

his back and a flag waving over him that is an invulnerable defence in time of need. The past week has seen the advance of the western section of the force in South Africa literally through a storm of bullets, shells and cannon balls. Three times has Lord Methuen's heroes engaged the enemy, each time dislodging them from strong positions after fierce encounters which he declares were the most sanguinary of any battles this century. His battle cry was "Up Guards and at them," and at them the splendid fellows who are the very cream of the British army went with an impetuous dash which outrivals the most gallant deeds on record. Mr. Boer has hitherto held "Tommy Atkins" in contempt. We should like to have his opinion of the bayonets of our men; we fancy contempt has given place to dread. General Buller is moving up to relieve Ladysmith, by whom, as we write, a decisive battle may have been begun, or contemplated. The sky is overcast, but its colour has changed, the clouds are crimsoned with the reflection of brave men's blood. The old saying is: "An evening red betokens a fine day." May this be fulfilled, we all hope as our feelings are stirred to their depths by sympathy with the fallen, and the bereaved, and by earnest aspirations that the Christmas bells will ring over re-established peace.

CANADA'S MERCHANT SHIPPING.

The report recently issued of the Marine and Fisheries' Department on the merchant shipping of Canada includes the reports of the Harbour Commissioners and other officials of all the ports of this country. The document, in one respect, cannot be regarded with satisfaction, but in another may be looked upon with pride and sanguine hopes. Indeed, there are grounds for anticipating that ere many years have elapsed the less favorable aspect of our merchant shipping returns will be so changed as to be as bright as they are now gloomy. While the maritime trade of Canada has been expanding rapidly, there has been equally extensive decrease in the number and the tonnage of vessels on the Registry Books of the Dominion. Our native vessels have, for many years, been decreasing in number and total capacity, their places being taken, and the enlarged maritime trade of the country having been provided for by British and foreign vessels. Should, however, the great enterprises now being established at Sydney, C. B., fulfil expectations, we shall have the supreme gratification of seeing ocean steamers built in Canada rivalling in capacity those whose vast bulks minister to the shipping requirements of this national port. The following shows the average number and tonnage of vessels on the Dominion Registry from 1879 to 1888, and from 1889 to 1898:—

Provinces.	Vessels.	Tons.	Vessels.	Tons.
	1879 to 1888.		1889 to 1898.	
New Brunswick....	1,072	299,600	868	153,100
Nova Scotia.....	2,959	534,700	2,630	378,900
Quebec.....	1,718	214,300	1,430	160,100
Ontario.....	1,163	146,800	1,411	142,400
P. E. Island.....	247	39,390	194	20,616
B. Columbia.....	106	9,496	308	24,738
Manitoba.....	43	3,996	96	6,800
Totals.....	7,308	1,248,282	6,937	886,654
Average tonnage....	171	128

Since 1879, when the maximum was reached, the tonnage of vessels registered in the Maritime Provinces has fallen off from 942,907 tons to 367,403 tons, and the number of vessels from 4,408 to 3,248. In those Provinces there were 353 vessels built in 1874 with a total tonnage of 151,141 tons, while last year the total number built was only 103, with a tonnage of 6,124 tons, which shows not only a serious decrease in ship-building as regards the number of vessels, but a more serious falling off in the size of those built. The displacement of wooden vessels by those of iron and steel accounts for the serious falling off in the native merchant shipping of Canada to a large extent, as it does for the decline of our ship-building industry, which, we trust, is on the eve of a revival that will put Sydney, N.S., alongside Glasgow and Belfast in the production of ocean steamers. The following shows the tonnage of sea-going vessels entered and cleared at Canadian ports for a series of years between 1879 and 1899, with the percentage of Canadian ships to the total:—

Year.	Canadian. Tons.	Brit. h. Tons.	Fore gn. Tons.	Percentage. Canadian.
1880	1,794,210	2,642,935	2,349,569	26.45
1883	1,886,166	3,001,071	3,085,540	23.67
1886	1,783,623	3,101,285	3,159,663	22.17
1889	1,599,594	3,333,079	4,363,928	17.21
1892	2,085,187	3,586,335	5,081,452	19.40
1895	2,054,024	3,994,224	4,928,581	18.80
1899	2,029,745	5,777,668	4,778,672	16.16
Increase in 10 years.	235,535	3,134,133	2,429,103

The total tonnage of sea-going vessels with cargo from and to Canada in 1880 and 1898 was:—

	Inwards. Tons.	Outwards. Tons.	Total. Tons.
1880	2,108,773	3,048,640	5,157,413
1898	3,539,941	5,420,282	8,960,223

On the other hand, while our sea-going vessels have been declining in tonnage, those doing business in inland waters between Canada and the States have been increasing. In 1879 the total tonnage of our vessels in this trade was 3,314,829 tons, and in 1898, 6,205,117 tons, those of the States in 1879 being 2,243,433 tons, and in 1898, 5,955,514 tons. In view of this large increase of American vessels trading in Canadian waters it becomes a question of grave importance whether it is desirable to grant any privileges to foreign vessels in our inland ports which our vessels are not allowed in foreign ports. It seems also as though there were a wide-opening for more and larger Canadian ships for service in our inland waters. The above statistics do not include the tonnage or number of vessels engaged in the coasting trade of Canada, the growth, and extent of the tonnage which appear as follows:—

	1877 Tons.	1880 Tons.	1887 Tons.	1898 Tons.
	8,968,862	14,053,013	17,513,677	29,633,950

It is pleasant to note how enormous has been the increase in the tonnage of sea-going vessels that arrived in this port in the last decade. In 1880 the total tonnage was 823,165 tons and in 1898, 1,584,072 tons, an increase of 92.55 per cent. Outside of the United Kingdom and Hong-Kong, the shipping of Canada