

the Continent, for the making of dress goods. Although there is not much new business reported here in raw mohair, the prices both in Turkey and at the Cape keep very firm, at rates distinctly in advance of this market. There have been some considerable sales of alpaca reported recently, and both yarns and piece goods of the best quality are certainly worse to buy. The demand from the Continent for staple classes of two-fold worsted yarns is kept very unsatisfactory by the reselling of stocks on the other side at rates even lower than the extremely low prices which have been recently taken here, but I am told on good authority that the quantities of these stocks must now be getting comparatively small. There is not much new business offering in worsted coating yarns, and as the export of worsted coatings to the United States in February only amounted to £19,000, the expected improvement in this market can only be developing very slowly. In other textiles the amounts sent to the United States in February do not call for any special comment, but the amount of £55,000 consisted of an unusually large proportion of dress fabrics in distinction to linings, which are included also under the heading of stuffs. The amount of cotton Italians keeps about £30,000, and some small portion of this will be fancy metallic-printed Italians, and some will be coloured goods finished by the new mercerizing process. It is still too early to predict the prospects of the season in the American trade in dress fabrics, but the winter trade is always much less than that of the summer season, and the heavy weight duty increases the charges largely of European productions of this class. In the home trade I find that although the last few weeks have shown a distinct improvement, and the warehouses here are certainly sending out more goods than they were doing, the spring season has not, on the whole, opened out up to expectations. Some of the novelties in fancy goods into which mercerized yarns have been introduced are doing very well, and some of the leading makers of costume checks are also very busy, but with the exception of plain Bengalines, the supply of everything seems to be quite equal to the demand. In both alpacas and fine jacquards there appears to be a better demand, but the enquiry is altogether limited to the best and most silky makes.

ROCHDALE.—At the flannel market recently the business transacted was of the smallest possible dimensions and rather disappointing. A few merchants made preliminary enquiries with regard to the next season's business, but it will be some weeks before there is anything of moment done owing to the increase in the cost of the raw material. Manufacturers will require an advance for new business, and there will be the usual difficulty in arranging terms.

KIDDERMINSTER.—The carpet trade is now very fairly busy, and everything goes to show that a good deal of the season's trade has yet to come. The London trade in particular has been later than usual, with the consequence that many firms, without being busy generally, are pushed to get off specially urgent orders. Rather more is doing in yarns, but the bulk of the deliveries are still from old contracts. Here and there sales of stock are made at prices which bear no proportion to those of the wool, but, generally speaking, prices are steady. The level of prices of carpet yarns is such that not much of the local spinning machinery is employed upon them.

NOTTINGHAM.—Though some departments of our lace trade continue to complain of a lack of business, the improvement mentioned in my last communication has been well maintained. Fancy cotton millinery laces are going off in good quantities, both for home and export, and the week has seen the placing of numerous orders, which will assure steady work for some time ahead. Fair quantities of fashionable laces are going to the nearer continental markets. Old valenciennes, malines, duchesse and point d'esprit laces are most in favor in white, ivory and butter. Linen Maltese and torchon laces make up assortments with point de Paris, Brabant and guipure laces and

insertions. American, crochet and warp laces have received more attention, but orders are unequally distributed, and there is some machinery idle. The same applies to Irish crochet edgings, Swiss embroideries and everlasting trimmings, while silk laces are decidedly slow, though some excellent qualities have been offered. Fashions do not yet appear favorable to this branch of the trade, and foreign competitors are supplying both the home and shipping markets. The plain branches are as busy as ever. Fine bobbin nets, heavy mosquito nets, Mechlin, Brussels and zephyr tulles are all in full request, and goods are only produced to meet bona-fide orders placed in advance at the full current list prices. Spotted nets sell moderately well. Rice nets and other stiff foundation nets have met with rather more enquiry, and there is a fair demand for silk nets and tulles. Silk veilings and chenille goods have fallen off. There is much competition for obtainable orders in this branch and business is quiet. In curtains, window blinds and anti there is activity, which, however, does not promise to endure for long, so far as the first-named article is concerned. Save for Paris, which is always ready to take high-class novelties, the Continent is not interesting itself much at this moment in our laces. The appearance of a number of American and Canadian buyers has stirred things up considerably, and improved commercial conditions in Australasia have led to an improvement in demand from that section of the British Empire. From Manchester there is a steady enquiry for valenciennes, and Brussels appliques are well spoken of. Lace and embroidered allover combinations, with edgings and insertions to match, have been in fair request, and are among the goods to which special attention has been paid by foreign buyers of the better-class styles. In Paris cream cotton veils have been worn largely, and other markets have given them a considerable amount of support. The danger to the lace trade from the selling of passementerie and ribbons does not appear to be very great. Mousseline de soie is used for certain purposes, but largely for the cheaper costumes. Net tops in light-weight goods are being used for the millinery trade to a considerable extent, and the demand for light Chantilly is still noticeable. The condition of our silk lace branch is shown by the exports for January. The value was £15,226, against £16,853 and £21,887 in the corresponding months of 1897 and 1896, respectively. Cotton lace shipments, on the other hand, opened fairly well, the value amounting to £242,307, against £220,029 and £223,080. Of the silk lace total America accounts for £6,497, which compares with £7,187 for January, 1897, and £10,042 for January, 1896.

LEICESTER.—The yarn market is rather more active as regards immediate deliveries, but business is still very difficult to book unless at risky prices with open dates. Production is of moderate extent, and stocks are not allowed to accumulate. The hosiery industry revives slowly, but the deliveries of spring and summer goods are likely to be completed at an earlier date than usual. Export business for South Africa, Australia, and Canada is of fair average extent, but the South American trade is inactive. Elastic web specialties sell freely.

KIRKCALDY.—Linen manufacturers find business continues to improve, and a more hopeful view of the future is being taken. Floorcloth and linoleum manufacturers are still very busy, extra work in some cases being necessary to meet the demands. Very large extensions in this trade are at present in course of construction.

BELFAST.—The yarn market is steady, with enquiries fairly general. Yarns are only selling in a hand-to-mouth fashion. Tows meet with little or no support. Prices untested, and nominally unchanged. Weft lines quiet, but firm. Cloth—Demand exhibits no change. Manufacturers are firm, even where business is slow. Damasks tend to improve. Powerloom bleaching cloth and cloth for dyeing and Hollands keep in well-sustained demand. Unions generally continue brisk,