

COMPETITION IN DRY GOODS.

GREAT BRITAIN VS. THE UNITED STATES.

Specially written for THE DRY GOODS REVIEW.

THE question arises whether the competition of the United States affects Great Britain in the Canadian dry goods trade as it undoubtedly does in other trades. The examination of the figures for the past few years shows some results which are worth noting in regard to the substitution of American for British goods.

In the great staples of dry goods—woollens and cottons—England is undoubtedly supreme. The only rival she has in woollens is the German, and this chiefly in ready-made clothing and certain novelties of dress goods. In cottons, the protective policy in Canada has thrown nearly the whole of the business into the hands of Canadian mills, which, by reason of the high rates of duty, have hitherto been able to keep their own market. But, where the Canadian merchant wants to import cotton he usually prefers an English to an American. So that, speaking broadly, the English manufacturers of woollens and cottons had not, previous to the Canadian preferential tariff, done any worse in this market during the past ten years.

In fact, it might be said that, in some measure, the growth of Canadian industries themselves has done more to take away the

in some cases, they do not prove it very conclusively. But, in going over the records, I just picked out haphazard a few lines for the purpose of finding out how far American competition was going, and the results are incorporated in the accompanying tables. These ten different lines, it will be observed, pretty generally cover the whole dry goods business. There are staples, and smallwares, and dress goods, and men's and women's headgear. The item of buttons shows that this line is affected by fashion and that some years we import a great many more than others, and it is quite probable that the falling-off in the purchase of this article, both in England and the United States, is partly due to the growth of the button industry in Canada. In the matter of cotton prints the import from the United States has practically doubled, and anyone familiar with the dry goods trade of the last few years would know this without looking up the figures at all. The retail merchant may not always be aware that the prints sold to him are American, but the jobber knows that New England prints, owing to the abnormally low prices prevailing across the border, have been unloaded on this market to a very great extent. While I admire some of the patterns in prints made in the United States, I admire still more the magnificent and colossal impudence of the one cotton print mill in Canada which has been able to keep out a great deal of outside competition by a high rate of duty. But surely it must be admitted that for range, value, and appearance English prints are not rivaled in the world, and, under the preferential tariff, there is no reason to doubt that their import must increase largely.

SOME CANADIAN PURCHASES OF DRY GOODS DURING FIVE YEARS.

	1893.		1894.		1895.		1896.		1897.	
	G. B.	U. S.	G. B.	U. S.	G. B.	U. S.	G. B.	U. S.	G. B.	U. S.
Buttons, of all kinds	\$ 38,501	\$ 135,030	\$ 60,116	\$ 101,136	\$ 42,531	\$ 41,799	\$ 47,227	\$ 46,859	\$ 31,112	\$ 45,723
Cotton prints	1,437,461	247,369	1,285,088	214,272	1,818,787	375,661	1,999,688	501,330	1,530,745	559,536
Cotton clothing and corsets ..	192,857	152,366	147,014	123,902	131,286	156,192	146,360	161,222	107,500	158,201
Curtains	217,291	61,111	186,630	73,971	165,057	69,151	189,283	59,314	169,462	58,745
Brands, cords, fringes, etc.	308,852	105,715	321,135	79,215	231,211	61,075	162,134	71,458	157,358	85,329
Fur caps, coats and jackets, etc.	66,383	9,084	49,036	17,012	32,525	16,994	27,084	18,144	26,636	11,799
Hats and caps—beaver, silk or felt	636,594	177,922	544,132	156,081	529,442	180,550	492,274	220,768	407,563	272,132
Dress silks in the piece	626,369	21,412	670,056	26,563	634,078	28,208	625,264	44,730	515,410	52,196
White and gray cottons	47,054	104,634	49,508	98,071	99,300	129,636	129,488	131,455	140,939	134,938
Hats—straw, grass, or chip	189,067	90,608	185,823	104,287	113,558	88,265	186,345	104,734	159,653	113,002

dry goods trade from Great Britain than United States competition. This was inevitable, since, long before the days of protection, we began to make coarse woollens in Canada and would, doubtless, have expanded that industry so as to shut out the cheaper English woollens, whether we had any duty or not. But, undoubtedly, the dry goods trade, like others, has witnessed during the last five or six years a diminution of trade with England. The preferential tariff will, it is almost certain, stop this tendency and probably turn the current the other way. But, as the figures are not yet available, it is impossible to speak with absolute certainty. The imports from England, by Canada, during the past five years, before the enactment of the preferential tariff, were as follows:

1893	\$43,148,413
1894	38,717,207
1895	31,131,737
1896	32,979,742
1897	29,412,188

Now, some share of this falling-off must have been due to dry goods, although, as has been said, not a very considerable one, for the reason that in staples England is still supreme. But it is instructive to analyze the returns and note that in all sorts of novelties and special lines, and everything in which ingenuity and skill and the fads of fashion enter, the American manufacturer has greatly increased his sales in this market.

For the purpose of illustrating this I have selected eight or ten lines of dry goods. They were not selected to prove this point, and,

In curtains, as will be seen, the Americans have held their own in spite of the competition of Nottingham and other long-experienced English centres. In small lines of fancy goods, like fringes, beads, etc., it will be noticed that, while the imports both from England and the States diminished, the falling-off was not nearly so marked in the novelties that we get from the States. Then, in men's and women's small furs, made-up, the Americans have steadily increased their trade from \$9,000, in 1893, to nearly double that in the last few years, while the imports from England have dropped one-half. Now, Canadian make-up of furs are not rivaled for skill and cheapness, and, naturally, they will take some of the trade away from England, but it is curious that the Americans, in this line, are not affected so much in the same way.

There is an instructive warning in the line of men's hats and caps. The English manufacturers have made no particular push in this market, relying upon the fame of their names, which is, undoubtedly, very great, as there is a decided preference in this market for an English hat. But, the Americans are never asleep in these matters, and they have much increased their sales in this market, with a result that, while in 1893 the position of affairs was: English hats imported, \$606,000; American hats imported, \$177,000; the condition in 1897 was: English hats imported, \$407,000; American hats imported, \$272,000. Any Canadian hat dealer will tell you that there is nothing wrong with the English hat. Why then the falling off? Simply the superior push