

great authority, namely, Lord Somerville, remarks, "the wool of our Merino sheep after shear-time is hard and coarse to such a degree as to render it almost impossible to suppose that the same animal could bear wool so opposite in quality, compared to that which has been clipped from it: as the cold weather advances, the fleeces recover their soft quality." As in sheep of all breeds the fleece naturally consists of longer and coarser hair covering shorter and softer wool, the change which it often undergoes in hot climates is probably merely a case of unequal development; for even with those sheep which like goats are covered with hair, a small quantity of underlying wool may always be found.⁹³ In the wild mountain-sheep (*Ovis montana*) of North America there is an analogous annual change of coat; "the wool begins to drop out in early spring, leaving in its place a coat of hair resembling that of the elk, a change of pelage quite different in character from the ordinary thickening of the coat or hair, common to all furred animals in winter,—for instance, in the horse, the cow, &c., which shed their winter coat in the spring."⁹⁴

A slight difference in climate or pasture sometimes slightly affects the fleece, as has been observed even in different districts in England, and is well shown by the great softness of the wool brought from Southern Australia. But it should be observed, as Youatt repeatedly insists, that the tendency to change may generally be counteracted by careful selection. M. Lasterye, after discussing this subject, sums up as follows: "The preservation of the Merino race in its utmost purity at the Cape of Good Hope, in the marshes of Holland, and under the rigorous climate of Sweden, furnishes an additional support of this my unalterable principle, that fine-woolled sheep may be kept wherever industrious men and intelligent breeders exist."

That methodical selection has effected great changes in

⁹³ Youatt on Sheep, p. 69, where Lord Somerville is quoted. See p. 117, on the presence of wool under the hair. With respect to the fleeces of Australian sheep, p. 185. On selec-

tion counteracting any tendency to change, see pp. 70, 117, 120, 168.

⁹⁴ Audubon and Bachman, 'The Quadrupeds of North America,' 1846, vol. v. p. 365.