

British Returns, the Dominion was the only one showing nothing later than 1871, while all the others produced complete statements to the close of 1875.

The last branch of the report, viz., "Trade and Commerce of Montreal in 1875," contains under the "Financial Retrospect" the causes assigned by the London *Economist* for the commercial depression of 1875. We shall reproduce this extract:

The *Economist*, in its financial review of the year 1875, assigns the following reasons for the wide spread commercial depression which has been experienced both in Europe and America. They are well worth recording here:—

"The first and most powerful of these causes was the Franco-German war (Aug. 70–April, 71); the payment of the Indemnity of 220 millions sterling by France to Germany (71–73); and the entrance of Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Italy upon a newer, freer and more enterprising national career. The suspension for a year of a part of the industrial production in the belligerent countries brought them rather more into the markets of the world, and especially into the English market, as soon as peace was assured, and thus helped to create a great demand beyond the capacity of the then existing means of supply: and hence the velocity with which in 1871–2 demand urged on production, especially of the instrumental articles of coal and iron. "Second, the mania in the United States for the building of railroads (1868–73), and the consequent large transfers of native and foreign capital from floating to fixed investments, operated in the same direction and in the same way as the demand in Central Europe. "Third during the same period (1868–73) Russia strained all its resources and all its credit in the pursuit of a similar policy of railway, road and navigation extension. "Fourth, the opening of the Suez Canal at the end of 1869 created during 1870–3 an urgent demand for a large fleet of steam-vessels adapted to the new Indian route; and, what is more, so altered and twisted many of the existing modes and channels of business as to create mischief and confusion among the parties engaged in them; and these derangements have been greatly intensified by the completion, since 1868, of a very complete telegraphic system between all parts of the world, not excluding China, Australia, and both sides of South America. And, fifth the rapid rise of prices and wages (1871–3) threw large systems of production entirely off their balance. More expenditure and less work took the place of frugality and diligence, and the acquirement of riches seemed to have become all at once so easy that the old virtues of diligence, skill and patience could be laid aside both by men and masters. "Considering the diffusiveness and the force of these causes, it is hardly likely that two and a-half years of reaction will suffice to correct them. The country—France—which, *prima facie*, suffered most, has, by virtue of these very sufferings, been least affected by the commercial misfortune. The harvest and vintages of the last three years have been very favorable in France, and, with a soil so rich, have doubtless gone far to replace the losses of the war and the indemnity. But the French people have again manifested that wonderful power of conquering adversity by thrift, patience, skill, invention and hard work, which has so often saved their country from calamities apparently overwhelming."

We cannot forbear noticing that in the opinion of the editor of the *Economist* we must seek for the causes of depression in an abnormal condition of trade which is precisely what we have contended for in recent articles. Under the subdivision, "Manufacturing and other Industries," we

find an enumeration of certain manufacturing and other industries in Montreal gathered from the census of 1871, published in 1875, and which "it has been thought best to give without remark" other than an opinion in which we certainly concur that "a full and accurate statement on the basis of this table appears to be a desideratum." The table gives the number of establishments as 1104, the number employed, male and female, 21,175, the value of the articles produced \$32,727,946, and the wages \$5,195,465. If the table is to be relied on, there were in 1871 eighty-six different industries in Montreal, the principal being the boot and shoe, 117 in number, employing 5,175 people, and paying in wages \$1,141,579. It would likewise appear that the business was profitable, for, taking the value of the articles produced, and deducting the value of raw material and wages, a profit of about forty-five per cent. is shown. The industry, which comes next in amount is that of which we are now bereft, sugar refineries of which there were two in 1871. The profit, estimating it in the same way, was under 7 per cent. We shall only notice five other industries, "tailors and clothiers," "hatters and furriers," "tobacco manufacturers," "millers and bakers." Each of these produces in value over a million, and they aggregate considerably more than one-half of the whole eighty six. We may therefore form at least an approximate idea of the employment of our people. There is a point well worthy of consideration in connection with this subject. In the sugar refineries the number employed was 339, all males, while in the tobacco works 590 males and 520 females in all 1110, were employed in manufacturing raw material, costing about one-seventh of the raw material of the sugar refineries. The raw material of the boot and shoe makers was considerably less than that of the sugar refineries and yet employment was given to 5175 people, male and female. In all the other industries to which we have referred, except the mills, females as well as males are employed and in considerable numbers. Much then, as we deplore the stoppage of the refineries, we ought not to exaggerate the consequences of the loss of employment.

There is some interesting information under sub-section "Dry Goods" which we cannot pass unnoticed. There is a comparison between the importations, in 1875 and 1874 the three preceding years, of certain leading articles. The value of cottons, yarns and warps in 1874 was \$4,184,893 and in 1875 \$2,732,541; of linens \$606,085 in 1874 and

\$485,192 in 1875; of silks, satins and velvets, \$1,244,926 in 1874 and \$818,217, in 1875; of shawls \$333,892 in 1874 and \$119,707 in 1875. We would, in conclusion, earnestly recommend Mr. Patterson's report to the thoughtful attention of our bankers, merchants and manufacturers. It is full of most useful information, and the author is entitled to the highest praise.

#### RECENT FIRES.

It would almost appear from recent occurrences as though there may be epidemics of fires as well as of diseases. The fires in Quebec, Kingston, Cayuga and St. Johns, all within a few weeks past, indicate something more than mere accident, and if suggestive of nothing worse, are evidence of gross carelessness on the part of the civic authorities in some of those places. The collective intelligence of these pigmy parliaments called town and City Councils has never been popularly appreciated since the Rev. Sydney Smith's recipe for making a wooden pavement for London by putting together the heads of the aldermen, and the remark would seem to be of extended application as shown by the blundering and shortsightedness of these bodies in much that relates to the public welfare. It is only when some signal calamity attended with great loss of life or property takes places that they become aware of the temptation continually kept before the destroying element, and even then they seem to regard it as an exceptional catastrophe arising from some special cause or misfortune, or from some individual act of carelessness or bad management which may not easily or speedily happen again. Thus reasoned, doubtless, the people of Quebec, St. Johns and other places, which now hulk themselves into fancied security from any such revisitation.

It was a matter for surprise to people among us who study the morals of trade that during the past winter and spring, in a period of great depression, fires were of such comparatively rare occurrence; this, however, seemed to have had its compensating balance in the great number of failures taking place through many of the country towns, caused, doubtless, by the efforts to tide over till spring determined the condition of trade. Within the last few months failures have dwindled down considerably, as may be observed by reference to our weekly list, although business has not been assuring, and here we may look for some of the hidden sources of the late extensive conflagrations. The approach of dry weather also would seem to warrant this view of the subject. We regret much to give expression to these