

Fur Trade News.

"The prevalence of cholera in Russia," says the *New York Fur Trade Review*, "which will certainly prevent the shipment of the usual quantity of furs from that country, has not as yet caused any speculation in the articles affected; in former years, persians, astrakhans and all Russian goods have materially advanced in like circumstances, but at present the market appears to be entirely different or obvious to the conditions which are so certain to result in short supplies of these foreign productions. Stocks of nearly all skins are small, and if the approaching cold weather results in the usual demand, the boom of the spring of 1892 will be repeated in coming fall season. Latest reports from Nijni Novgorod strongly assert that cholera is steadily decreasing in the district, and that there has been, at least since August 20, a daily increase in the number of visitors to the Fair. The goods sold will doubtless have to be cleaned before they will be received into any European market, and as this operation will require time the goods, and especially furs, will not be received at Leipzig until a much later date than usual."

The Leipzig (Germany) correspondent of the *Fur Trade Review* writes on August 10 as follows: "Business has remained quiet. The cholera in Russia is having a noticeable effect on our trade; the greater number of our Leipzig fur dealers who formerly regularly visited the fair at Nijni Novgorod have remained at home; many of the large Moscow firms have also refrained from attending the fair; according to all reports only moderate supplies of goods have been sent forward to Nijni Novgorod this year, the goods being officially refused a mission to Russia. The chief supply of Persian lambs, intended for the fair, have not yet arrived there; owners of parcels of these skins at Moscow and elsewhere outside the fair district demand excessive prices—but find no purchasers; fresh dyed Persians will not be ready as early as usual this autumn; dyed Astrakhan is in very limited demand, and trade in raw skins is very dull both here and in Russia; gray krimm sells slowly, with lower prices on each successive transaction; all other Russian lambs are neglected. In German dressed squirrels the lowest sort of back, and some medium and inferior belly linings; have been taken by Berlin and Copenhagen mantle makers; some Russian worked back and belly linings, in pairs, have been purchased for France and England. White hares sell only slowly; susliki sacs are offered at cheaper rates than in the spring, but there are no sales owing to depressing reports from New York and London. White and dark mouslin are neglected; a few selected parcels have been purchased by Leipzig retailers for dyeing. There is limited demand for Tibet coats and crosses; single good skins sell freely at excellent prices. Sable tails are in good request for France; Kolinski is used to some extent for linings, the tails are much cheaper than they have been in a long time. Russian bears are offered in small supply, but demand is not strong; brown dyed Russian marmot has been taken for northern Europe, where it is used in place of dyed white coats. European foxes have been cut into backs and bellies, and the latter exported to Russia; the demand has now ceased; there is no request for pine marten or stone marten tails; fitch is taken for Galicia; black cats are in good demand for Italy; land otter is quiet, and prices are low; fox tails sell freely for boa manufacture, and black, brown and skunk dyed boss find a fair sale. Only a limited quantity of musquash has been sent to Russia, owing to high duty; moderate parcels of inferior skins have been secured for lining manufacture in Germany; linings now sell at prices affording little or no profit; seal colored musquash sells slowly, and the demand for prime raw skins is consequently limited; black musquash has been in continuous request for France, and stocks are small here and prices high. There have been some good transactions in raccoon, and parcels have been purchased for firms in the

western part of the United States. American opossum, skunk color, sells well for America, but demand for Europe has declined; parcels of raw skins have been ordered back to America. Skunk of superior sorts has only a limited sale; striped sorts are in somewhat better request for French and German trade; mink continues in favor with Berlin mantle makers; tails are in very good request for France and America, and prices are high. Common cat sells only at reduced prices. Some of dyers have produced a new and brilliant black dye on red fox, greatly surpassing black dyed white fox. The cheaper grades of Australian opossum have sold well; brown dyed skins also in good request. Japanese foxes, dyed blue, are ordered for Russia, to be made up in broad collars; supplies of raw skins are large; only small and low grade nutria sells, and views for the article are not favorable."

The London, England, correspondent of the *New York Fur Trade Review* writes as follows on Aug. 13: "Business still continues very quiet and the holiday season now being on certainly does not improve matters, and as we feared in our last that the continued depression in trade would furnish a good crop of failures, has proved only too true, as we have to report at least three failures, with liabilities amounting to £30,000, and this of course tends to make business very unsteady. There are signs, however, that trade will improve towards the end of the month."

Stone marten tails are in slight demand and prices are still ruling rather low. Persians are being inquired after, but only in small quantities; the better grades having fallen off somewhat and the cheaper ones are now selling, and we are still of the opinion that there will be a good sale for these goods during October and November. Dressed and pulled nutria are still being used by our cloak houses and will run through the season. Mink is a very good article here and skins are selling pretty freely at from 5s to 6s 6d per skin; fine dark skins are also in good request and in point of facts the demand excels the supply. Martin do not sell so well as we anticipated, but still there is time for improvement."

The lining trade is still the best, and notwithstanding the cholera at Nijni-Novgorod, prices rule just about the same as before the fair. Several parcels of squirrel back rotundas have been sold at very low prices indeed, but lock linings still keep their prices. Musquash back rotundas are still selling, but not so freely as might be expected, considering the price they are at to-day. Hamster linings are in slight request, but this is always a very poor article, very few indeed being sold. Susliki sacs are still in pretty good demand and no doubt will continue throughout the season."

Black and grizzly bears, which have been the mainstay of the furriers during the whole of the season, have, during the last three weeks, fallen off very considerably, both in bears and pelerines, which is no doubt due to a great extent to the feather boa trade, which is rather brisk just now, but this of course will fall off as soon as we have a touch of cold weather."

The Curing of Sealskins.

A lot of curious and interesting information was given yesterday, says a San Francisco paper, by Gustav Niebaum of the Alaska Commercial company, and Russian vice consul, in regard to the dyeing, dressing and softening of the skins of the fur seal. One of the most difficult things to do is to remove the coarse hair from the skin, leaving that which is as soft as silk or eider down. Capt. Niebaum told about this. He has had a long experience in far Northwestern sealing, and has collected a unique museum of stuffed seals, their skins cured so as to illustrate the various stages of their progress in becoming the handsome and highly prized garments seen upon San Francisco streets.

What started the veteran sealer to talking was a statement wired from Newark, N.J., saying that a company had just been organized

there with \$10,000,000 backing to dress and dye American skins. Mr. Niebaum smiled as he glanced over the statement. "Ten million dollars," said he, "is a great deal more than is needed. No such sum is needed at all. The machinery needed is not costly, but a great deal of skill is required. We didn't think when we were catching seals extensively that it would pay us to go to dyeing, dressing and curing generally for ourselves. We could get it cheaper in London."

As to there being any great secret, however, about the process of dyeing, as has been told over and over again, that is an error. Skins can probably be dyed here as well as in London, but it takes a little finesse to remove the coarse hair. That is the particular business. The skins have to be just so hot and so cold. If they are too hot, then all the fur will come out, and if they are not warm enough the coarse hair won't come." Mr. Niebaum illustrated his story by opening a door to another room and showing from an exhibit of many skins all across which there were three broad bands. The first showed the hair in the natural state. It was thick and gray. The next band showed only the fine tawny fur underneath. But it was somewhat bunchy, like wool on a sheep. The next band showed it beautiful and black, and combed out and softened by the machinery so that it was exceedingly soft.

"The coarse hair," said Mr. Niebaum, "is removed by first planing the skin on the under side by some very sharp and perfect machinery. It cuts the hair bulbs or roots of the coarse hair, which project lowest, and then, by simply brushing the top of the fur, the coarse hair will drop out. But first the skin is treated with certain chemicals, being skated in them as before intimated. I apprehend that the new company at Newark intends to treat many other kinds of skins besides those of the seal, such as rabbit, coon, bear and various others. All these skins are now colored in various hues. You see some of them on the street every day worn in various forms." This is more than half the business of the London firm.

"The entire annual product of sealskins in the world is, say 70,000. About half of these are consumed in the United States. Well, if the new company got all of these to treat it would only be a small thing. According to the rates we paid it would be worth about \$4 10 for transforming in the manner I have stated the skin of a large pup. For the larger seal it would be \$5.10. It costs \$2.45 for dressing, \$1.15 for getting the coarse hair out and \$1.50 for dyeing."

"Gen. Miller and I for a time thoroughly talked over and considered the advisability of dressing and coloring the skins, but it was finally abandoned, because to make that part of the business profitable we must treat many other kinds of skins with which we had nothing to do. The fine work is in removing the large hairs. Ireadwell, who is represented as one of the leaders in the enterprise, has been in the fur business for a good while."

The Canadian shoe and leather directory for 1892 has been received. It is a complete handbook of Canadian shoe and leather industries, and will prove a valuable book of reference to houses in these trades.

A sharp advance having taken place in the States on the finer grades of paper, owing to a scarcity of rags, wholesalers at Montreal are going to advance their prices. In proportion the advance will equal at least ten per cent.

A blacksmith of Quebec is credited with having discovered a process for hardening copper. It has been tested successfully at the Government ranges, a bullet fired at forty yards being flattened and split against a copper plate one and three quarter lines in thickness. The matter will be brought to the attention of the Admiralty, and it is claimed that if the process stands all the tests at the English dockyards, as is expected, it will work a revolution in armour plating.