

Canadian Journal of Fabrics

THE JOURNAL OF THE
Textile Trades of Canada.

Vol. XXI.

TORONTO AND MONTREAL, DECEMBER, 1904.

No. 12.

Canadian Journal of Fabrics

A Monthly Journal devoted to Textile manufactures and the Dry Goods and kindred trades.

Subscription: Canada, United States and Great Britain, \$1.00 per year Foreign, \$1. Advertising rates on application.

Office: 11 Court St., cor. Church, Toronto, and the Fraser Building, Montreal

BIGGAR-SAMUEL, LIMITED, Publishers

TRAVELLING REPRESENTATIVE: A. W. SMITH.

Toronto Telephone, Main 4310 | Montreal Telephone, Main 2549

Business correspondence should be addressed to Montreal; but ads, news items and editorial correspondence to Toronto; cuts from abroad should be sent by post wherever possible, not by express. Changes of advertisements should be in our hands not later than the 1st of each month to ensure insertion.

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A NEW TEXTILE INDUSTRY FOR CANADA.

In the June number of the Canadian Journal of Fabrics an account was given of a comparatively new textile industry which has been established in the United States—the weaving of fabrics from asbestos fibre. The special interest this possesses for Canadians is that the raw material of this American industry comes from Canada, and that the industry might have been first established in Canada better than in any other country. As the uses of asbestos fabrics are continually multiplying we would advise our capitalists to look into the matter, for a large field is open here not so much for the supply of the home market as for the export of asbestos manufactures to foreign countries. The natural advantages Canada has in developing this industry are first, that we have the raw material of the best quality, and in unlimited quantity; second, that this raw material is better suited for weaving than the asbestos so far discovered

in any other country; and third, that we have the skilled labor necessary to make the industry a success.

Asbestos is a mineral that is widely distributed over the six continents, but it so happens that only two countries have so far been able to produce it in commercial quantities and qualities, namely, Canada and Italy. The United States has plenty of it, but it has no fibre, in fact most of it goes into powder under the manipulating required to work it up. The Italian variety has a fine fibre, but while eminently suitable for some purposes it is too weak and brittle to weave into cloth. Only the Canadian asbestos is strong and flexible enough in fibre to stand making up into a fabric that will hold together. These points are very important in considering the establishment of a home industry.

As is commonly known, one of the great and growing uses of asbestos is for fire-proof cloth or fire-proof paper, and in the latter item alone we import thousands of dollars worth of goods made from raw material taken from the province of Quebec. The United States or British manufacturer pays freight on the raw material from Canada and ships the manufactured goods back to Canada at a good profit after paying the duty. Surely here is a neglected field for Canadian investment. About twenty or twenty-five years ago two small factories were started in Quebec for working up asbestos, but the machinery was very crude and moreover the demand for asbestos goods was less than a tenth of what it is to-day. In one case at least the factory management was not what it should have been, and the industry died out. The situation now affords a much larger and more profitable field, and there should be little doubt about the result to an enterprising Canadian manufacturer, seeing that new uses for goods made from asbestos—the only product in nature known to be indestructible by fire—are being created by progress in other spheres of industry; and that we have in Canada the only raw material fit for some of these applications.

It will be interesting to note that whereas the production of asbestos in the United States in 1903 was only 887 tons, valued at \$10,760 (a decline on 1902 when the amount was 1,005 tons, valued at \$10,200) the production in Canada in 1903 was 34,051 tons, valued at \$84,836. Of this total value, \$116,806 worth went to Great Britain, \$700,381 to the United States.