to 1s. 9d. per lb., while to day it stands at 1s. 8½d. per lb., and constitutes one of the most valuable fibres of the animal kingdom as applied to textile manufactures.

Donaldson & Mathews have sold their clothing business at Vancouver to J. Walker, of Kootenay.