

THE MACCLESFIELD SILK TRADE

Manufacturers still report, says the *Macclesfield Courier*, that the silk trade was never in a worse condition than at the present moment, both hand and power looms are doing next to nothing, and, to use the words of one of our principal manufacturers, "Throwsters are in a deplorable state, and don't know what to do." The slightest gleam of hope, however, is welcome, and it is with pleasure that we record that manufacturers are at length looking forward with anticipation in the hope of doing a fair autumn trade. May their hopes be realized, both for the sake of the employer as well as of those—of whom, unhappily, there are too many—who are almost starving for a crust. The autumn trade usually opens out in August, and we understand that manufacturers have made large preparations for the manufacture of fancy goods, and the general belief is that in the not far distant future trade will be much brighter—at any rate in some departments. Unfortunately the plain silk trade of Macclesfield is lost to us on account of foreign competition. Owing to the closing of the American markets a large quantity of Japanese handkerchiefs have been thrown on the London market, and have been disposed of by the dealers at very low prices, thus materially interfering with the Macclesfield fancy trade.

One cannot hide the fact that in the midst of the general depression much poverty exists, although if it must be seen it must be searched out, for one trait of the working classes of Macclesfield is that they do not parade their poverty before the world. They would rather live on a crust than plead for charity from their neighbors, and there cannot be a doubt that many of late have been living, to use a common expression, "from hand to mouth." Notwithstanding this the Relief Association has not been called upon to dispense their relief to the extent that would have been expected, seeing the straits to which many of the inhabitants have been put, or it may be that the association has singled out, very properly, the more deserving cases instead of assisting those who do not use the relief afforded as they ought to do, or who by their past imprudence have brought upon themselves their present impoverished condition. Be that as it may, there were only 13 cases before the committee on Monday. Turning to the cases which come before the Board of Guardians, however, we find here a great increase in the amount of outdoor relief granted. This week the total sum distributed to applicants was reported at the weekly meeting of the board to amount to £91 18s. 8d. against £82 7s. 8d. in the corresponding week of last year. Last week it was reported at £90 10s. against £82 12s. in the corresponding week of last year; and the week previous the sum granted was £92 11s. 6d. against £82 11s. distributed in the same period last year, or on an average about £10 per week of an increase when compared with the same period last year, and this in addition to an increase of about ten persons per week admitted into the house during the last few weeks, compared with the number in the house at the same period last year. Had the serious depression taken place in the winter instead of summer, no doubt the poverty would have been much more apparent, and employers and employees alike will undoubtedly look forward to a revival in the staple trade with much satisfaction, and its speedy realization will be heartily welcomed.

COVERT CLOTHS.

These cloths are generally made of double-twisted yarns, both in warp and filling, and are woven very close. The first labor is of course the burling, and on this, as well as any other kind of cloths where the weave is to show up more or less after being finished, care is the first requirement. The mending process comes next, and requires the same amount of care, for the absence of any threads is sure to show in the finished product. Supposing that the burling as well as the mending has been properly performed, we are now ready for the fulling. After the goods are put in the mill the ends should be properly sewn together with fine stitches. This is all the more necessary, as large stitches are very apt to streak the goods for a yard or more from each end, making the cutting of

remnants one of the chief occupations in the finishing room. Sewing machines are sometimes employed, but a fine hand-sewn seam is to be preferred.

We are now ready for our calculations in fulling, and shall have to take into consideration all the loss the goods are likely to sustain in the process, and provide for it, so that they will come out right as to weight in the end. As these goods vary in weight according to the notion or requirements of the buyers, no particular weight need be taken; and it will be sufficient to state that after the percentage of loss is estimated as nearly correct as possible, it will be easily to figure out the amount of shrinkage the goods are to receive. A yard is to be marked off on the end of the cut, about a yard or so from the seam, and this is shrunk to the required length. This makes it easier to examine the goods, as it will be unnecessary to measure the whole cut. These goods ought to run between two and a half and three hours in the mill, and the soap used on them should therefore be made with this end in view. About 4 oz. hard soap and 2½ oz. of alkali to the gallon will be found to give a soap which will meet the case in every particular. This soap is manufactured, says a writer in the *Textile Manufacturing World*, with the object of making it unnecessary to add soap in the washer. As soon as the goods come from the mill they should be run into the washer, but if this cannot be done at once they should at any rate be opened out, so that they may cool off, for it will not do to let them lie in a heap while warm, as they are apt to stain or become cloudy. While the colors may be all that can be asked, it will often be found that the heat combined with the alkali in the soap will work harm if air is not allowed to get to the goods.

When the goods have been run in the washer and properly sewn together they should be given about three barrels of warm water at 100° F.—that is, for four pieces. Let run in this for ten minutes, open gates, and draw off the heavy dirt; then add three more barrels of warm water, and run twenty-five minutes; then open gates and turn on cold water and rinse thoroughly. Much depends upon the stream of water at command; but no matter how good the supply, forty-five minutes is none too much for rinsing. The goods are then taken to the rolling machine and plate stretcher (if one is at hand), and tightly and evenly rolled up. Lay them down flat and let lie till next morning.

Although the dyeing to shade of the above-mentioned material does not directly pertain to the questions asked, it stands in close relation to them. The low price of the fibre material only permits of the employment of the cheapest methods, and attention must principally be directed to find out whether it is possible to strip, mordant, and dye the material in the same bath which may be done in the present case. After the material has boiled for 1½ hr. in the bath, the dye to produce the desired shade is added. Alizarin yellow is used for yellow and alizarin red for red, and both of these colors fix admirably in these baths and give very fast colors. Patent blue, cyanine, or a little brilliant alizarin blue are used for blue, and in place of the patent blue an acid violet, fast against chrome, and which is a little cheaper, may be used. Generally, however, a small quantity of patent blue will suffice for yellow olive, which, since the bath is sufficiently acid, is fixed well, and is fast against washing.

If less acid is added to the mordant, which is not by any means an error, if above-mentioned alizarins are used, an improvement is made by adding acetic acid. When it concerns the stripping of lighter colors, the mordant is decreased, and in this case the employment of patent blue becomes more favorable.

The employment of sulphuric acid was mentioned but in some dyehouses an acid is used for stripping colors which acts much more energetically than the former—namely, nitric acid. It is an energetic oxidizing agent, but nitrates the material at the same time—that is, changes its chemical condition. It is well known that indigo is readily converted thereby into a yellow nitro body, which is also the case with several other dyes. Great care is necessary when using nitric acid, and it is not safe to use more than 3 per cent. by weight. Whenever possible its use was avoided.