

offering for some time past, the position of holders of these merino wools is quite strong. Lower classes of crossbred colonial wools have been in poor demand for the last twelve months, and prices have gradually fallen away until the combed tops made from these wools could be purchased at a price fully 10 per cent. lower than anything previously known. This state of the market has been the result of a strong combination of causes, such as the discontinuance to a large extent of the use of braids made from these wools, the reimposition of the wool and weight duties on American imports, and the substitution of smooth-faced cloths for serges in both men's and women's wear. Following a well-known rule of commercial economy, however, this unusually low level of prices has at last begun to attract increased attention to fabrics made from low crossbred wools, and already the prices of 40's tops have been advanced fully a $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per lb., and there is every indication that an upward movement of considerable importance has already set in. Bradford has laid itself out more especially to deal with combing crossbred wools of both the finer and coarser kinds, and is to-day practically without a competitor in the preparation of the yarns made from them, as is proved by the fact that both France and Germany import practically the whole of their supply from this district. No doubt serges for dress goods are made largely on the Continent from yarns spun there, but these yarns do not possess either the strength or the wearing properties of the Bradford made serges, and on account of being filled are liable to retain creases and damage quickly from rain or damp. Filled serges are also unsuitable for the application of showerproof or unshrinkable finish processes. There is not much change in the demand for the ordinary run of non-lustrous English wools, but the best bright wools are more enquired for. Raw mohair and alpaca are quite firm at the recent advance, and as only a very small portion of the present year's clip now remains outside the control of the consumer, we may look for the present level of prices to be at least maintained for some months to come. The dress goods trade is quiet, affected no doubt by the attention just now being given to fancy goods and the imminence of stock-taking; there have, however, been one or two important London buyers in the market recently, who have displayed considerable interest in bright goods for the coming spring, and also in clearing lines of winter fancies. The prospects of Bradford dress goods for the coming spring season are distinctly improving, especially in regard to both plain and jacquard mohairs, and the high-class mohair crepons, which had been to some extent neglected lately, also seem to be returning to favor in the home market, following no doubt the lead of America, where they have all along been good property. Every recent season seems to have emphasized the distinction between dress materials for indoor wear and those for walking purposes, and there is every appearance of light-weight fabrics, cut very full, being worn for house dresses, whilst heavy clothing tailor-made cloths will be required for costumes. Bradford is laying herself out to fill the bill in both respects. The production of fancy silk goods for blouse purposes is a department of the trade which has shown very considerable expansion lately, and all the makers who have devoted their special attention to this branch of the trade are full of orders, and have produced some most effective styles.

KIDDERMINSTER.—Manufacturers, while they do not speak exuberantly with regard to the year, will no doubt find the stock-taking, which is now in progress, come out as well as for several years past, says The Kidderminster Shuttle in the review of the year. The year has been free from any exciting incidents. The price-lists which were in force at the commencement are still the basis of business transactions at the close of the year. The volume of trade has been from 2 to 3 per cent. better than

in the previous year—certainly a movement in the right direction, while the travelers who are now at home are full of expectancy with regard to the spring season. At the commencement of the year there were distinct indications of a revival in the demand for the best qualities of Brussels and Wilton carpets, and many a 6-frame cut-pile loom which had been idle was set in motion. This has been the feature of the year's trade, and the assurance is given that the demand will be more than maintained in the immediate future. No doubt the vast development of the Royal Axminster trade has led to this revival, so while that special industry has had its drawbacks so far as male labor is concerned, it has been attended with satisfactory results in other respects. Some of the best retail houses have broken away from the bad habit which had grown up of late of giving their orders from hand to mouth, so to speak, and have learnt to anticipate their wants, but many dealers still need to be educated in this respect. It is the number of small urgent orders—invariably of course to a certain extent—which have such a disturbing influence with the manufacturer in calculating the cost of production, and sometimes leads to rather strained relations with the carpet weavers.

NOTTINGHAM.—Business generally has been at a standstill all the week until yesterday, when the factories and warehouses once more resumed the even tenor of their way. Prior to the holidays there was a great effort made to clear off as many orders as possible, and consequently in many cases stock-taking was able to be proceeded with almost without interruption. It is to be feared, from the general trend of business during the year, both in the lace and hosiery departments, that the results, when the balance sheets are made up, will not be so satisfactory as could have been wished. Both departments have had many adverse influences to contend against during 1898. It is to be hoped that the coming year will make amends for past bad seasons, and that an era of prosperous times will dawn for Nottingham. In the fancy millinery lace departments few advance orders have been booked. America and the colonies have sent a few, but the demand for the Continent has fallen extremely low. The pattern-rooms have been kept busy, and although no startling novelties have been introduced, it is expected that the newest assortments in Torchons and Valenciennes will find much favor in the new year. Oriental laces are not so much enquired for as formerly, and other millinery laces are somewhat erratic in their movements. Silk laces are all in a stagnant condition. The plain branches show very little falling off; in fact, these goods have sold phenomenally well for a long period. The hosiery trade has been affected by the mildness of the weather and the paucity of orders for America. Cotton goods have shown no improvement in either demand or price. Foreign competition has had a great deal to do with the falling off in these goods. A few specialties in cashmere hose and larger underclothing have been moving; but, taken all round, prospects in the hosiery trade are far from bright.

LEICESTER.—The hosiery trade is now fairly active for choice fabrics and specialties, but heavy goods are depressed and repeat orders are extremely small, although stocks are low. The export trade with South African, Australian, Indian and Canadian markets is of fair extent. In the yarn market there are more enquiries for covering all prospective needs, while spinners are in a stronger position, and decline to book orders unless at prices which show a fair margin of profit. Cashmere yarns of the finest quality are firm, lambswool and fancy yarns are steady, but there is a poor consumption for cotton yarns.

KIRKCALDY.—The Dunfermline and Kirkcaldy linen manufacturers have had a fairly satisfactory year. The linoleum industry during 1898 was exceptionally active, and that, too, at remunerative prices.