
THE TRADE.

THERE is a steady improvement in business, but not much more so than would naturally be expected at this time of year. The very warm weather has had a depressing effect upon the retail trade, and although jobbers and manufacturers who cater directly to retailers are busy they are not overwhelmed with orders as they would be under other circumstances.

Stiff hat manufacturers generally are very busy, particularly upon fine and medium grades. The cheaper grades are for the present neglected, and this is accounted for by the fact that the laboring classes have not as yet been at work long enough to enable them to think of new clothing, all their efforts being directed to catching up with the landlord, the butcher and the grocer, who have been carrying them through the dull times. The boom will not appear before the spring, if indeed it does then.

The South appears to be in splendid shape, the orders from that section being liberal, and placed with an air of prosperity and a belief in the future that is pleasant to behold.

Collections are only fair, and from some localities less than that.

An early start has been made by the case houses for spring trade and some very large orders have been already booked.

Dating seems to have run riot, and those who thought a panic would have the effect of restricting dates have found that it had the contrary effect of extending them. No one has the temerity to suggest any combined action

regarding the regulation of dates and discounts, and it is not probable that any such effort will be made in the near future. Each house is regulating its own terms according to its capital and business policy, and this, perhaps, after all, may be the true solution of the problem for the present.

A natural sequence of this is to be found in the consolidation of accounts into the hands of large commission houses, as small manufacturers will not be able to compete with them in such matters. When this consolidation, which is now rapidly going on, is effected it will then be easy for the few large houses to agree upon terms and live up to them. It is, in other words, simply a survival of the strongest.

STYLES AND COLORS.

THE dullness of the retail trade, owing, no doubt, to the very warm and unseasonable weather, has prevented, to a great extent, any special selection of a popular style. Usually, by this time, it could be said definitely just which one of the leading styles had struck the popular fancy; but, up to date, it is a decided go as you please with buyers, each one of whom seems to have developed a fancy for a style of his own. In some sections of the country the taper crown is selling almost to the exclusion of other styles, while for nearby and large city trade the full crown will undoubtedly have the lead.

English styles are of much smaller proportions than those shown by American manufacturers, and it is as yet an open question as to what the extreme city style will turn