

WHAT THE TARIFF COSTS US

Going into a small custom-tailor shop to learn the price of clothes, I was told that a suit that last year cost me \$35 would this year cost me \$40.

When I protested at the increase the tailor replied: "I must get that for wool clothes. Otherwise I ask you less and give you cotton and shoddy."

He took from his shelf some small strips of cloth. To my eyes they were of excellent texture. He frayed the edge of one, and, drawing from it a thick thread, untwisted it. It showed a dusty, short-fibre stuff which signified nothing to my untutored eyes until he explained that this was a mixture of cotton and shoddy. Shoddy is nothing more or less than old clothes ground up. They are ground into powder and are first blown and then rolled into the "woolen" cloth. The shoddy in the strip of cloth the tailor was showing me made a kind of dust on his fingers. The test for the cotton came on touching a lighted match to the frayed part. It burned freely. A purely wool fibre shrivels up rather than burns.

"Either people pay the higher prices for woolen clothes," remarked the tailor, "or else they pay the former lower prices and get cotton and shoddy mixed with the wool. Such clothes do not wear; they turn rusty and get weak and rotten."

This indicates the situation with woolen clothing throughout the country. As prices go up, the material deteriorates. This has been the obvious tendency for the past twenty years. The figures for the last decade are not accessible, but it is a plain, bald fact that our woolen mills used one-tenth less wool in 1900 than in 1890, while they used 2,000,000 pounds more cotton and 15,000,000 pounds more of shoddy. Heaven and the protected woolen manufacturer know how much less wool and how much more cotton and shoddy are being used in "woolen" clothes in this year 1910 than were used in 1900.

And yet our woolen manufacturing barons are not all to blame. Underneath them are the wool-growing barons, or, as Mr. Franklin Pierce describes them, "those flockmasters of Montana, Washington, Idaho and Wyoming who pasture their sheep over our great ranges where . . . they are destroying the very soil, denuding the hills of trees and thus impairing the patrimony of the Nation." These "hoofed locusts," as they have also been called, demand and get heavy protection against foreign raw wool.

From this it follows that our woolen manufacturing barons have to pay a high price for their wool and are in turn protected against the foreign woolen manufacturer. In consequence the American public has to pay for its woolen clothes double the price it would pay if foreign wool and woolens could come in free of duty and compete in our markets. Henry George, Jr., in New York World.

First of series in Wool