

## WHAT OF THE SMALL WOOL MANUFACTURER?

We live in an age of big things. Big organizations and "combines" seem not unlikely to sweep the smaller concerns either out of existence or into their own gigantic nets. The woolen manufacturing industries have not yet experienced much of combines and trusts, and there does not seem any immediate prospect of the creation of such organizations. The nearest approach to such monopolistic trading in woolen circles is the Yorkshire Woolcombers' Association, which, however, has thus far offered little inducement to the further welding together of independent firms. Moreover, it is now an accepted fact that the general public do not like the trusts and combines, and the fate of the small trader, which was at one time said to be sealed, is now much more hopeful than of late; and if he can but hold his own for a little while longer, it is not unlikely to become yet more assured. Nevertheless, the small mills feel acutely the competition of the larger concerns, although these cannot be described as "combines;" and whereas once upon a time there were quite a number of manufacturers who owned but a few looms, and made only a few pieces of cloth every week, which they sold without difficulty, to-day there are very few such tiny concerns. The development of the fancy trade in woolsens and worsteds has largely caused their disappearance. When the woolen trade was almost entirely confined to plain goods (such as broadcloth, beavers, doeskins, etc.), these small men were always certain of their stock—even if they accumulated any, which was not often; for there was no continual changing of colors and designs as at the present time. Men used to be able to start in business as manufacturers on their own account with little capital which they had managed to save out of their personal earnings, and from this class have sprung many of our older manufacturing firms. These men, who had learned manufacturing by actual work at the loom, became often large employers of labor and successful business men, whose practical experience served them well in dealing with the operatives they employed, and with the problems of cloth manufacture. Having nothing to depend upon but their own efforts and energy, they were far more likely to succeed than many of those who came after them and found businesses and capital ready to hand, which their fathers and grandfathers had made by strenuous and intelligent work. It is thus a legitimate subject for regret that so few men of brains are able to start woolen manufacturing to-day with what little capital they have managed to save from their weekly wages; the industry is the poorer for losing these valuable recruits.

Although the very small manufacturer, with his two or three or a dozen looms, is no longer with us, his fellow of thirty or forty looms may still be found. Unhappily, however, he stands no great chance of survival. At the best of times these small firms feel the keenness of competition, even when the small orders that big firms sneer at when times were good, are finding their way into the smaller mills. But when things are quiet, the larger mills are glad to secure these orders—which they can do by cutting in price. Thus small and big orders are swept into their nets. In woolen manufacturing much depends upon the turnout of a mill, and it stands to reason that the firm which can produce 200 pieces per week is better able to do things much lower in price, and at the same time make a profit, than the firm turning out only 100 pieces per week, the cost in the one case being by no means double that of the other. The only chance for small mills is to specialize, producing fabrics upon which they can put a good profit. When they try to compete with

larger firms on goods which almost anyone can make, their position becomes hopeless. Merchants, while not too kind to small firms, tolerate them for their own particular ends, but lose no opportunity to grind them down. They take liberties with small firms which they dare not do with big ones; for if one of the small concerns sells goods where they think it ought not, they cast it off light-heartedly, while winking at the same practices by an influential house. In the matter of terms, where the big firms can fix and insist on their own dates of payment, the small firm has to take what is offered. Also, merchants are getting more and more averse to giving appointments to small manufacturers, as they like to see a large variety of ranges when they do take the trouble to go through a selection. A possible remedy is to be found in combination, reasonably carried out. For instance, there are many districts where co-operation of the small firms making much the same goods would enable them to turn out their good so much cheaper than they would be in a more favorable position in the market. They could concentrate their different departments and have one dye-house for all the mills, one mill for one class of goods, another for another, and so on. The objections advanced against "combines" would not apply to co-operation on the lines thus indicated.—Textile Mercury.

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## MR. TARTE AMONG THE COTTON MEN.

The following extract from one of J. Israel Tarte's recent speeches throws a side-light on the tariff history touching the cotton trade:

Mr. Tarte assured his hearers that the Canadian manufacturers were prevented by the tariff from giving their men as good wages and as favorable hours as Americans. He told a picturesque story of his relations with the cotton mills of Valleyfield. "I ran in Beauharnois, and the cotton people did everything possible to defeat me. Everywhere I went I was followed by wagon loads of cotton employees, who made a noise at my meetings. It was not pleasant, I assure you. I was defeated, and I was very angry. Then Mr. Fielding, Mr. Paterson and I started in on a revision of the tariff, and when it came to cotton I wanted the duty raised.

"When we came to discuss the matter in council, Sir Richard Cartwright turned to me, and said:

"Tarte, are you drunk or crazy? Did not those cotton people do all they could to defeat you?"

"So they had, but meanwhile I had been looking into the cotton industry, and Mr. Gault and some others had come and asked me if I were going to take my revenge, or if I would treat them squarely, and they had shown me that the cotton industry needed more protection."

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## WORSTED YARN SPINNING.

The Bradford, England, correspondent of the Textile Manufacturers' Journal writes that great interest is being shown in Bradford in the subject of mule-spun yarns against that spun on the cop frame. It will be remembered that recently a conference took place between Bradford combers, spinners and manufacturers to try to solve the question why so many French dress goods were being sold in British markets, and there was a unanimous verdict that the secret of the Roubaix manufacturer lay in his using mule-spun yarns in preference to everything else. It must be said that Bradford manufacturers have approached them so far with skepticism.