

SAMPLE AND SHOW ROOMS AT ODESSA.

It was recently announced that, with a view to promoting American trade on the Black Sea coast, the United States Government had decided to appoint a number of commercial agencies in Southern Russia, where there will be a permanent exhibition of American products, and every possible facility will be given for their importation. The first of these agencies, which will be placed under Consular supervision, is to be opened at Odessa. In commenting upon this fact, a German newspaper offers the opinion that "when the Americans once secure a hold on the markets of the Levant, their vast resources, their business capacity and energy, and the vigilance of their Consuls will give them the lead in many classes of goods." In this connection it ought to be borne in mind that although the highly protective customs duties in force in Russia against incoming merchandise act as a strong deterrent to importers, yet if American firms should succeed in deriving commercial advantage from agencies and show-rooms, there is no reason why other firms should not follow the example set them by their enterprising competitors in that market.

MOISTURE IN TEXTILES.

An esteemed contemporary says: It is a well known fact that all textiles when exposed to dampness absorb moisture in large quantities, and consequently increase in weight. When stored in a dry place the same textiles lose their moisture. The effect of this hygroscopic property is that the weight of a given lot of textiles varies from day to day, so that it is absolutely impossible to tell at any time the actual weight of that lot without testing it. It is easy to understand that these conditions have been, and still are, a source of great trouble to dealers. Let us suppose, for instance, that a lot of wool has been baled and weighed on a damp or rainy day, then kept in storage for some weeks and shipped in dry, windy weather. When the lot arrives it will have lost nearly all its moisture, and when it is weighed by the buyer every bale will appear to be short, complaint will naturally be made and trouble is likely to ensue. Under reversed conditions the lot will have gained. As may naturally be supposed such a state of affairs cannot be suffered to continue indefinitely. Wool is the fiber most sensitive to moisture, says a writer in a contemporary, varying as it may from 5 to 35 per cent. of its actual weight, according to the action of atmospheric influence. But as the price per pound for wool was less than for silk, it was in the silk trade that the matter was first studied, and in 1750 an establishment was founded in Turin, to ascertain the "condition" of the silks sold on that market. From this we have the term "conditioning." Actually a "conditioning house" is a laboratory in which tests are made to ascertain not only the percentage of moisture contained in a textile, but also the percentage of foreign matter (gum, grease, soap, oil, etc.), the size or count, the tenacity or strength, the elasticity, the amount of twist, etc. In fact, a conditioning house may be called an assay office for textiles. In some silk centres the

practice of conditioning was extended to high grade wools used in mixed goods, then to ordinary grades, and at the present time all European textile markets possess at least one conditioning house. In order to have a basis for commercial purposes it is necessary to make a certain allowance for moisture, because we never find, in normal conditions, silk or wool absolutely dry. That allowance, or "reprise," is the quantity of moisture which is added to the absolute dry weight in order to obtain the conditioned weight; it cannot be the same for all textiles, for they do not contain the same amount of moisture when placed under identical influences. An International Congress met in Turin in 1875 and adopted the following reprises: Silk, 11 per cent.; wool (combed), $18\frac{1}{4}$ per cent.; wool (spun), 17 per cent.; cotton, $8\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.; flax, 12 per cent.; hemp, 12 per cent.; tow (spun), $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.; jute and Phormium, $13\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. of the absolute dry weight of the textile.

Those percentages are now applied in all conditioning houses in the world.

LONDON WOOLREPORT.

C. Balme & Co., in their report of the Third Series of Colonial Wool Sales of the current year, which opened on the 2nd ult., and closed on the 19th, state that of the quantity sold, approximately 95,000 bales have been taken for export, nothing having been purchased for shipment to America. The immediate cause of the very sharp rise in values which marked the series of sales which closes to-day was the notable advance in quotations for merino "tops" which began directly after the Easter holidays. The "terme" markets of Antwerp and Roubaix led the way, and Leipsic and Bradford followed suit. In spite of the known shortage of fine wools, manufacturers have for some time past been deterred from holding any but the lightest stocks by the sluggish state of the woollen textile trade and the repeated political disturbances of the last two or three years. They were not slow to realize that, with a clearer political horizon and more promising trade prospects, they might be caught understocked, and so the movement grew surprisingly in strength, until at the opening of the auctions, prices for tops stood at a higher point than has been reached since 1890. With a crowded sale room, values for merinos, whether greasy or scoured, ruled from the outset 15 to 20 per cent. above March parity. French buyers topped the market to begin with, but with the advent of free German and English competition later on and the keenest general animation, from 20 to 25 per cent. in excess of the final figures of the second series was frequently paid. Towards the end of the sales a rather more sober spirit pervaded the room owing to easier quotations for tops on the Continent, and the concluding prices of the auctions show practically no variation from opening rates. As was only to be expected, fine crossbreds have benefited very largely by the sharp demand for merinos. They shared the opening improvement to the extent of from 10 to 15 per cent., and gradually gained ground throughout, until at the close they are nearly 20 per cent. dearer than in March. The comparative