

it. To this drawback must be added the general depression which has prevailed in all trades all over the country, and in other countries in addition. This cause has made competition more than keen, and in order to do any business at all prices have had to be cut down to the lowest possible limit; in fact, they have been lower than ever before, in spite of the fact that wools and yarns have been continually advancing in price. The public favor has also turned away from fine goods, such as West of England makers produce, and tweeds made from cheviots and crossbred wools have been in universal wear, to the disadvantage of the finer goods. West of England machinery is not adapted to the manufacture of the coarser kinds of wool, though one or two manufacturers have laid down new machinery in order to cope with the demand for these goods. Merchants, however, do not care to buy from one district what is the speciality of another centre, and they will go to Ireland for Donegal tweeds, and to Scotland for cheviots. Of course, every kind of specialty is copied in cheap fabrics by manufacturers in certain districts in Yorkshire, and these firms seem to have been the only ones who have been well employed during the year, as the cry has been for low-priced goods.

The weather, too, has had a deterring effect on the woolen trade all through the year, both directly and indirectly, for many who have had the money to spend on garments, would have done so had there been dry, decent weather to encourage people to put on new clothes; but the inducement has been to put on the oldest garments one possesses to paddle about in mud and mire.

The West of England trade depends more on what is cast aside in garments than what is worn out, for the class of individual who usually buys clothes made of the finest material does not like to be seen too many times in the same suit of clothes, nor in the same overcoat. Consequently, the finer the weather, the more the garments are displayed before the public, and the sooner are they cast aside for fresh ones of different pattern.

Novelty has been the demand of the merchant throughout the year when he has been disposed to favor the West of England manufacturer, and he (the merchant), has not been slow to take advantage of the prevailing slackness of trade to grind the manufacturer down to the lowest farthing in arranging prices. Those manufacturers who have depended on the plain trade have been very badly off, for blacks and blues and other plain goods have had a very dull time. Fancy overcoatings and riding tweeds have been the best selling goods the West has produced, but flannels have not been nearly so successful as formerly, partly owing to the weather; and partly because the tweed suit has largely taken the place of the flannel suit, which soon gets to look raggy and untidy. There have been a few West of England tweeds selling for suitings, but merino wools do not lend themselves to such bright colorings as do Scotch wools and crossbreds, for the excessive milling they have to undergo robs them of their lustre to some extent.

The West of England manufacturers have shown themselves ready and capable in dealing with such a crisis as the trade has undergone, for never before have such efforts been made to get orders. No amount of trouble and expense has been spared in making new ranges and in bringing them to the notice of the buyers. The depression has, at least, had the effect of rousing manufacturers up a little, and has taught them a lesson on the necessity of energy and resource in critical times which will not be forgotten when trade gets better again, as it is hoped it will do very soon. The prospect is

certainly brighter, for goods made from fine wools are coming rapidly back into favor.

STORING WOOL.

In a special report of the United States Department of Trade and Commerce on the "Warehousing Industry," some interesting information is given on wool storage in the United States, and in Australia.

Marketing wools at the producing end of the trade does not require much provision for storage in the United States, especially in the Territories. In Miles City, Mont., where the woolgrowers and merchants had built a large frame warehouse for storing wool, a fire occurred, in which the establishment was destroyed. In its place a large brick warehouse was erected the following spring and operated for two years, after which it was sold to the Northern Pacific Railroad Company. Prior to this sale free storage was given during the wool season, and when the woolgrower had sold and the purchaser wished to ship his wool it was compressed for him, and the baled wool was loaded into cars ready for billing over the only road running into the city. Charges for baling and loading were 10 cents per hundred pounds, paid by the owner or the woolgrower insuring his own wool.

Under the management of the railroad company the baling charges have been reduced to 5 cents per hundred pounds and the limit of free storage is reduced to ninety days. Here the storage is of course made the means of accumulating the stocks for freighting over the railroad, which affords such facilities for reaching market. As a rule, however, very little wool is stored in Montana. The buyers are eager to take it as soon after shearing as is practicable. At Great Falls and Billings wool is brought in from the shearing places, and buyers from the East bid on it. It is baled and made ready for shipment in order to save freight.

In North Dakota the State decrees two or three points where sale days are announced. To these places sheep men bring their wool, and buyers come and bid for it. In Wyoming the largest wool-selling point is Casper, and the buyers gather here about the time the wool is sheared and purchase as fast as it can be had. It is thus apparent that only a short time can elapse between the bringing of the wool upon the market and its shipment to outside points. Shipments are usually made to consignees or dealers who sell to manufacturers. Scouring mills have been started at several points in the West, but as a rule, have not been a great success, the railroad companies preferring to handle unscoured wool, owing, presumably, to the shrinkage in weight of scoured wool from 50 to 75 per cent.

In the United States comparatively little wool is graded and classified before marketing; the sheep owner, having several grades of wool in his flock, dumps it all into bags and markets it in that condition. Wherever it is shipped it has to be opened and the different grades taken out and put by themselves in large piles; that is, assorted into grades representing perhaps twenty to thirty different clips. In this way each kind of wool loses its identity, and subsequent sorting adds to the expense in the preparation of it for the manufacturer.

In Australia a very different process is followed. Most of the wool is graded and put into proper shape so that the buyer can see at a glance what it is worth. The fleeces are skirted by taking off lower grades and the rough ends of the wool, leaving it free, so that its main quality can be