

## The Hat and Cap Trade.

### THE SPRING SEASON.

MARCH is opening very well in the Canadian hat and cap trade. The retail stores report a good early business, and, in the large cities, the millinery openings brought a considerable number of people to town. In the wholesale houses, the staffs were kept busy, and many of the travelers were in the warehouses. They go out this month for sorting business, and also with Fall fur samples.

The demand for hats has been active this season, showing that dealers' stocks were low, or else that inquiries were earlier than usual. It is still the opinion in the trade that the stiff hat will make a good run this year, since dressy young men seem to have a tendency towards that style, as far as one can see in the fashion centres. The inquiry for colored stiff hats is greater than usual, especially for terra, walnut and pecan.

There are some very nice new caps on the market for golfers and other outdoor purposes. Some are quiet tweed effects in good material; others are white canvas tops with stiff black brims, suited for bicycling and boating. New names in these goods are the Sirdar, the Raymond and the Rob Roy.

In furs, the travelers will show lots of small furs, and a season for fancy furs of different kinds is expected. Some pretty goods in fancy ruffs, caperines, jackets and other novelties are going to be put on the market this season, although it is still a little early to give details. In skins, there is said to be an appreciation in the price of such furs as skunk, racoon and opossum.

### HAT MEN IN THE UNITED STATES.

It is announced from New York that one house there, Tenny & Co., will handle the output of four New England manufacturers. These factories make a line of cheap derbies, and an agreement in the price of these lines has been reached.

This gave rise to a report that there was to be a hat combination. On this point, Mr. N. B. Day, New York selling agent of The J. B. Stetson Co., said: "No combination of hat manufacturers is possible, in my opinion, for there is constant jealousy in the matter of prices; everyone is suspicious that he is being underbitten by some of his competitors. Prices have been very low, and there has been stern competition on account of the increasing cost of the raw material. It is positively necessary to raise the price of the majority of hats, and when a low figure is named it is pretty certain that the stock which goes to make up the hat is of inferior quality. Combinations have been tried before, but they have lasted only a short time."

### ENGLISH HAT TRADE CHAT.

At the present time, two subjects are agitating the hat trade of London: The first is the rise in the price of hatters' fur; the second, a threatened strike of the bodymakers. In regard to the first, writes S. W. Homewood to The American Hatter, while it is true that the rise has been gradual, and been going on for some time, it has not been felt severely, as most of the large hatters had outstanding contracts to carry them to the end of the year. Now, however, they are confronted by a serious difficulty and the question arises: "Shall we increase the price of hats, sell at the old

price and decrease our profits, or lower the quality of the hat?" The last will probably be the solution in some of the cheap grades of goods, but most of the better class manufacturers have decided that the quality must be kept up at all costs, and they will get higher prices.

The trouble with the bodymakers will affect London manufacturers of silk hats only, and is likely to drive the remnant of that trade away from the city. The men have united for the purpose of establishing a uniform rate of wage. That in itself would be all right; but, unfortunately, they have fixed the standard at about one shilling higher than the present rate, and the result will probably be that the fine trade will be obliged to follow the cheap, and remove their factories to the provinces. If this trouble forces the manufacturers to combine, it will have a beneficial effect, as, up to the present, there is so much rivalry and jealousy that the unions have been able to make their own terms.

One of the great troubles in the felt hat trade has been the brittleness of the finished hat, and of this feature Henry Heath has made a special study, with the result that he has succeeded in producing a hat which is unbreakable. The secret, of course, lies in the finishing and in the perfection of proofing, which is in the centre of the fur, making a finish very soft, with extreme suppleness. Mr. Heath has brought out a new material for shooting caps, which has found such favor with the Duke of York that he has recommended it to a number of his friends, one advantage being that it is entirely waterproof.

I was reading, a few days ago, an article dealing with the pirating of names of English hat manufacturers by Russian merchants, but this work is not confined to Russia, and speaking to Mr. Davies, I find that the firm of Lincoln, Bennett & Company is one of the worst sufferers. Their name seems to be a favorite, and they have had to fight for it in all parts of the globe, and they had one case as near home as Glasgow. "What's in a name"; "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet," but—a hat is not a rose, et voila.

Their advance orders for export trade are keeping them very busy in the factory, and the travelers are now out looking for home trade. In their retail branch at Sackville street business is quiet. They expect it to open up this month, but with the weather so precarious, it is hard to foresee results. To-day it is like April—warm, clear and bright; yesterday it was November—foggy, wet and cold; to-morrow it may be January or June. The whole winter has been a curious one.

### FIRST APPEARANCE OF THE SILK HAT.

An old journal, dated January 16, 1797, gives the following amusing account of the wearing of the first silk hat in London: "John Hetherington, haberdasher, of the Strand, was arranged before the Lord Mayor yesterday on a charge of breach of the peace and inciting to riot, and was required to give bonds in the sum of £500. It was in evidence that Mr. Hetherington, who is well connected, appeared on the public highway wearing upon his head what he called a silk hat (which was offered in evidence), a tall structure having a shiny lustre, and calculated to frighten timid people. As a matter of fact, the officers of the Crown stated that several women fainted at the unusual sight, while children screamed, dogs yelped, and a younger son of Cordwainer Thomas, who was returning from a chandler's shop, was thrown down by the crowd which had collected, and had his right arm broken. For these reasons the defendant was seized by the guards and taken before