

SPRING TRADE IN WESTERN CANADA.

WINNIPEG, December 31, 1898.

From THE REVIEW'S special correspondent

A REVIEW of the past year, or, in fact, the past 18 months, is necessary to a correct view of the coming Spring trade. And it is well that our friends in the east should understand some things about trade here, which, if they be wise men, they will do well to heed.

Manitoba and the Northwest, have been enjoying good times for the past two years. Crops have been good. Prices have been good. Last year, particularly, everything the farmer had to sell was a good price. Many who had been financially embarrassed had extricated themselves the previous season, and were in a position to purchase, and did purchase largely, both staple and fancy goods. This general increase of trade resulted in a large number of new firms going into business during last Spring and Summer. Spring sales of wheat were at enormously high figures, and the prospects of a large crop for 1898 were noticeable early. Everything pointed to a very large Fall trade.

Merchants all over the country laid in very heavy stocks of Fall and Winter goods. What was the result? Owing to a wet Fall, an almost unknown thing in Manitoba, threshing was delayed. Wheat could not move, and trade was practically paralyzed for nearly two months. When at last wheat began to move, prices were low and also a considerable percentage of the crop was damaged. These things tended to make the trade in Fall and Winter goods very much less than anticipated, and many firms were obliged to carry over a great portion of their stocks. To old and well-established houses this was a drawback and a loss, but it did not cripple them. To the newly established it was a much more serious matter. Does this mean that the country is in a bad state? Not at all. It only means that whole sale houses require to exercise caution if they wish to avoid bad debts. Young travelers and those new to this section are very apt to be carried away with a desire to send in large orders and urge upon customers goods which they do not really need, or, if required at all, should only buy in small quantities.

Another thing which is apt to lead eastern people astray is the report of our largely increased population. The report of the increase in the population is quite correct, numerically, but let no one be carried away with the idea that this means a large additional consumption of dry goods in Manitoba during the coming season.

The great majority of our new immigrants are Galicians, and they will not increase the sale of dry goods to the extent of \$100 per 1,000 next summer, or, materially, for years to come, except for the cheapest class of cotton staples. The Doukhobors, who are already arriving, and who will form the bulk of our immigration during 1899, are Quakers and hold very strict views on the subject of dress, so that they will not offer an attractive field for the "Knights of the sample-trunk and grip-sack."

Notwithstanding the drawbacks mentioned, a very fair Fall trade was done, and leading houses express themselves as satisfied with the results and encouraged by the prospects for a good Spring trade. Already travelers are out with Spring samples, and a pretty correct guess can be made at leading styles and lines. There is every indication that the Summer of 1899 will be a white Summer. White pique, cords, lace, lenos, dotted lawns (a new fabric, by the

way), and, in fact, every class of white dress goods, with white hats, white parasols and white gloves, will be worn.

The preference will be for skirts of heavy cord with blouses of lighter material, either white or fancy colored lawn or silk. Probably because women love vivid contrasts, the demand in woollen goods is for black. Fancy black weaves continue to be popular. "Bull-Cloth" and "Sirdar" are among the new names and designs. These goods, according to the old-style ad., are "at prices to suit all purses," for R. J. Whittle & Co. showed me a line ranging from 15c. to \$2.50 per yard.

In colors, the Amazon cloths take the lead, but covert cloths are also ready sellers. There is a marked return to subdued shades and plain effects, hair stripes and tiny checks. Neat and elegant are the watchwords this season. Dress silks are in delicate shades, but extremely rich and beautiful effects are produced by the use of different shades of the same color for warp and woof and the elaborateness of the brocaded designs.

Stobart, Sons & Co. are showing a very fine range of these silks, and also the very latest thing in Parisian silk blouses. These are in poppy red, cornflower blue, lemon, cerise, salmon and white. The material is a soft, thick satin, trimmed with appliques of black lace and jet. The effect is very handsome. The silk blouse is evidently to remain with us, judging, not alone from the number and beauty of the ready-made article, but from the variety of exquisite silks shown for this purpose. Bryce & Co., through whose samples your correspondent had the privilege of a rummage before they went upon the road, have a line of these silks which are perfect marvels of beauty. The pattern is groups of stripes in alternating shades, and the effect something like a rainbow as it pales towards the centre of the arch, or the moon:

Beginning to pale on the light she loves
On the bed of a daffodil sky.

COLORED COTTON DRESS GOODS.

In colored cottons, the variety is endless. Mr. Slater, of Robinson, Little & Co., showed me a line of English printed cottons, in soft finish, for which his house are the sole agents for Canada. These cottons come in 27 different patterns, the colors are soft and delicate, and the goods are almost as handsome as silk. The designs closely resemble those produced at the early part of the century.

This house has found business so satisfactory that they have established two more agencies between Lake Superior and the Coast, Mr. Masters representing them in the Northwest Territories, and Mr. Brabury in British Columbia.

TRIMMINGS

A great many lines of dress trimmings are offered, but ribbon is the leading decoration. This does not mean rows of ribbon set on. It may mean a dainty puff of silk gauze in the centre, with tiny ruffles of embroidered silk gauze on each side, or a narrow band of Dresden pattern with a drawing-string on one side and a dainty fringe on the other. Black ribbons, with gauze edges, satin stripes, picot edges, scalloped edges, drawing-strings at the middle, at both edges. Ribbon in every guise it is possible to imagine, and always pretty, dainty and effective. Passementries are narrow and light in design, and seguinis are still very much in evidence. The Cyrano chains, which began their career as muff chains, are in greater variety than ever, and are quite the proper caper for watch chains and fan chains. Those made of alternate jet and gold beads are the handsomest. The jeweled elastic belts are in greater variety and richer designs than ever, and furnish just the right touch of richness and color to an all-white costume.

MILLINERY.

Trimmed hats for Summer are not yet shown, but trimmings and shapes are here. The hat of the coming season will be the