

SOME OPINIONS.

(Continued.)

trial activity will in due time be renewed on a yet sounder basis than heretofore."

Mr. Robert Meighen, president of the Lake of the Woods Milling Company, and director of a number of other prominent Canadian concerns, feels a little uncertain about the immediate future. "In the first place," he said, "I believe that trade conditions in Canada are much better than those existing in the United States. But I believe the trade of the Dominion is at the present time to some extent side-tracked and not running on the main line. Canada is above everything else an agricultural country, and upon the success or failure of her crops depends business conditions. I think, therefore, we must not look for normal conditions in trade until we realize the prospects for the coming crops."

Indications Are for Good Business.

Messrs. Caverhill & Learmont, wholesale hardware merchants, interviewed, said: "Since the middle of December trade has been very slow. Up to then it was good; but at the middle of the month it fell off and became dull. But this is not unusual at this time of year, and we look for a marked improvement to take place by the middle of February. Our travellers have just gone out and are now spread all over the country, so that before long we ought to be experiencing results."

"So far as we can ascertain, stocks throughout the Dominion are not heavy, so that when the demand starts again as it is certain to do shortly—there should be considerable activity. The country seems to be in a sound condition, our remittances from customers, with the exception of those in the North-West, having been excellent. All indications point to good business for 1908."

Mr. E. B. Greenshields, of the wholesale dry goods house of Greenshields, Limited, said: "Personally, I fail to observe anything in the situation to justify despondency. I am aware that many well-posted men look for trade depression during the coming year, and that many bankers agree with them. I can only say that our business during the past year was the largest we ever experienced, and throughout the year accounts have been well met. The present year is opening up most favorably. Unquestionably, more care is being exercised by buyers and sellers, and travellers are not taking such large orders as they were a year ago. One must expect some recessions in trade after so many years of activity, and the realization thereof need not be an occasion for pessimism. Although there will probably be a slight falling off in the volume of trade, it does not seem to me that there will be much decline in prices. Wool and raw cotton have so far shown hardly any decline. Several cotton companies have been holding off in expectation of being able to purchase their supplies at lower figures."

As to Cotton Stocks.

"In some cases, stocks which ordinarily would have been purchased in the autumn have not yet been secured, holders of raw cotton being evidently of the opinion that mills would have to meet their views. The last London wool sale gave evidence of strength; whether or not this will be the case with the next sale is a question. But even should both cotton and wool decline somewhat, it does not follow that manufactured goods will do the same, because the manufactured article never advanced to the extent justified by the advance in the raw material. It seems to me, therefore, that the situation continues very sound all round, and that we may look forward to a prosperous season during 1908."

Mr. C. B. Gordon, second vice-president of the Dominion Company, questioned as to the outlook for the cotton trade, replied: "Everything considered, I think that prospects, if not in every respect rosy, are good. I may say that we are at present running our mills full time, and our output is probably greater than ever before. It is true that we are largely working on orders taken some time ago, and that we are only, as it were, catching up with the past. I see no reason to anticipate any trade depression which would occasion a falling off in the consumption of cotton. Should any such signs appear, you may be sure that we shall immediately reduce our output. That this has not been necessary, so far, is a good indication of how we feel."

"As to values, I can only say that raw cotton is selling fully a cent higher than a year ago, and, as you know, we have had to advance wages almost 15 per cent. since a year ago. Under the circumstances, it is manifest that, instead of decline in price, manufactured cottons are very strong and may advance. Mills have been holding off making purchases in the hope of lower prices. These have not been experienced, and I suppose will not now be. Any falling off in demand which has yet taken place has been confined to the North-West and Ontario, all the other provinces are ordering as freely as before. Not the least pleasing feature

of the situation is the fact that accounts have been, and are still being, well met, notwithstanding the conditions of the money market."

Footnotes of the Situation.

Mr. James Redmond, vice-president and general manager of the Ames Holden, Limited, manufacturers of boots and shoes, expressed a hopeful view of the situation. "It is true," he said, "that trade has been slow, of late. This has been mainly owing to the weather. There is little doubt that retail merchants would have well disposed of their stocks had the fall and winter weather not been so fine and open. Even as it is, stocks are only in moderate compass. Jobbers have no great quantities on their hands, and, while retailers are still carrying some of their fall goods, I have, no doubt, that before long these will be worked off. That conditions are fairly healthy throughout the country is shown by the way retailers are meeting their accounts. With the exception of certain sections in the North-West—where the complete failure of the crops makes it impossible for farmers to pay the retailer—our collections were never better, while our branch in the lower provinces reports that collections were never so good there before."

"On the whole, I think, boot and shoe manufacturers look for a slight falling off in demand during the coming year. As a consequence, it is likely that the output of the factories will be reduced somewhat as compared with last year. A good deal will depend upon the crops of next season. Should the outlook be favorable, preparations will be made to meet the resulting increased demand for footwear. I think trade will be good."

Outlook is Promising.

Mr. J. S. Carter, of S. J. Carter & Company, wholesale grocers, spoke very hopefully of the outlook for the coming year: "I do not see how there can be any serious decline in trade," he said. "When the country, as a whole, is in such a sound and prosperous condition as at present. In Ontario and Quebec there are sections where the hay, grain and other crops turned out so badly that farmers will be compelled to buy feed for their cattle and live stock in order to carry them through the season in good shape. In many cases the farmer will have to obtain credit from the retailer to do this, and the retailer will in turn call upon the wholesaler and the wholesaler upon the banker. Advices have come to us from the country, stating that banks have in some cases been withdrawing credits, and that as a result conditions are still rather severe in places."

"It may be necessary for us to look into accounts more closely than in the past, but this does not furnish occasion for alarm. I do not think that recent conditions will cause any decline in the price of groceries, and I believe that very few pessimists are to be found among country merchants. Although farmers are now bringing in a rotation of crops and are financing very much better than they used to, it is unlikely that they will have much extra money until towards the spring when the new eggs and dairy products begin to be marketed. Everything considered, I think wholesale grocers may look for a very good business during the coming year."

Mr. W. H. C. Mussen, of Mussen's Limited, mining and contractor's supplies, when asked his opinion regarding the outlook for 1908, said:

"I am looking forward to an active year. I find a little uncertainty and even hesitation among merchants generally regarding the future, but I fail to find much pessimism among them. But we do not come in touch with the general public to any great extent. So far as we are concerned, we are practically certain of a good year's trade. Contracts are now running for various kinds of work from one end of Canada to the other, and a large portion of them, such as the great railway undertakings, will take years to complete. Meantime, I have heard that Government will authorize the expenditure of upwards of \$100,000,000 in works during this session, so that there is every assurance of a large quantity of contractor's machinery being required during the present year. Last year we did the biggest business in our history."

"Collections during the tight money period of 1907 were bad. Contractors, like everyone else, were tied up for want of funds and could not meet their accounts as they came due. Matters have now been gradually improving for some weeks past, and if this improvement continue we shall have little ground for complaint. While we cannot look for as big business in 1908 as in 1907, we regard the outlook as encouraging."

A reinsurance reserve of \$3,380,757 and a net surplus of \$1,118,394 are exhibited by the Connecticut Fire Insurance Company up to the close of last year. There are gains in assets to the amount of \$400,000; in reserve, of \$250,000 and in net surplus, \$200,000. This is a good record in a not very encouraging year.