

This is probably the best mode of dealing with the question at present, but while anything like uniform mileage rates would be impracticable, it seems only reasonable that the railway companies should be subject to some control.

WOOL AND WOOLENS IN 1876.

It is universally admitted that there is a strong proverbial connection between "wit" and "wool gathering"; though how it comes about is more difficult to explain. Yet the history of the wool trade in this country for the last few years has made it very evident that to "gather" any adequate monetary reward from the wool trade in any of its branches is a matter requiring no small "wit" to accomplish. The difficulties this trade has had to surmount have been very considerable, and, though it has long been one of the staple trades of the country, none has perhaps suffered so severely. It is ill jesting on so grave a subject, but it is equally useless to "pull the wool over our own eyes," or those of others, and so blind ourselves to the logic of facts, when, by looking them plainly in the face, we may be able to trace the causes for depression, and, we trust, also find reason for well grounded hopes for the future of the trade.

In reviewing this trade for the past year we must premise that Montreal cannot lay claim to being the centre of woollen manufacture, although in its character of the commercial metropolis of Canada it is the distributing point for probably the largest share of the goods manufactured. We subjoin an extract of the imports and exports of wool at this port, showing also the average price for the last three years. From this it will be seen that Montreal succeeds in securing a fair share of the trade in the raw material also.

| IMPORTS. | | | |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------------|
| | Lbs. | Value. | Average Price. |
| 1874..... | 2,260,103 | \$409,353 | 18 1-9 cents. |
| 1875..... | 2,149,128 | 419,365 | 17 1-8 " |
| 1876..... | 1,080,233 | 183,177 | nearly 17 " |

| EXPORTS. | | | |
|-----------|--------|---------|----------------|
| | Lbs. | Value. | Average Price. |
| 1874..... | 15,000 | \$2,790 | 18 9-15 cents. |
| 1875..... | 49,080 | 14,038 | 28 1/2 " |
| 1876..... | 30,000 | 8,183 | 26 1/2 " |

From these figures it will be at once observed that there has been a very large decrease both in imports and exports of this article in 1876, and that the average price in both cases is also reduced. At first glance this would seem to imply a more seriously depressed state of the trade than is really the case. As we have already said, woollen manufacturers have had to bear their full share of the general depression, but not to the extent exhibited by these figures. Much of the decrease in imports is undoubtedly to be

attributed to an increased employment of domestic wools in the goods manufactured here, a result brought about by the improvement in quality and the greater care exercised in selecting and manipulating the clip. There has been a fair and well sustained demand for Canadian wools during the year, though prices obtained have not been always satisfactory.

Although a considerable quantity of the wool used in our factories is the product of Canada the greater proportion is foreign wool, which is used to mix with it so as to adapt our crisper, harder wools to the necessities of certain classes of manufacture. The state of foreign markets and the prospects of future supplies are, therefore, a matter of interest to the trade. The principal classes of imported wools used here are Monte Video, Cape, and a smaller quantity of the best Australian. These are purchased direct in some few cases, but most generally at the London periodical auction sales, or in the New York markets. A recent New York market report mentions the sale of "100 bales Monte Video for export to Canada on private terms." The London market, however, is by far the largest, and really rules the wool markets of the world. The United States *Economist* of April 14th says, "The London spring sales will commence on 8th May with an offering of 'from 350,000 to 380,000 bales of Australian and Cape. One can thus form 'some faint idea of the immensity of this 'trade in England, beside which ours is 'but child's play.' The last London sale, commencing 20th February, finished on 26th March, and about 220,000 bales were disposed of out of an offering of about 242,000 bales. About 125,000 bales were bought for export. The rise established by the August sales, and further maintained and advanced in those of November, was almost completely lost during the recent sales. No special rise in price need be expected at the forthcoming May sales there. The arrivals for these up to March 27th were about 152,000 bales, and it is expected will foot up to nearly 350,000 bales, though some firms well posted in the trade estimate that the total offering will not exceed 330,000. It must not be forgotten, however, that there were considerable withdrawals from last sales which remain to be added to the supplies for the next series. This large total, in view of the present depressed state of the woollen interests in England, and the uncertainty produced by the war rumors from the East, may probably even have a depressing effect on prices unless the demand from our western hemisphere is largely increased. From the United

States at least this is not likely to be the case. The Antwerp sales, from advices received up to March 24th, show as strong a tendency as usual to follow the course of those of London, and the offerings are likely to be heavy for next sales, commencing 24th April.

Canadian wool growers, therefore, can hardly look for any access of prices the coming season unless the tide of affairs elsewhere should lead to a sudden increase of demand for army and war supplies. The wool trade here for the latter half of last year, which should have been more than ordinarily profitable in the face of a rising market, was balked of much of its hopes by the prevailing depression among our manufacturers. Prospects for this year are largely dependent on an improvement in the general state of trade, which, if the hopes of some of the sanguine are realized and a good harvest is laid in may yet be the case.

Last year cannot, with any regard to truth, be deemed a profitable one to our woollen manufacturers; they have had to bear up against both dull trade and losses by bad debts, from which not even the greatest carefulness in crediting could altogether save them. To keep their mills running, they have been content during the past year to work at very slender profits, and, to stimulate demand, have made great efforts to bring forward new styles and superior qualities. The consumers, therefore, have probably received better value than ever before. Production has been greatly decreased, and stocks are light. If prices of raw material continue low, as is more than probable, and the demand for manufactured goods keeps up to its present point, better profits are likely to be realized throughout the balance of this year; and at present the outlook is more hopeful. New lines are being gone into in naps and beavers, and are meeting with a fair demand throughout the country, and every improvement possible in style and pattern in other goods is being attempted in order to keep a firm hold of the trade in the face of imported goods.

It may be of interest to some of our readers to give the values of Canadian woollens exported from Montreal to the United Kingdom last year. They are considerably in excess of previous years, and show a praiseworthy disposition on the part of our manufacturers to fight the English manufacturer on his own ground.

1876.

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| Export of woollens for quarter ending 30th June, 1876, value..... | \$10,892 |
| Export of woollens for quarter ending 30th September, 1876, value..... | 2,699 |