

## AMERICAN RAILWAYS.

The statistical report of the Inter-State Commission on the railroads of the United States for the fiscal year 1895, has reached us. Its figures, though not recent, are instructive, and our first task may well be to present side by side the principal items for the years 1893-4 and 1894-5:

	1894-5.	1893-4.
Total railway mileage in U. S. . .	180,657	178,709
" capital . . . . .	\$10,985,200,000	\$10,800,370,000
" funded debt . . . . .	5,407,115,000	.....
" gross earnings . . . . .	1,075,371,000	1,073,360,000
" working expenses . . . . .	725,700,000	731,394,000

Thirty-three million fewer passengers were carried, a reduction of  $6\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.; but 58 million tons, or almost 10 per cent. more freight was carried—for all the good it seems to have done earnings. It is true that the year covered by this report was a slightly better one than 1893-4, but still the record is a disastrous one. One hundred and sixty (160) railways in the United States, operating 37,856 miles of line, were at its close in the hands of receivers; the number for 1893-4 was 183, with 40,819 miles of line. The capital represented by these roads was nearly \$2,500,000,000, or about 22.21 per cent. of the total railway capital in that country.

Of the total capital \$4,961,260,000 was ordinary (\$4,201,695,000 common, and \$799,560,000 preferred stock.) And the funded debt is classified into \$4,659,875,000 bonds, \$445,220,000 miscellaneous obligations, \$246,105,000 income bonds and \$55,915,000 equipment trust obligations.

Seventy per cent. of the common stock paid no dividend, and on the enormous sum of \$904,485,000 no interest was forthcoming for the year. Default was made on bonds to the extent of \$624,700,000, which is more than 13 per cent. of the total.

The report concludes by showing at the close of the year a total deficit on the operations of £5,969,000, the deficiency for the year ending June 30, 1894, having been £9,170,000. These deficiencies were met, it is stated, by a decrease in accumulated surplus, or by the creation of current liabilities. How much further can this creation of liability go on? Since the Inter-State Commission came into existence so large a proportion of stock has never passed dividend in any one year, or so much of the funded debt shown default on interest. The record is a truly depressing one, and exhibits as clearly as anything can do the extent of the commercial and industrial stagnation in that great country.

## THE DRY GOODS JOBBER.

The position of the wholesale dry goods jobber has been attacked from a number of quarters within recent years, and it has been predicted that this important industry must soon pass away or sink to an insignificant basis. Without doubt the direct importations of the department store have given a great impetus to retail importations. The merchants of Canadian cities and larger towns have considered it good economy to purchase from the manufacturer direct. At first sight this arrangement appears to be wholly in the advantage of the retailer and the public, but closer scrutiny reveals a number of serious drawbacks to retail importation. In dry goods, people want the correct thing. The goods must be new, and not common. To win the patronage of shoppers, the merchant must carry a complete assortment of new goods in all their varied shades. The department store with its enormous purchasing capacity can afford to buy these goods from the manufacturer in cases, but the average merchant must buy them in pieces from the jobber.

Competition has reduced the profits of middlemen to a very narrow margin, and there is little question that it will pay the retailer to give the jobber this profit, which represents legitimate earnings in distribution. The jobbers have a place in the dry goods trade, and the mistakes of the present tendency will but emphasise their importance.

## FOOTWEAR IN CANADA.

Trade in boots and shoes is dull. Jobbers and manufacturers are winding up the Fall campaign, and looking over the season find the results none too satisfactory. In Manitoba and the North-West business has been of an average volume. British Columbia, probably as a result of the mining boom, has given better orders than usual. But trade in the Eastern Provinces is very discouraging. Ontario retailers are overstocked. The "Bargain Counter," the "Bankrupt Stock," the "Clearing Sale," and even the "Fire Sale" have apparently become staple features in retail trade. People watch for them and wait for them, and are not inclined to purchase from the ordinary trader, paying the usual profit. Competition on Yonge near Queen street, Toronto, has been unusually severe. Prices have been cut below a living profit with the inevitable results. The department stores in the same vicinity have added fuel to the flames and the people have bought good footwear at little cost. The same conditions, in a modified form, have existed throughout the province, and it is little wonder manufacturers complain of trade conditions. Manufacturers are already beginning to think out designs for the spring of 1897. From present appearances it is not likely the season will bring out any startling novelties. Styles will show a modification of last year's shapes, rather than any marked innovations; although it is thought the razor toe will continue to be popular, there is a tendency in the opposite direction. In colored goods the darker shades, such as ox-blood and chocolate, predominate. It is as yet too early to speak of values, but in all likelihood, unless the leather market improves, prices must be very low.

## MERCHANTS WHO "KNOW TOO MUCH."

Some persons who plume themselves on being good business men will tell you that they don't see much necessity of training for business. They will say that if a man is the proper stuff he'll learn business all right and quick. The same people appear to disdain the usual means of business education. Ask them to buy a book on commercial law; they will answer that common law is only common sense. Recommend them to take a commercial paper to learn what is going on; they will tell you that they have no time to read. Suggest that they would save bad debts by subscribing to a mercantile agency; they will declare that they know more about their customers than any agency. In fact you cannot teach them anything. But experience will teach them.

There was a decent soul out in California who had been farming, and having saved a good deal of money, determined to become a grocer, thinking he knew quite enough to run a business. He tells the *Country Merchant* thus how he got along:

"I went in partnership first with another man, and for a while he did all the buying and really ran the store. But we didn't get along very well. I didn't think he did just the right thing and concluded I could do better, so I bought him out. Then when I was all alone I began to realize how little I really knew about the business. I bought goods I couldn't sell, and I didn't know the right kind of goods to