

DRY GOODS.

A rapid survey of several of the wholesale dry goods establishments of Toronto, and advices received as to the same trade in Montreal, shows that while, for the moment, there is some degree of inactivity in certain branches of the trade, the general feeling is one of entire confidence for the future. The dullness, such as it is, is discernible in the demand for cotton goods, and consists in a slowness on the part of retailers to lay in a stock for more than absolutely immediate requirements. It is quite easy to account for this, though, as the trade thinks, the reason is one which can scarcely be said to hold water. Prices of textiles are very high, particularly since the upward movement of last month, and there still seems to be an undoubted disposition on the part of a large number in the retail trade to believe that a decline must surely come before long. We have already attempted to explain on what a slender foundation these hopes of a coming downward movement rest. The fact that raw cotton made a considerable slump two weeks ago is discounted when it becomes realized that all such fluctuations at the present time are largely of a speculative character, which is indicated the more strongly by its having risen again within two or three days. The truth is that the changes in quotations of raw material are almost purely of a nominal character, and represent but slightly the actual buying and selling values. The values on which are based the present prices of finished goods were made and allowed for months ago, and it is quite probable that if any change at all takes place in these, it will be in an upward rather than a downward direction.

A feature in the cotton goods branch of the trade is the slowness and unsatisfactory character of deliveries by manufacturers, and this applies even more strongly to those in the Old Country than those here. We were informed by one wholesale dealer that the filling of an order for an important staple line of goods, given on April 19th last year, is only being completed this week. This is one feature which tends to cause unsettled conditions. The market for woolen staple articles is a very firm one, and all indications point to continued high prices. Values at the London wool sales are tending upward; English domestic trade is improving; Yorkshire yarn spinners are very busy; all of which factors have their influence over the tone of this market.

Business in spring dress goods opened up very auspiciously, and this has gone on, and in fact increased until the present time. Greys are a very prominent feature in all makes and styles, while a tint, a little out of the common, which is also favored is cream, especially in serges. Solid colors are the rule but stripes and faint checks are also popular. Broadcloths and voiles are often in demand. Eoliennes in black, green, and rose are also seen in fairly large proportion. Prices on many lines of fall dress goods in the European markets have already advanced, and this may be the beginning of a general upward movement.

MUNICIPAL SINKING FUNDS.

There are a number of Canadian municipalities which do not exercise a sufficiently keen oversight of their sinking funds, a matter which called forth some caustic comment the other day from the Private Bills Committee of the Ontario Legislature. The remarks

came up in connection with the town of Trenton, which was trying to provide for the consolidation of a debt of \$53,267 by the issue of water-power debentures, the sinking fund having been used for maintaining water-power for industrial purposes, and the returns therefrom not having come up to expectations. Mr. Carscallen, chairman of committee, gave the Trenton people to understand clearly that the subversion of sinking funds is a step that must not be resorted to under any circumstances, and seized the opportunity to explain that his advice was by no means confined to Trenton. Another town which had failed to make deposits on sinking fund account was Brockville, in 1885, 1889, and 1892, and this deficiency of \$4,097, with a further loss in the reduction of interest rates from 4 1-2 to 3 1-2, renders it necessary to borrow \$10,000 to pay into the fund. In order to provide accommodation for the fire department, \$7,000 is required. A bill enabling the town to raise these sums by debentures and loan was reported. Part of the plan is to construct a theatre and public hall. There is no question as to the honesty of the town officials in these requirements, but aldermen and officers should take warning, and realize that sinking funds must not be trifled with under any circumstances.

WESTERN BOARDS OF TRADE.

Wednesday and Thursday, June 13th and 14th next, have been fixed as the dates for the third annual convention of the Associated Boards of Trade of Western Canada. The second convention was held at Regina last June under the title of the Associated Boards of Trade of the North-West Territories. Special arrangements have been made with the Canadian Northern and Canadian Pacific Railways for the transportation of delegates at greatly reduced rates and there is every prospect of a convention at the enterprising truly typical Western city of Edmonton proving an unqualified success. The growth of that city and of the marvellously fertile country surrounding it is making such rapid strides that it is difficult to keep pace with it, and such gatherings as the one announced, besides making possible a valuable interchange of opinions regarding the best needs of the whole Western country, will do much to keep the minds of visitors *en rapport*. The gentleman having the arrangements for the convention in hand is Mr. F. T. Fisher, the energetic secretary of the Edmonton Board of Trade.

OCEAN ACCIDENT AND GUARANTEE CORPORATION, LIMITED.

What strikes one first, in perusing the report of this company for the year 1905, is the extent of its operations. A revenue of close upon five millions and a half dollars for the year implies an extensive business. And truly the operations of the Ocean Accident are extended enough, for it does business in every British colony, in France, Germany, and Japan, as well as in the United Kingdom and the United States. Another thing that strikes one as unusual is the provision in the company's balance-sheet of extraordinary sums under the heading of "General Insurance Fund." Here, besides the provision for liability on unexpired risks, we find two millions put aside for "claims outstanding," and in addition \$505,000 for investment reserve and general contingency account. These, we venture to think, are unusual provisions, and decidedly conservative. No such relatively generous provision has ever been made, to our knowledge, for possible claims. And, indeed, the half million for investment reserve over and above the other reserves is also most liberal, since the list of £1,452,000 in securities, which we have seen, is one of the cleanest possible. Still, the resolve of the company seems to be to make its dispositions