

## BEWARE OF FRENCH BRANDY.

Certain statements were made a day or two since, before the learned members of the Royal Institute of Public Health, assembled in congress at Blackpool. The subject under discussion was brandy, and from the conclusions arrived at by Sir Charles Cameron and Prof. William Smith, it appeared that, as a factor in the production of French cognac, the grape is almost played out. Indeed, it was asserted that it can be dispensed with altogether, for, whereas the fertility of the vineyards is decreasing, the manufacture of eau de vie steadily grows. Corn and potatoes, it was added, "with an admixture of chemicals," take the place of grapes, and other details were thoughtfully supplied of a kind calculated to make cognac drinkers "sit up." Prof. Smith added some instructive statistics, from which it seemed that previous to the outbreak of phylloxera among French vines in 1876, more than 12,000,000 hectoliters of wine—a hectoliter being a little over twenty-two gallons—were annually produced, while last year the production dropped to below 1,000,000. Yet, although at the earlier period less than 2,500,000 hectoliters of cognac were produced, of which something under 2,000,000 found their way to England, at the later period, with one-thirteenth the output of wine, over two and one-third millions of French brandy were exported to this country. And it is distressing beyond words to learn that the so-called "fin champagne," for which one frequently pays a shilling and upward per glass in the hope of obtaining a superior post-prandial liqueur, is by no means always to be considered above suspicion. "Then of what," it will be asked, "is the brandy that France sends to us, composed?" The answer is easily supplied. "A great deal of the brandy that comes from France," declared an expert, "is distilled from corn, whereby it loses its medicinal quality, and very often becomes actually injurious to those who drink it." Asked as to the other ingredients used in the manufacture of alleged brandy, he mentioned, as among the most common, apples and pears, beetroot, molasses, and wine lees (dregs), the latter probably being the least illegitimate of these extraneous elements. In this connection, I was able to obtain some very interesting figures showing the production of alcohol in France in the year ended September 30th, 1898. They are as follows:

	Hectoliters.
Alcohol made from wine (real brandy) .....	40,267
Alcohol made from corn .....	613,471
Alcohol made from molasses ....	721,781
Alcohol made from beetroot .....	823,558
Alcohol made from apples and pears .....	11,594
Alcohol made from wine lees ....	118,245
Alcohol made from other materials .....	396

What is quite plain, and peculiarly significant, is the fact that whereas, as shown above, the alcohol produced in France from wine in that period amounted to no more than 40,267 hectoliters, there were exported to England alone during it no less than 83,983 hectoliters of brandy, so-called, or more than double the quantity of the real article produced. Other countries, it may be noted, took 198,340 hectoliters, while France herself consumed 2,199,818. Of course, it is open to the French manufacturers to say—and that, indeed, would probably be their contention—that much of the cognac they ship to this country and others, has been with them in bond for years, and, although such a statement would be difficult to disprove, it is certainly a fact that English importers find it no easy matter to obtain "samples" of genuine old

brandies from the other side of the channel.

The plain truth, of course, is that the phylloxera scourge that broke out somewhere about the year 1876, played ducks and drakes with the French vines, and, as connoisseurs know well enough, nothing like a revival in flavor of brandy occurred till as recently as 1893. But the recovery has never been anything more than a partial one, and nothing could more effectually prove this than the fact that whereas the vines under cultivation in the Charente districts—where the real cognac comes from—in the year immediately preceding the outbreak of the pest, amounted to 285,150 hectares—a hectare is about two and a half English acres—the same districts last year only boasted 56,097, that yielded any production. In other words, the figures have been reduced to one-fifth.

## BRITISH SHIP-BUILDING.

Returns compiled by Lloyd's Register of Shipping for the third quarter of the year show that on October 1st, there were under construction in the United Kingdom a total of 558 merchant vessels, of 1,347,549 gross tons. This is a considerable falling off from the showing on the corresponding date in 1898, when 598 vessels of 1,364,250 tons, were building. Of the 558 vessels now under way, but twenty-five are sail vessels. Of the total tonnage, but two vessels, aggregating 3,350 tons, are building for the United States. It is notable that sixteen of the vessels are of 10,000 tons burden or above. There are under construction in the United Kingdom eighty-two war vessels of 412,980 tons. Of this number fourteen vessels of 125,920 tons are building at the royal dock yards, and sixty-eight vessels of 287,060 tons at private yards.

## FLOURS COMPARED.

The Sydney, N.S.W., Evening News of September 8th, says:

"Some of the Australian wheat growers fail to understand how it is that Ogilvie's Manitoba flour is worth six shillings per barrel more than the best South Australian. The South Australian farmers and millers were for many years averse to admit the inferiority of their product, and some of the Adelaide trade will not admit it even to-day. A section of the South Australian press from time to time endeavor to maintain that Adelaide consignments should realize as high a figure in Sydney and Queensland ports as the far-famed Canadian. It will be of interest to the New South Wales farmers to publish the results of some enquiries instituted by an Evening News reporter, as to the reasons for the disparity in prices. It has been ascertained from comparative tests made by competent bakers in New South Wales that a barrel of flour ground from wheat grown in Victoria, Tasmania, or South Australia will only make 258 lbs. of bread, whereas a barrel of Manitoba flour (Ogilvie's Hungarian), will make 298 lbs., an increase of 40 lbs., equal to 15½ per cent.

This is directly due to the much greater strength of the imported article; or, in other words, the Manitoba flour has to that extent a larger power of absorption of water, although, of course, due allowance will be made for evaporation during and after baking. Another important advantage with the Manitoba is that it not only contains a larger percentage of gluten, but also that the quality of the gluten surpasses that of the wheats grown in Australasia. In some of the colder districts in New South Wales, especially around Bathurst and Goulburn, some experiments were made with Mani-

toba seed, and the first crop of wheat was found to be pretty close to the Canadian standard; but second and subsequent crops showed serious deterioration from original samples. No set rule can be formulated for our bakers as to precise quantities for mixing, as the proportion depends on the baker's own wants as to the quality of bread he produces. Tasmanian flour, being white and soft, requires a larger percentage of Manitoba than does the South Australian or New South Wales. The New Zealand flour, now being sent in such large quantity (in grain bulk), to London, requires to be freely intermixed with the hard product from Canada, in order to produce a loaf up to the standard."

## RAIL AND WATER CARRIAGE.

It is announced that the Trunk line railways have this season, for the first time in the history of the grain trade, taken more grain out of Chicago—bound east for the seaboard, of course—than the lake vessels. The gain for the railroads has been mainly in oats. The figures given to date are 75,240,468 bushels of grain for the vessels, as compared with 107,827,706 bushels by rail. For the same period in 1898, lake vessels were credited with 158,263,526 bushels, against 103,505,468 bushels by rail. Probably the figures are all right. If they are, they simply mean that the 3½-cent lake rate on corn from Chicago to Buffalo, which has prevailed for a long time past, has caused the business to go to the railroads. But this is not a matter of special significance, as regards competition between the vessels and the railroads. Up to a few days ago, there were not enough vessels to be had, even at the 3½-cent rate. The railroad harvest is due entirely to the demand for ships in other lines. When the Chicago-Buffalo rate returns, some time in the future, to a cent a bushel, modern ships of the 6,000-ton kind will carry the grain at that figure and make money on it, but this the railroads cannot do.—Marine Review.

## WHITES IN SOUTH AFRICA.

According to an article in the Contemporary Review for October, the white population of all South Africa is 820,000. This population, according to the same authority, is divided between Boers and British, as follows:

	Boers.	English.
Cape Colony, with Bechuanaland .....	265,000	194,800
Basutoland .....	300	350
Orange Free State ....	78,100	15,600
Natal and Zululand ....	6,500	45,500
Transvaal .....	80,000	123,650
Rhodesia .....	1,500	8,500

Totals ..... 431,600 386,400  
In this calculation, those of French Huguenot descent are counted as Boers, and with the English are counted all the other white population that is not Boer. If, as now seems certain, the Boers in the British possessions remain loyal, there ought not to be much trouble in dealing with the rest.

—During the coming winter, the receipts of Cape Breton coal promises to be heavy. The Dominion Coal Co. has chartered steamers "Turret Age," "Turret Bell," "Ayona," "Oscar II," and "Britannic," which, with their own boats, the "Cape Breton," "Louisburg," and "Cacouna," will give them a fleet of eight vessels. Part of the fleet will run from Louisburg to Portland, and the others to Boston.