

## DECLINE OF AMERICAN SHIPPING.

Little chinks let in much light. The other day there was a small paragraph of intelligence from Brussels, which has been unnoticed by the press, and is yet of first-class importance as a revelation of new relations, an admission of decline, and a presage of future evil. It was to the effect that the Washington Government had given notice of the termination of the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation with Belgium, concluded on the 7th of July, 1858. A twelvemonth's notice is required, and so on July 1, 1875, the United States faces an entirely new condition of things, in which Great Britain is deeply interested, in common with all other nations who are concerned in commercial enterprise and the commerce of the sea.

So much for the chink, and now for its light. The war in the South, as is well known, changed the entire character of the American shipping trade. Not only were some hundreds of ships captured, burnt, sunk, or otherwise disposed of by the Southern cruisers, to the temporary annihilation of the maritime power of the United States, and the utter collapse of many marine insurance agencies, but the carrying trade was gradually transferred to foreign bottoms. The bulk of it fell into the hands of English shipowners, who constructed special vessels, devoted capital to the legitimate trade and to blockade-running; and who have held it ever since with a tenacity nothing seems likely to disturb short of maritime war. American capitalists were paralysed, and what with heavy taxation and the determination to wipe off the war debt—which is now seen not to have been wholly a wise policy, greatly as we have applauded it in this country—they have not been able to sufficiently recover to make shipping competition at all brisk. The coasting trade is, of course, in the hands of native merchants and adventurers, but the heavy import trade, with much of the export trade, and nearly the whole of the mail-carrying ocean trade has passed into other hands. At the present moment there are a number of ocean lines between North America and Europe, but, sad to say, only one is strictly American in character. The rest are in the hands of English, French, German and Belgian companies. Now the Treaty of 1858 exempted all Belgian ships in American waters, and all American ships in Belgian waters, from dues of tonnage, anchorage, bays and lighthouses. Two years ago a new Antwerp line was started, and when the first ship arrived in American waters ordinary dues were claimed, and paid under protest, a reference being made to the treaty of 1858 and the exemptions we have noticed. Investigations followed into the provisions of a treaty that had almost been forgotten, and the money was repaid. The publication of the official correspondence on the question attracted the attention of the German, English, and French lines, who through their respective Ministers, claimed to have similar exemptions, in accordance with the "favoured nation clause," as it is called, of their respective commercial treaties. The immense decline of American merchant-shipping made this claim somewhat one-sided, and showed at once that it could not be resisted the matter must be dealt with in another fashion. It has been under discussion ever since, and no signs of improvement having manifested themselves, last month the "House of Representatives" passed a resolution in favour of terminating the Belgian treaty, which, in its turn, was

acceded to by the Senate, and due notice has followed. Next year, then, all the great lines will have to pay the usual harbour dues, without any possibility of remonstrance, and Belgium will fare no better than England, France, and Germany. In discussing the matter, the American press has made no secret of the real cause, and admits the decline of the shipping trade of the United States, as we admit ugly facts which we cannot honestly deny, and yet must unfeignedly lament.

The step will do no good. It will neither prevent foreign lines entering American harbours, and carrying goods to and from Europe, nor will it encourage native energy and capital to embark in a business already fully occupied. It is a melancholy evidence of the result of war—a result which was wholly unexpected, and which more than compensates us for any annoyances we have experienced. Further, it illustrates the now familiar truth, that wherever capital is abundant there opportunity will give power. The Suez Canal was to ruin our Indian trade, and it has, perhaps, doubled it, because we had money where with to build special ships and to make the most of a new opening. We see the same thing in other matters. Great American schemes are floated with English capital. It is the great wealth of this country which enables us to build and maintain a costly fleet, and to waste money in experiments that will change the whole character of naval warfare. Yet, with her magnificent sea-board, the United States ought to excel us in shipbuilding, and be a strong competitor for the trade of the world. She has timber handy enough, and her iron-trade has scarcely suffered as much as ours has done from the fluctuations of the coal and the labour markets.

There are other consequences not to be overlooked. The United States is just as bad off for ships in her fighting as in her merchant Navy. She is rapidly sinking from a first rate into a third rate Naval Power, and with little hope of recovery. The few steamships she has resolved to build will not do no more than repair the inroads decay is making in her existing fleet, and there is no apparent desire to enter into equal competition with European Powers. Buncombe is beginning to decline, and when it does not decline to look ridiculous. Mighty efforts might accomplish wonders, but naval monsters are not built by magic, and sea men cannot be extemporised, like spread eagle orations and celebration speeches. The amount of special training in America for the fighting Navy is very small, and thus the importance of a good merchant Navy to fall back upon is more manifest. But it does not exist, even on paper. Coasting seamen abound, but they are utterly unfit for anything better than coast defence, and they require long training to make them efficient for such limited services. A purely defensive war is not very likely, and would be almost as fatal as the last one, under conditions which are infinitely worse to begin with. As far as our vision enables us to penetrate, the United States would not be engaged in any war except as an ally of some European Power—say Russia. If the bulk of the European trade were in the hands of American shipowners they would have an enormous advantage over any single Power with which they might be at war. They would at once be able to cripple his trade, whilst they would have a reserve of seamen who might be of use in active warfare for such small vessels as could be rapidly built. But, on the other hand, there would be less room for serious mischief by hostile cruisers, who might re-

peat the experience of the Southern fleet. Foreign vessels would either stop at home, or run the risk of detention and capture by small American monitors. The more heavily armed war ships of the enemy would also have a double duty to perform to protect the commerce of their own nation, and to assail the ports of the United States, or of the ally in Europe. But these duties would be rendered easy by the immense reserve of merchant seamen Great Britain could draw upon, were she so disposed, and were she the enemy, for the time being, of Russia and the United States. The joint absence or deficiency, both of a good fleet and a good merchant Navy, is thus an indirect guarantee of the Pacific disposition of the United States. She declines the European naval competition. She submits, with a good grace, to the exigencies of war. She deliberately allows herself to be distanced. She surrenders the only power which would enable her to maintain a leading part in any European struggle—a good fleet, and with no near or remote prospect of anything like recuperative energy.

These facts have a special lesson for this country. They teach us the importance of holding what we have gained, and holding it with intelligence and determination. The prosperity of our merchant trade has made us careless both of the ships we send to sea and of the men who control them. Brisk business has induced reckless speculation, and pressing demands have led to the engagement of seamen of an inferior class. Our first duty is to weed out all rotten vessels, which are of no use for effective trade, and only encourage gambling, in which underwriters suffer and good men are lost. Our second is not less important. We must improve the condition of the merchant seamen, or our enormous shipping trade will be a loss to us, so far as effective seamen and a possible war reserve are concerned. Odds and ends of all nationalities give no character to a merchant navy, if they enable ship owners to pocket a little more profit, and to be less anxious as to the fate of the crews that are sent out in their vessels. The Royal Commissioners incidentally suggest the advisability of training-ships, similar to those found to be of such powerful service in the Royal Navy. The suggestion deserves serious consideration. There are endless difficulties in the way, but they may be overcome by prudent provision and a little thoughtful preparation. We need not insist upon the enormous fighting power it would add to our strength in the event of a maritime war. It would render us simply irresistible. Moreover, it is in this direction that we must honestly seek to develop our resources, not only to retain our position, but to make it supreme beyond all question. Shipowners could hardly object to such contingencies, when they would derive all the benefits of better men and more thorough training from the early process of what would never be more than an indirect way of feeding the Navy. But the risk of death at sea must be diminished before we can hope to obtain a better class of merchant seamen, or undertake to render national assistance to their momentary instruction.—*Broad Arrow.*

A Carlist despatch from Tolosa, reports that Brigadier General Peruela by storm. He totally defeated ten battalions under Gen. Llorones, with heavy loss to the latter.

New York is doing all honor to the Lord Mayor of Dublin and the Irish team, which he has accompanied,