

The Hat and Cap Trade.

THE LINEN HAT TRADE.

TRADE continues very good in the hat trade generally. The reports regarding linen hats are that this line is going to be as great a fad the coming summer as they were last. At least these are the indications up to February 1, from the sales made to leading hat dealers throughout Canada. The demand for linen hats will only interfere with the cheap grades of straw hats, the better goods in straws having sold as largely as usual.

FAVORITE COLORS IN HATS.

It looks as if the run this year was toward taw, walnut, and nut brown in colored hats. These, it is considered by importers, are the three favorites in stiff hats. Black hats, of course, will, as usual, predominate. The same colors are most called for in fedoras, with the addition of agate and drab.

CANADIAN HATS.

The other day, a colored hat was shown to THE REVIEW, and an opinion upon it was asked. After carefully examining it, the critic replied that no fault could be found by the most fastidious person. It was perfect in color, down-to-date in shape and the silk feel was high-grade. Inside was the legend: "American Manufacture." Of course, Canada is in America, and so is Mexico or Nicaragua. This was a Canadian hat, THE REVIEW was then informed, and it was certainly a credit to the manufactures of this country. Yet, such are the supposed prejudices of buyers, that the maker had not labeled it "Canadian," but preferred, for safety's sake, apparently, to take refuge in the "continent to which we belong." Some day, a Canadian hat manufacturer will make a hit with a national brand, boldly Canadian, and come out on top.

SMALL SHAPES IN THE STATES.

The New York Hat Review says that the change in style which we regard as specially desirable for stiff hat manufacturers is already developing, and the tendency is distinctly toward smaller shapes, low, moderately full crowns, with properly proportioned brims; at this time 4½ to 5 in. deep crowns, and 1½ and 2 in. brims, appear to be quite popular. Retailers who placed orders in December, for delivery from February 1 to February 15, early in January sent forward requests to have the small shapes included in their orders forwarded to them at once by express.

ENGLISH ADVICES.

The London Hatters' Gazette says: "The trade for December has been considerable for all inferior qualities, best blacks alone remaining unworkable, owing, it is said, to the very high prices at which they are held. All other grades are practically cleared off the market, and orders on hand will consume the greater part of the production for next month. The old year has been one of the most remarkable ones for very many years. The great scarcity of skins has caused prices to go up with a rapidity that has caused much alarm to every branch of the trade. January saw the first upward move from the unsteady markets of the closing months of 1897, when best New Zealand skins were bought up freely at 1s. 4½d. to 1s. 5½d. per lb., and Tasmanian and Melbourne skins at 1s. 0½d. to 1s. 1½d.

per lb. From that time down to the beginning of November the advance continued, and best New Zealand skins left off at 2s. 2½d. per lb. and Tasmanian and Melbourne at 1s. 8½d. to 1s. 9½d. per lb., showing an advance for the ten months equivalent to about 2s. per lb. on the produce of fur."

THE MAKING OF HATS.

A correspondent of the Danbury, Conn., News., denies that hat machinery has led to a decrease in the men employed in the United States hat factories. He says: "There has been so much said about the large increase of improved machinery in the hat factories, that I arise to explain.

"There has been no improvement in machinery for blowing fur or mixing it in fifteen years. There has been no improved machinery adopted in forming fur hats in twenty years, with the exception of dipping attachments, which have been used in a few shops only—in the hardening-rooms there has been no machine used in twenty years—in the sizing-rooms, where more men are employed than in any other department, there have been no improvements made on the machinery within ten years—there have been no improved machines introduced in the blocking department within twelve years—in the coloring department there has been no machinery used in 50 years; in fact, the machines in use over 50 years ago have been discarded; in the shaving and stiffening departments, there has been no improved machinery to materially decrease the number of workmen in 12 years. In the drying department, no machinery is used; in the finishing department, there have lately been some ironing machines and presses introduced, but I am informed that they do not materially decrease the number of workmen. In the curling rooms, there have been introduced some machines for turning the edges of the hats. In the trimming department, operated by women (bless their patient souls), there have been no improved machines.

"There have not been improved machines introduced in our hat factories to decrease the number of workmen 10 per cent. in 10 years, while the demand for fur hats has increased from 40 to 50 per cent., owing to the increased population and the decreased demand for wool hats."

THE MERCHANTS DYEING AND FINISHING CO.

THE REVIEW was shown here some new figured black dress goods done at their works, with mohair raised figures, done by the new mercerising process, which is supposed to be known only to a few, and, as far as the writer's judgment goes, the retailer could about double his money on them. They are also now preparing to do certain other classes of plain goods, which they expect to sell largely for both Spring and Autumn, and claim that, having a stock of goods in the grey, they will be better able to supply the colors that may be needed as the season goes on than any other house. Certainly the goods done here are a great credit to Canada.

While giving special attention to those classes of dress goods which they can dye and finish here, The Merchants Dyeing and Finishing Co. are keeping, also, a large range of every class of dress fabrics. The silk department is also larger and more active than ever, while their old specialties—gloves and hosiery—still form a leading feature—in fact, they are striving to excel in the specialties that they now handle. Ribbons, laces, trimmings, cotton dress goods, muslins, etc., are especially attractive and up-to-date.

J. Sproul Smith, Toronto, has been appointed agent in Canada for John Bright & Bros. Limited, Rochdale, England, silk plush and carpets.