

TRADE PROSPECTS.



SINCE our last issue the warm weather has interfered materially with the demand for heavy goods. Buyers are confining themselves to their immediate wants, as they are forced to do so by the fact that their customers do not seem at all anxious to spend their money so long as the weather continues comparatively mild. A spell of sharp, cold weather would alter the condition of things very considerably. But yet Toronto wholesale houses report that trade so far this month is far ahead of the same period last year, more particularly in mantlings and dress goods. In dress goods there has been a brisk demand for tweed effects. Two or three years ago the trade scoffed at the idea of pushing the sale of tweeds for ladies' wear, but a change has come. The excessive duty on imports led some of the Canadian mills to develop the manufacture of six-quarter tweeds, and within the time mentioned they have made a tremendous advance in the style, quality and finish of these goods. They have had positively to refuse repeat orders for the fall trade as they are filled up with orders for spring delivery. The tweed patterns, both in heavy and light goods, are very pretty. The favorites seem to be soft checks and plain greys. There is also a good demand for serges, the prevailing colors being navy blue, black, and myrtle green, and the style "wales." There has not been much demand for Bedford cords, and Meltons seem to be played out. Very few ulsterings have as yet been sold, and tweeds seem to be supplanting sealettes. Gimps, cords and jet nail heads are in great request for trimmings. In staples the demand has been most encouraging, and orders for woollens have been fair, buyers being inclined to act cautiously. Nothing is wanted but seasonable weather to boom trade. The farmers will soon have plenty of money, and storekeepers will get their share of it. A marked feature in business this season is the fact that manufacturers have been paid cash for August and September deliveries, their customers preferring to save the discount rather than take the four months from October 1st.

THE TRADE IN MONTREAL.

(By Our Own Correspondent.)

The dry goods trade has been told that the crops are good, but they have nothing more than hearsay for it. No indications have come either in payments or in increased orders to travelers that such is the case. They are of course hopeful, but they look for their profits a long way in the future. As far as relieving the stringency of the situation it has had absolutely no effect. On the contrary, wholesalers show a disposition to clear up their old business before entering upon what many believe is a new and better state of things. Consequently they are pressing for payment, and for all paper maturing a rigorous demand for money is made—that is, they are insisting upon a settlement of one kind or another. As a result the list of failures is heavy. Great discretion is used in placing orders, and in the case of one city traveler a very small number of names was put into his hands of those upon whom he might call. The trade feels that it has been playing a losing game long enough, and considers it time to call a halt, and if they can make no money they are determined not to lose any more. The wholesale dealers, as has been said, are pressing the retailers, and they in turn are urging the farmers to meet their bills. The effect of this is to cause alarm and to limit the desire to buy. As yet almost no money is in circulation, and it cannot be expected that in a few weeks the effects of a long period of depression will be removed. The lessons of late have been so severe that buyers show no disposition to discount the future too heavily, and prefer to wait till they actually see the results of the much talked-of crops before spending their prospective money. Conservative people look for no important change till Christmas, and no real improvement till the spring trade commences. The

weather again has had its effect, as people will not buy winter or fall goods in summer heat, and if they manage to pass New Year's day without extra heavy garments being needed then they are safe not to buy at all. But all this is making for a healthy condition. Business is getting down to bed rock. Loose ends are cut off and all encumbrances cleared away, and a general condition of good sense prevails, even though these logical methods do, and will, bear hard in specific cases. To specify: there is almost an entire absence of those job lots which, when thrown into the circulation gorge the system and bring everything below the standard; there is no inclination to cut prices, but the feeling prevails that for the present, goods are better on the shelves than in the shops of doubtful customers and that in the near future they will be worth what they have cost. An exception is to be made in the case of thread, which has been cut to at least twenty-five per cent. below the habitual price and at the instigation, not of a cheap German house, but as a move on the part of a reputable Scotch firm. If this were a review of the future it would be proper to speak of "encouraging reports" of "hopeful feelings" and "pleasing prospects," and many things point in this direction, though dealing with the present, remittances are very slow, but improving, orders are small and limited, though better than this time last year. One out of a half-dozen interviews is a fair sample of all and appears like this: "There is a decided improvement, sales being ahead of last year. Reports from all points are encouraging, and while collections do not show a marked increase, prospects are very much better, there being a hopeful, healthy feeling in all quarters. All our reports are in a sanguine strain and we anticipate that payments will be better than for some years past as soon as crops commence to move and the money they bring goes into circulation." Another selected at random: "Fall business has been good and has improved lately. This applies chiefly to the retailers as the wholesale season is almost over and travelers on the road are doing nothing." Yet some small orders are coming in, chiefly repeats from the west and a few from travelers who are sorting up. There is every ground for confidence, and the trade has had such a thorough weeding out, the good effects will last until buyers and sellers become reckless again and embark upon enterprises in which it is impossible for them to succeed. The lines of goods in which there is any considerable movement are mantles, dress goods, chevots, tweeds and serges. The retail trade in the district, of which Montreal is the centre, has received the usual fall impulse and particularly during the past month on account of the fall fairs and the number of people visiting the towns and villages.

COMMERCIAL LITIGATION.

Some new rules of Court have just received the sanction of the Lord Chancellor says the Drapers' Record, which will prove of great importance to commercial firms. They lay down the rules to be observed in regard to bringing actions against foreign firms, which have hitherto, owing to conflicting opinion, been of much difficulty and very perplexing. There have always been two very pronounced difficulties—viz, whether the firm should be sued in the name of the firm or in the names of the partners, and whether the writ should be served upon the partners in this country or on one partner only or all the partners. As a consequence, it frequently happens that foreign firms, either carrying on business by a branch in this country, or having their businesses wholly abroad, but making a contract here, either wholly escaped or forced their British creditors to go to a foreign country for redress. This has been entirely removed, for it has been decided that those partners who happen to be in this country can be sued, and that if there is a branch of the firm here a summons or writ must be served in the name of the firm, and at their office, to any one who appears to be in authority there.

CORRESPONDENCE.

We solicit letters from our readers on business topics. A practical merchant's views are always of great value to others in the same business, and we should be pleased to have our paper made the medium of exchanging such opinions and experiences.