

Colored Cottons Decline.

During the past week the trade has been in a turmoil and a state of trepidation with regard to the price of colored cottons, and as a consequence sales by jobbers have been almost nil. A certain wholesale house in Toronto came out on the 1st of September with flaring advertisement of reduced prices on "checked shirtings, denims, cottonades and flannelettes," and declared they were prepared to give astounding quotations. This announcement was what created the turmoil and trepidation.

In the first place, the announcement implied that flannelettes were further reduced, which was not the case. They were reduced just after the passing of the new Canadian tariff bill, and have remained steady ever since.

In the second place, the announcement was made in the daily papers, which went into the hands of consumers, and retailers were thus placed at a disadvantage. Their customers were informed of declines in prices months before they could receive these reductions. Hence retail trade in these lines has stagnated. Had the announcement been made in a trade paper, it would have fallen only into the hands of the trade, and its effect would have been much less disastrous. The common sense in these arguments will be an effectual answer to any person who might possibly say that this paragraph spoke one word for the retailer and two for the trade journal.

In the third place, this announcement was made in language so bold that it was misleading.

As everybody knows, there is a combine in Canada on cotton goods, and prices are not regulated by the cost of production, but by other sets of circumstances, which include: The protective duty levied on competing goods by the Canadian government, and also the prices prevailing in countries which manufacture cotton goods similar to those put on the Canadian market by domestic manufacturers.

Proofs of this were seen when the prices of greys dropped after the readjustment of the Canadian tariff in March. About April 1st the price of unbleached cottons dropped from seven to ten per cent., because the duty was lowered from one cent. per square yard and 15 per cent. to 2 1/2 per cent. At the same time a reduction of the duty on unbleached from 1c per square yard and 15 per cent. to 25 per cent. caused an average reduction in mill prices of seven per cent. These changes were pointed out in the April issue of this journal. At the same time it was pointed out that the prices of colored goods had "not changed much as yet," thus showing that a change was expected. Flannelettes dropped considerably, as has been mentioned, and linings were also lowered about 5 per cent., although on one line it was 12 1/2 per cent. These examples show that prices are subject to the tariff levies, and do not necessarily conform to cost of production.

Now, as to the second contention that the prices are influenced by the prices prevailing in the countries who have similar goods for sale, the present decline in colored goods is offered as an example. The lowering of the Canadian duty would lead to an expectation for a decline. But this reduction cannot wholly explain a decline running as much as 18 per cent. The fact was that cotton goods in the United States were at panic prices. The demand was not equal to the supply and prices were down to cost limits—perhaps went below it in some cases. Then the foreign market began to be worked, and Canada received her share of attention. Cottons were being offered in clearances to Canadian jobbers at 10 per cent. less than even the low prices in the states. The natural consequence was that the Colored Cotton Co.,

in order to prevent jobbers loading up for spring with United States jobs and clearances, dropped the prices of denims, shirtings and cottonades.

In proof of this assertion as to low prices in the United States, Dun's Review, of Sept. 1st, says: "A comparison of standard articles elsewhere gives a decline in price averaging 17 per cent. since last year, and 24 per cent. since 1882; the reduction in some important fabrics being 33 per cent."

Still prices in the United States are advancing. Print cloths have gone up a quarter and low grades of bleached cottons fully one-eighth. Otis checks and Excelsior checks and stripes are up one-quarter. With these advances staring them in the face, the Canadian Colored Cotton Co. might have held to their prices and avoided the disastrous break that has occurred. It may be that the lowering was decided upon before there was an appreciable change or hope of change in the United States market. If so, the circumstances must be simply regarded as exceedingly unfortunate.

A great many wholesalers in Toronto are of the opinion that did the colored cotton manufacturers of Canada commence to introduce new styles and patterns they would have considerably less difficulty in unloading their stock. They are still making patterns that had their original in the infancy of the industry. In fact, one wholesaler asserted that he sold a great many of the patterns when he first went into business in England in 1859. On the other hand one wholesaler said that he thought, on the whole, they had done fairly well. But he is in a hopeless minority in Toronto so far as this question is concerned. Having thus seen the nature of the causes that effect prices of cotton goods in Canada, this recent change in prices must be considered more fully.

The change was intended at first to apply only to goods delivered December 1st and after, and the new quotations were made to jobbers with that view. But now it is likely that it will apply to all goods delivered after October 1st. No rebates will be allowed to the jobber by the Cotton Co., and hence it cannot be expected that the retailers will receive any from the jobber. The latter will lose enough on present stocks without giving any rebate on goods he has already sold and shipped. There is little doubt, however, that considerably closer prices can be obtained from now until October 1st. The competition among wholesalers is too keen to maintain prices until the last minute.

The decline varies from 5 to 20 per cent., and shows that either there was previously a large margin in these goods for the manufacturer, or that prices are now down to cost of production. This latter is undoubtedly true, and the Dry Goods Review prophesies higher prices on colored and grey cottons before another year rolls around. This will be especially and vigorously true if the United States manufacturers get busy enough to have their hands fully occupied with the trade in their own country. The cotton companies here are virtually in control of the trade in Canada so far as internal competition is concerned. As soon as foreign competition is removed they will put the prices as high as they dare.

A line of goods that formerly sold at 8 1/2 at the mill is now sold at 7c, or a reduction of 18 per cent. Another line that cost 12 1/2 at the mills is now sold at 10 1/2, and so on through the list.

In denims the reduction is very considerable, amounting on some lines from 15 to 18 per cent. In shirtings the reductions are not so large, and will average perhaps 7 1/2 per cent., being 10 per cent. in some cases. In cottonades the reduction is very considerable and runs all the way from 5 to 10 per cent.

At these reduced prices, retailers need have no hesitation in placing heavy orders. Prices

are bound to go up again as soon as the United States prices stiffen. This process has already begun, two or three well-known brands of grey cottons have advanced from 7 1/2 to 10 per cent. at the United States mills.—Dry Goods Review.

Defects in White Lead

The Maritime Provinces have for many years been accustomed to the very finest of imported white leads, and it is natural that they should quickly find all the faults and imperfections in the domestic product. This is no doubt due to the close price, at which the Canadian grinders sell under the recent fierce competition. Nearly every dealer is growling because it is too coarse or because it is too fine. There is no reason why both these complaints should be met. It may be necessary to change a trifling more for better lead, but the firm who did it can eventually get the trade. In some other lines of business manufacturers meet competition by putting a cheaper brand on the market, but steadily maintaining the quality of their established brand. Doing so often enhances the value of the old brand.

"Another grave fault," remarked a western grinder who was spoken to regarding the complaint of the Maritime Province dealers, "is that the close prices of the ground lead have forced manufacturers unwisely to buy cheap grades of dry lead containing a large percentage of foreign matter, which is a great detriment to the body as well as to the grinding of the article. The trouble with the cheap dry lead is that the iron or the sulphur has not been sufficiently extracted from it, and where there is a high percentage of these foreign elements the lead cannot be ground sufficiently fine. The complaint of the Maritime Province people is well founded."—Hardware Merchant.

A Pair of Shop Hints.

The question is frequently arising in my mind as to whether shafting for shop purposes is not doomed to go. Isn't it going to be cheaper to string a copper wire to a tool, have a small motor built in with it and drive by electricity than it is to turn a long line of shafting several hundred feet in length and keep it revolving day in and day out, whether there is any work being done at the other end of it or no? Some large shops have answered "Yes," but the art is still in an experimental stage and no one really knows. It seems reasonable, and I am rather disposed to believe it. But whether the electrical breakdowns of the motors will more than counterbalance the mechanical breakdowns of shafting and belts remains to be seen.

Taking care of patterns, keeping them catalogued and allowing for depreciation is one of the troublesome tasks of foundry work. An apprentice or the foreman usually has the run of the loft; he knows where everything is, and his head is the only catalogue. But when a pattern is needed that has not been used for several years it is usually found to be so dried and the glue has parted in so many places that the rush job has to wait until the pattern maker has had a chance to do a day's work on the pattern. But the pattern loft is under the roof, and to say that the air is hot and dry is to express it mildly. I have found that good ventilation contributes mightily to the welfare of the patterns, and if a large shallow pan be placed there and kept filled with water a still further improvement will be noted. In one case I had a window in my pattern loft opening directly opposite the exhaust from the engine, and the steam blowing in at the open window kept the air moist and the patterns free from injury through checking. Next to this the shallow pan is the thing, but above all lot there be good ventilation.—Dixie.