

**FRENCH COMPETITION.**

**A**ll of us are more or less given to extol the excellence of French goods says the Textile Mercury, (Manchester), the design is declared to be more apt, the colorings more harmonious, the finish softer and more in accordance with requirements. At one time these observations were no doubt true, but we very much doubt whether such is the case to day. We have recently had the opportunity of viewing considerable quantities of French goods and although in some few cases the beauty of the design was unsurpassable, yet on the average we have no hesitation in saying that the goods are equalled, and often excelled, by those of English manufacture. A few observations upon each section of the trade may not be out of place, particularly as our remarks are based upon the contrast between English and French manufactures.

The coating or heavy goods trade shall first be considered. Here was distinctly observable, as in the case of samples of English manufacture, a wide difference in individual merit, some of the cloths were really excellent, while others were at the least defective if not abominable. Weave effects as used by the English manufacturer, and likewise utilized here, and perhaps with rather more harmony between colour and weave; but for this latter combination we should certainly say the Englishman carries off the palm in knowledge of weave structures.

In colour one expects the French to be very strong, and in certain respects undoubtedly are, but we very much question whether on the average they excel Englishmen, still less Scotchmen. We say, "on the average" advisedly, since our observations tended to demonstrate that in some few individual cases supreme excellence was attained, we naturally endeavored to account for this soaring of the individual above the common crowd, and our thoughts resolved themselves into a solution very readily, which was again and again confirmed. It has often been questioned whether the designing for English firms is in the right hands.

The necessity of a combination of practical knowledge in cloth structure, colouring, and design, along with the necessarily origina- tive and consequently theoretical mind, presents a difficulty, which only education in its most highly organized form can overcome, and in the meantime practical knowledge places the possessor in the mill as designer or in some similar capacity, while the origina- tive faculty urges the artist on into the production of pictures. Now the man who can never excel as an artist might become of great value as a designer, he is usually far above the ordinary designer in methodical work, in colour perception and in the rendering of form, and yet he suffers disappointment after disappointment, in striving after a position he is incapable of filling, while a more lucrative and more suitable calling is neglected. The French having realized this, and it seems to us, in looking over the goods, that the best examples were the production of a more highly finished mind, that while knowledge was no more evident here than in English goods, culture placed an unmistakable stamp upon the goods, we wish would-be artists would take this to heart, more refinement, more subtlety, are wanted in designs, and we do not hesitate to say that many earning a miserable pittance, or nothing at all, in the picture line, might with a little application excel as designers for textile fabrics. The French have realized this, and the result is manifest in their production.

In the soft goods dress trade we noticed many exceedingly beautiful colour combinations, produced by the free use of solids

mixtures and twists. Of noteworthy excellence were the crammed stripe goods, usually consisting of a worsted ground with silk crum, often in a distinct, but most harmonious colour. We also noticed some excellent double plain styles, which in tailor-made dresses would leave nothing to be desired, but their weight precludes their use in other forms.

Manufacturers who want a good line to work upon cannot do better than manufacture silk plush stripe cloths; from what we have seen in the metropolis of fashion it would appear that a type of stripe corduroy silk plush in greys is going to be in great demand, and if the beauty of the fabric is to be a gauge of the demand for it, then there is no mistake about the demand; it should be very great indeed. In the harder dress goods some few alpacas were exhibited, but the like or even better have been seen for some time in England, and therefore claim no comment. In cotton goods, however, we have something to learn, and particularly in the combination of cotton with silk. In ordinary cotton goods the use of colour was again noteworthy, the introduction of single or double threads of a distinct colour and worked independently being well worth further development at our hands.

In striped goods, cotton grounds and silk figures were well represented, and as a rule a most harmonious contrast between the colour of the silk and cotton resulted in very beautiful fabrics.

More particular reference shall be made to the above-mentioned goods later.

**DRY GOODS BUSINESS HOURS.**

In these days of strikes for shorter hours of labor, higher wages, etc., and of the passage of laws limiting the laboring man's working time to eight hours, has it ever crossed the mind of the average thinking man or woman that the dry goods clerk of either sex is to-day working longer hours to earn his or her daily bread than almost any other class of wage earners?

Our large city retail establishments says the Dry Goods Chronicle of New York, open their doors for business promptly at 8 o'clock in the morning and remain open to all comers until 6 P. M., making ten working hours, but they are in a very small minority as compared with the smaller retailers of the principal cities and the general country stores scattered all over the Union, who take down the shutters at 7 A. M. or earlier in some instances, and never think of closing until 8 o'clock, and often 9 or 10 P. M. twelve to fourteen hours at a stretch without intermission, except just time enough to snatch two hasty meals and back to the counter again to the old grind, day in and day out and no complaints, notwithstanding the exhausting nature of the work at which they are engaged.

In the exercise of a dry goods clerk's duties, he or she, as as the case may be, is of necessity confined to a position behind the counter, where the brain is most actively employed at all times. The stock must be looked after constantly, staple lines must never be allowed to run out, customers require attention every few moments, and must have it, or the business suffers, and an endless amount of minor details, which are part and parcel of the dry goods business, is their portion day in and day out.

Yet, from these same clerkships have developed many of the master minds in the worlds of commerce, finance, manufacturing and trade generally.

The dry goods store is an excellent training school, and there is no better stepping stone to future greatness than the thorough business education which the thoughtful and painstaking clerk can gain in such surroundings and associations.

The clerks that do not count the minutes and hours they work are the ones that succeed, and the ones of whom, after they have succeeded, we hear said, "What a lucky fellow," etc.