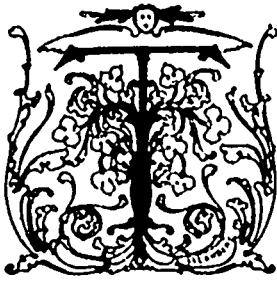


PROGRESS OF OUR CARPET INDUSTRY.



HERE is one industry, at least, in Canada which is making strides along the path which leads to greatness and prosperity. This is the carpet industry. Five years ago it was a pickaninny business in small factories of a few looms each. To-day several very large factories are in existence, and the number is on the increase.

True all this has not been accomplished without much uphill work. Adverse circumstances, induced by various sets of causes, have made the advancement of this industry much slower than it might otherwise have been. But this is always the case in a new country. The manufacturers must force their way against adverse conditions, against overwhelming competition and against foundationless prejudices.

The adverse conditions were the fact that the duties levied on yarns and other classes of raw material and on machinery militated against the manufacturers. Their protection was too small altogether. True it seems large to the politician and the consumer; but these did not seem to understand that the manufacturer's protection is found by subtracting the duty on his raw material from the duty on the finished product. But although this was small, they forced their case on the Government, and the result has been that during the past two years they have been better treated both in amount of protection and in the appraisement of competing goods at the customs houses.

The overwhelming competition has been due to the fact that large United States factories find at times that they have an overstock of goods. They do not care to slaughter these in the United States, and consequently they bring them to Canada and sell them at a very low price—less than cost. They thus leave their own market clear for future business and at the same time realize cash on their overmake. Undervaluation and wrong appraisements of United States carpets has intensified this competition.

Besides these two great difficulties, there has been the heavy weight of public prejudice. It has been thought that Canadian dyeing is not so permanent as British dyeing. This has been due to the fact that British manufacturers use more exclusively darker colorings and refrain from the use of light colors. Domestic manufacturers have, on the other hand, catered for the "light-color" taste, and have thus laid themselves open to the criticism of the ignorant. But there is little doubt that the Canadian and British corresponding colorings have about equal wearing strength, and that neither has any appreciable advantage.

Up to the present time Canadian manufacturers have confined themselves to unions and wools. Only one factory has gone further and commenced the manufacture of Axminster rugs and carpets. It is well that too much development in the direction of a wider range of manufactures has not taken place. Excellence in one line is more to be desired than commonplace merit in several. It requires a great deal of attention, capital and skill to develop any new line, and smaller mills are doing well in sticking close to the more common grades. Still the fact that better grades are being thought of and made on a small scale, shows that there is a future for carpet manufacturing which will gradually make itself.

The number of carpet looms in the carpet mills of Canada to-day is over 250, and the yearly output will amount to about a million yards. The number of persons employed is about 500, and the wages paid will amount to \$150,000. These figures may seem small, but the difficulties under which the industry has struggled have been pointed out and explained. The last two years has seen the industry double in size and treble in importance. Under favorable conditions the next five years should see a wonderful development in this industry.

DEFECTS IN CARPET MANUFACTURING.

IN the Canadian carpet manufacturing there have been, and are yet, serious defects. These defects have been overcome by some manufacturers, but not by all. Two mills, at least, have been fitted with sufficient dyeing and scouring plant—the Toronto Carpet Mill and the Empire Carpet Mill, St. Catharines—but most of the others depend on job dyeing, and consequently do not secure the same good results.

Canadian carpets have been regarded with a considerable amount of disfavor, and this prejudice has not been without foundation, and reasonable foundation at that. The yarns have not been properly cleaned from natural grease, for lack of improved scouring machinery, and as a consequence the dyeing was imperfect. Dyeing can be done, and has been done, in Canada, which is equal to the best carpet dyeing in any older country. There is no reason why this should not be the rule, and that with no exception. Every mill in Canada must have its proper arrangements and its proper machinery for scouring and dyeing before it can hope to establish itself in favor with the trade.

It is pleasant to be able to assert that no person has been more cognizant of the defects of the carpet product than the makers themselves. But until they received proper attention from the Government, it was impossible to induce sufficient capital to enter the business and thus provide the necessary plant. But now that the trade has been placed on its feet by a slight measure of protection there has been an improvement, and the latest machinery for the purpose has been added to the best factories.

This being the fact, there is no reason why the prejudice against Canadian-made carpets should exist any longer. The larger factories are turning out goods which are clean and honest. They are the product of Canadian labor and as such should be encouraged—or, at least, should not be discouraged.

The retail merchants are the men on whom the success of the Canadian carpet industry depends, and their nod and approval is able, in a very short time, to double the number and capacity of our mills. By giving the product of Canadian looms an equal chance with the product of looms operated by foreign labor, a great industry can be stimulated to renewed vigor. Not only will more carpet be produced, but better carpet also. As the mills increase in size, their machinery will increase in perfectness and the product rise in point of quality.

The strength of a country depends, as in the case of a human being, upon the equal and full development of all its members. Manufacturers should not be helped to the detriment of the consuming public; but the development of manufactures to a certain extent aids in building up a well-developed and self-reliant nation.