

THE COMMERCIAL MARINE.

Now we come to the next element of maritime enterprise—the commercial marine of British America. Nearly all of the provinces possess an abundance of timber suitable for the construction of ships, and as a large proportion of the people are engaged in maritime pursuits, they have naturally directed their attention to shipbuilding. Since the commencement of the present century, there has been a steady and in fact rapid increase in the tonnage of the vessels owned and employed in British America. In 1806 the provinces did not own more than 71,943 tons of shipping*; in 1830, the number had arisen to 176,040; in 1850, it was put down at 446,935 tons; in 1866, it was estimated at double the amount, viz: 950,000 tons, comprising about 6,500 vessels, valued at \$31,000,000. Now, in order to appreciate the value of the shipping interest of British America, it is sufficient to know that she is entitled to rank, as a commercial or maritime power, after England and the United States,—her tonnage being very little, if any, below that of France. Indeed, the Americans are forced to admit that we are, in this particular, gradually outstripping them; for the commercial marine of the United States, it is notorious to everyone, has remarkably retrograded of recent years. Soon after the close of the American war, Mr. Secretary McCulloch, then the head of the Treasury department, was forced to make this humiliating acknowledgment in the course of his annual message to Congress:—"The prices of labour and materials are so high that shipbuilding cannot be made profitable in the United States, and many of our shipyards are being practically transferred to the British provinces. It is an important fact that vessels can be built much cheaper in the provinces than in Maine. Nay, further, that timber can be taken from Virginia to the provinces, and from these provinces into England, and then made into ships which can be sold at a profit; while the same kind of vessels can be only built in New England at a loss, by the most skilful and economical builders. But the evil does not stop here: if the only loss was that which the country sustains by the discontinuance of shipbuilding, there would be less cause for complaint. It is a well-established, general fact that the people who build ships navigate them; and that a nation which ceases to build ships ceases of consequence to be a commercial and maritime nation. Unless, therefore, this state of things is altered, the people of the United States must be subject to humiliation and loss. If other branches of industry are to prosper, if agriculture is to be profitable, and manufactures are to be extended, the commerce of the country must be sustained and increased." The present condition of the commercial marine of the United States strikingly verifies the fears of Mr. McCulloch, and proves how remarkably a leading industry may be crippled by the adoption of a wrong commercial policy, such as now prevails in that country.

No State of the Union—no country in the world, can exhibit the

*These figures include P. E. Island and Newfoundland.