The Commercial

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Sales of Dry Goods.

The auction sale in New York on Wednesday of 17,452 packages of cotton and fancy flannels, wide sheetings, 4 x 4 brown sheetings, bleached cottons, etc., valued at about $1,500,000 represented rather the stress of the so-called dry goods trade than an evidence of its satisfactory condition, as explained by a number of those who have commented. As pointed out in Bradstreet's the condition of the cotton goods trade, including second hands, has not been favorable. While paralleled as to condition by the woolen goods industry for many months, the latter has recently been stimulated by a widespread demand in an effort to discount the proposed new tariff on wool and woolens, but cotton goods have had no such incentive to induce the public to buy. The Dry Goods Record well says that "of the large number of mills engaged in producing staple and semi-staple cotton fabrics, the burden of complaint for the past year or more was and still is that there is no money in manufacturing, and if the mills have to run it is because it entails less loss than to shut down and allow the machinery to become disabled." As many reports of the cotton goods auction have stated, prices of some of the products sold were "satisfactory," by which reference is evidently made to the manufacturer. Such being the case, even the layman may be able to draw his own conclusions with respect to the nature of the other sales—those which were not up to the grade of "fairly satisfactory." The fact is the sale was probably rather below than above a fair average in the matter of returns, and its most favorable feature lies in the fact that that proportion of stock over the market has been distributed.

The Railroad Problem Again.

The number of the North American Review just issued contains a lengthy and interesting article by Mr. Lloyd Brice under the above head, which, while it cannot be said to adopt a particularly new way of looking at the matter, marshals the facts in a way calculated to attract attention. A leading point which Mr. Bryce makes is that the evils arising from unremunerative rates are not confined to the capitalist or the owners of railroad securities, but constitute a direct injury to the general prosperity of the country, and affect no class more unfavorably than workmen themselves. They injure, in fact, over one million railway employees or persons directly employed by our vast system of transportation, and affect the comfort and happiness of four million human beings, to say nothing of the hundreds of thousands who have invested in railroad securities and from whom, in many cases excessive reductions of rates take away the income on which they live. Furthermore, so many industries are co-related to transportation that reduction of rates cannot be made without reduction of the wages of labor in many different directions.

When, as Mr Bryce points out, railways are prosperous and rates remunerative, millions of dollars are expended in new equipments, improvements of plant and betterments, so that whatever railroads penetrate all business is affected beneficially or injuriously, as they are prosperous or otherwise. According to the author, the view that the public interest always requires the lowest rates, or reductions in rates are even presumptively for the public welfare, is a superficial one. He claims that what the public really requires is the persistent maintenance of official, reasonable and safe transportation service, with rates properly adjusted as between competitive points of production and consumption, always free from individual discrimination and steadily permanent from year to year.

How to reach this ideal condition is the question which perplexes statesmen, economists and practical railroad men. The railroads, on their part, complain of unfair and excessive taxation, of a constant public demand for expensive improvements, which give little or no return on the capital invested, and of legal restrictions which, if lived up to by all, would mean ruin to many roads, besides which there is an oversupply of railroads entailing excessive competition. Mr. Bryce quotes Judge Reagan, on whose part in securing the enactment of the Interstate Commerce Law it is needless to dwell, in which he said that "further study has caused me to believe that the act may be amended so as to benefit both the railroads and the people by allowing the railroads to enter into traffic arrangements with each other," and, following this line of argument, a strong plea is made by the writer from whom this is quoted that the railroads should be given the necessary powers to enter into stable agreements for the purpose of regulating traffic and rates.

Emphasizing the evils of the present system, he concludes with the striking illustration that one mill, or one-tenth of one cent. per ton per mile additional upon the tonnage of the railroads of the United States in 1895 would have yielded over $80,000,000 additional revenue, this infinitesimal fraction of a dollar, the mill, being all that stands between the prosperity or insolvency of our railroad system.—Bradstreets.

History of Matches.

A writer in the Boston Transcript says: "The first practical friction matches were made in 1817 by an English apothecary named Walker, who coated splints of cardboard with sulphur and tipped them with a mixture of sulphate of antimony, chlorate of potash and gum. A box of eighty-four matches sold for 1c., a piece of glass-paper being furnished it for obtaining ignition. In 1830 a London man named Jones devised a species of match which was a little roll of paper soaked in chlorate of potash and sugar, with a thin glass globule filled with sulphuric acid attached to one end. The globule being broken, the acid acted upon the potash and sugar, producing fire. Phosphorus matches were first introduced on a commercial scale in 1833, and after that improvements were rapid.

"The modern lucifer match combines in one instrument arrangements for creating a spark, catching it on tinder, and starting a blaze—steps requiring separate operations in primitive contrivances. It was in 1836 that the first United States patent for friction matches was issued. Splits for them were made by sawing or spliting blocks of wood into slivers slightly attached at the base. These were known as 'slab' or 'block' matches, and they are in use in parts of this country to-day. The latest important invention in matches secures the separation of the chemicals, which in combination are almost more or less dangerous. Thus is obtained the 'safety' match, which was invented by a Swede named Lundstrom in 1855. The head of the safety match contains chlorate of potash and sulphur, while the friction paper on the box is spread with a paste of amorphous posphorus and antimony.

"Among the odd varieties of matches now in vogue are the 'vestas,' of which the split is a waxed cord; 'fusees' for lighting in a wind, with a short thick stick tipped with a large mass of chlorate of potash composition, and 'natural gas' matches, with a very long splint for lighting natural gas fires. In former days the manufacture of phosphorus matches was attended with great danger to the workman from the fumes, which caused a decay of the bones of the jaw. Many persons were poisoned from carelessness in handling them, and numerous conflagrations occurred on account of the ease with which they were ignited. The 'parlor match' had its origin with the manufacture, in 1838, of Schrotter's amorphous phosphorous. This product has neither odor nor taste, is not poisonous, and does not take fire at ordinary temperatures. Mr. Walter Hough of the National Museum, of whom the writer is indebted for a good deal of his information, says that before long electricity will greatly reduce the consumption of matches. The electric match will represent the final culmination of the evolution of fire-making apparatus."

Uses of Hot Water.

The Phrenological Journal gives the following useful hints on the applications of water in severe attacks of illness. The adult members of a family should keep them in mind for an emergency.

A strip of flannel or a soft napkin, folded lengthwise and dipped in hot water and wrung out, and then applied around the neck of a child that has the croup, will usually bring relief in a few minutes.

A proper towel folded several times and dipped in hot water, quickly wrung and applied over the site of toothache or neuralgia, will generally afford prompt relief.

This treatment for colic has been found to work like magic.

Nothing so promptly cuts short a congestion of the lungs, sore throat, or rheumatism as hot water, when applied early in the case and thoroughly.

Hot water taken freely half an hour before bed-time is an excellent cathartic in the case of constipation, while it has a sooting effect upon the stomach and bowels.

This treatment, continued a few months, with the addition of a cup of hot water slowly sipped half an hour before each meal, with proper attention to diet, will cure most cases of dispepsia.

Ordinary headaches almost always yield to the simultaneous application of hot water to the feet and back of the neck.

A couple of cars of hogs were shipped to Winnipeg this week, says the Souris Plaindealer newspaper, by our local dealers. Owing to the bad roads considerable trouble was experienced in bringing the hogs to town, and the shipment was limited in consequence. Good young hogs weighing from 125 to 280 pounds, bring four cents per lb.