

Foreign Textile Centres

MANCHESTER.—The cotton market presents at the moment a perplexing appearance. Although continuing to rise in value, it is subject to sudden fluctuations. One day the Agricultural Bureau furnishes an alarming report as to the condition of the growing crop; the next, private advices of an entirely different nature are to hand. Meantime, the small daily port receipts are the one fact in evidence, and, as a consequence, advancing prices. Cotton is now nearly 50 per cent. dearer than in the early part of the year, and many here believe in a still considerable advance. These remarks, of course, apply only to American cotton. Egyptian continues to decline under the influence of the approaching new crop. Other descriptions are firm, but call for no special remark. The trade here, both in grey cloth and yarn, continues in an unsatisfactory condition. Undoubtedly more business has been put through lately than producers are willing to acknowledge, but much of it has been profitless. The Bombay trade continues depressed, and shipments to that port are reduced, but other centres increase their purchases. It is encouraging to note our larger trade in yarns to Germany and other Continental sources. Unquestionably, Lancashire has not yet participated to the extent of Yorkshire in the improved commercial situation, yet probably the situation here is by no means as bad as our market reports would cause outsiders to believe. Signs of improvement are not wanting. Some of the Lancashire manufacturers are engaged on fancy goods for the United States, and find themselves unable to accept all the business offering. This is not an unremunerative trade, but is unfortunately in few hands.

MACCLESFIELD.—Some sections of the silk trade are much more promising than others. The Macclesfield Silk Manufacturing Society, a concern conducted on co-operative principles, is advertising for inside weavers, and promises regular employment. French, Swiss and German makes of silks are so well ordered that producers are able to go on for some time to come, looms being well engaged. Even locally—that is, in the Macclesfield as well as in the Manchester district—manufacturers have taken heart, and weavers are in great demand. It is unfortunate for weavers that silk is such a season trade, with periods in which there is no happy financial medium, work being either too plentiful or too scarce. The average earnings of silk weavers in the North have for years been very low, and the *Drafter's Record* correspondent says their income during the course of the year seldom exceeded £35. This refers to the earnings of men who are heads of families. At present, however, trade is fairly brisk and dyers are well engaged. The buyers also are to come in force, and gladden the silk mills of the district with their presence; but some persons have been frank enough to suggest that the only way to build up trade is for the seller to call on the consumer. A meeting has been held at Macclesfield to consider the replies received to a circular recently sent to twenty-four leading distributors of British silks. The circular, signed by Thomas Wardle, as president of the Silk Association, asked for the opinion of its recipients as to the advisability of a conference between manufacturers and distributors. Of the twenty-four whose opinions were asked, seven replied in favor of such a conference, while twelve were of the opinion that no useful end would be served. From five no replies were received. In view of the fact that so few reported in favor of the conference, and that the other silk centres, such as Leeds and Congleton, were also opposed to the idea, the meeting at Macclesfield resolved that the whole matter had better be postponed.

BRADFORD.—The *Drafter's Record* correspondent says: The business in Merino wools, which now forms so large a part of the Bradford trade, is always quiet for a few days previous to the opening of a sale of colonial wool in London. Even after the sale has commenced the first week has to elapse before a standard of prices can be fixed. The opinions of the course of the present sale are endless, but it is generally acknowledged that unless an advance of nearly 20 per cent. on the close of last sales is established, the

prices current in this market will not have been sustained. At the present sales about 240,000 bales are to be offered, which is as near as possible the same quantity as was put up at the corresponding sales a year ago. The terminal market in Antwerp may usually be considered as a fair indication of the feeling on the continent. Prices there show much fluctuation. Figures during the recent excitement had attained quite an unjustifiable height in comparison with Bradford, and the weakness displayed in futures may only have meant that the market was expected to come more into line with the quotations for the better class tops made here. The prices for all classes of English wools are gradually hardening but the greatest interest is still taken in wools of a lustrous character. Although there has recently been little business doing in mohair, the prices at the source of supply are again quoted dearer, and a thousand bales of alpaca realized a few days ago the top price of 2s. 3d. per lb. In yarns there are large offers for coating purposes at slightly under to-day's rates, which will probably be got through if the sales do not open excitedly. There is also a good deal of business coming from the continent in serge, warp, and weft yarns, but some of these have limits for price and time of delivery, which prevent them being delivered. There are still inquiries for bright yarns of both alpaca, mohair, and lustre for wefts from the continent, but at present the spinners here seem unable to supply the demand from the Bradford manufacturers. In the piece trade the greatest attention is being paid to bright goods, and, as might be expected after the late sharp rise, prices are very irregular. Merchants, as a rule, have contracted for all they can get from manufacturers, and have already placed the greater part of this supply either with the home trade retailers, or with shippers to the continent, the United States or South America. In addition to the plainer makes of bright fabrics very beautiful specimens are being made, some showing great taste, and a novelty quite apart from the old-fashioned jacquard alpaca, etc. In worsted coatings the inquiry for the United States and other markets shows no signs of falling off, although I am told that orders for the American market are being kept back rather than pay the extreme quotations of to-day. In the alpaca serge lining department the latest advances are also unobtainable.

LEEDS.—The Leeds clothing business continues fairly active, as, in addition to the improvement in the home trade, better orders for shipping are coming to hand. Travellers report stocks in the country unusually light, and retailers are in much better spirits, on account of the good harvest weather, and the signs of improvement in the iron and coal trade. The heavy woolen districts also continue unusually busy, and most of the leading Dewsbury and Batley mills are running all possible overtime. Low and medium presidents and serges sell well in the home trade. There is a revival in the demand for backed worsteds for shipping. A few years ago very large quantities of these goods were consumed. Although there are hopes of an early settlement in the carpet weavers' wages dispute in Dewsbury, a settlement has not yet been arranged. During the week a few weavers have left work in Yeadon and Shipley on a refusal to grant them an advance of wages. There is a particularly good sale for fancy rugs and sealskins. Could merchants only give the advances asked for new blanket orders, business in that department would be very good. In flannels there is a fair demand, especially for Yorkshire whites. The machinery is running full time. The fight for advanced prices is, however, coming more to the front every day, and in many cases causing orders to be held in abeyance pending the fixing of prices from the London sales.

HUDDERSFIELD.—Trade in Huddersfield continues good in all branches, and the volume of the general exports increases. In view, however, of the loss to the district of the manufacture of low worsted on account of the non-adoption of the two looms to a weaver system, several conferences have been held between representatives of the masters and men to try and arrange for the system in special departments of the trade.

DUNDEE.—The Dundee jute trade remains steady, and values are well maintained. Some further business in Ralli's jute has