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THE CANADIAN TEXTILE DIRECTORY

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Editorial

THE STATE OF TRADE.

The uncertain, and to some extent unseasonable, weather of the past month has been very much against trade in the retail branches, but the indications are all in favor of a better spring trade. The wholesale houses report that orders of spring goods are on the whole much in advance of what they were this time last year, and in very few districts is there any falling off whatever. Manufacturers are feeling more hopeful, and as soon as the belief becomes general that the approaching tariff revision is not to be dreaded, an even more general revival of trade is to be looked for. In Canada

prices are moving upward, and though an occasional falling off may be noticed in some lines, it is only the wave motion of the advancing tide of prosperity, and general prices are found to be steadily rising nevertheless.

Japanese Competition.

We hear so much of the changed and changing conditions of trade that we are losing sight of the fact that there are economic laws underlying each passing phase of commercial development, which are as unchanging as are their manifestations various. The Japanese problem presents itself thus: A country possessing a temperate climate and products of the greatest variety, has a population larger than that of Great Britain. The people display an intellectual capacity and a power of perceiving the beautiful which is hardly rivalled by any other people since the ancient Greeks. When we add to such qualifications a patient industry which never tires, and habits of such simplicity that a whole family would live comfortably upon a sum which would hardly support a young child here, we have an industrial engine of immense force. Given such a supply of labor as this, what will be the result of the introduction of modern machinery and manufacturing methods? The answer appears at first glance to be unlimited production at prices which have no relation whatever to European or American values, the swamping of these markets, and in a great measure the destruction of the industries formerly supplying them. To reach this solution the most important factors of the problem are overlooked; it is assumed that the population will remain unchanged under an entirely new set of conditions. That such permanency is not to be looked for is proved by changes that have already taken place. The people no longer put their best efforts into everything they do. They have caught the infection of the "cheapness first" craze, and hence the Japanese equivalent for "made for the export trade" expresses a depth of contempt which indicates that such articles, even if low-priced, will not long keep the market which their apparent value at first secures them. But not only does the quality of the goods fall off, but the prices rise, because the population changes its habits and is not satisfied with the simple fare of other days. Already Canadian flour is the diet of the Japanese navy, and when it becomes the staple food of the whole popula-