

sugar refineries here a few years ago; there are now only two. Besides the loaf-sugar branch the whole of the refined sugar trade of this country is indirectly affected by this bounty, and directly by having foreign markets closed against it, whilst foreign-made sugars are imported free; and it must be remembered this is no unimportant trade, for the raw sugar that passed through our refineries in a year was valued at from 15 to 20 millions sterling not long ago.

But it may be urged that, as to the sugar trade, and still more as to smaller trades, we can afford to let them perish without any great harm being done to the general prosperity of the country. But what of the iron and hardware trade? How should we be able to stand vast populations like those of Birmingham and Sheffield being thrown on our poor rates like the Coventry weavers were? The iron trade in France is protected by a bounty on exportation very similar to that on sugar. The result of this is that the imports of iron into France are now smaller than they were twenty-five years ago, for the duty of 2*l.* 8*s.* a ton is decidedly more prohibitory in 1877 than that of 9*s.* a ton was in 1852. In 1874 the value of cutlery exported from France was 114,494*l.*, while that imported was only 12,819*l.*, and even in Birmingham itself French competition is beginning to be much felt.

But it is in Belgium we have the most dangerous competition, for the Belgians have already got the monopoly of many sorts of wrought iron. Not five per cent. of the rolled joints, now so much used in buildings, are of English make. As a rule Belgian iron of all sorts can be delivered in London about 2*s.* a ton cheaper than Staffordshire iron. This is partly to be accounted for by the fact that freight by sea from Antwerp or Brussels to London is only 6*s.* a ton, whereas by rail from Staffordshire to London the cost would be 15*s.*, and also because the Belgian Government have the control of their own railways, and consider it good policy to assist in every way the export trade of the country. Besides all this it must be admitted that the Belgians do excel us in some sorts of iron manufacture, but if that is so in some few sorts, there are many others in which we excel them, and if we continue to be debarred from finding a market abroad for our iron, while we admit theirs here free, it must ultimately ruin our iron trade, and the effects of such a disaster are frightful to think of.

It would really be difficult to point to a trade not affected by our present system, and it would be the greatest folly to wait until each trade is ruined separately before we interfere. Even in such a national trade as cloth the small end of the wedge has been inserted, and French houses that used to only send over a traveller occasionally, now have large warehouses in London. Even in cotton manufactures we have had alarming indications of ruinous American competition, and the cotton trade would have suffered more had it not been especially taken care of in the French Treaty of 1860, where, as the late Lord Derby truly said, 'very good care has been taken of the cotton manufactures; but what is the case with linens? what is the case with silks?' The time is coming when cloth and cotton will be affected as much as other trades. Are we prepared to have the populations of Bradford and Manchester thrown on the poor rates also?

But leaving the question of injury to these trades, which no person who inquires into the subject can deny, let us see whether the mere consumer really gains as he is supposed to do by unrestricted imports. No doubt he does gain for the time being, but the temporary advantage will be dearly bought at the cost of the ruin of his home manufactures, for then he will be at the mercy of foreigners, and may by-and-by have to pay very dearly for his folly. The loaf-sugar trade has been ruined. Sugar for a time was cheap. Then came a failure in the French beet-root crop, sugar went up in price, and the French, who now have a monopoly, will take very good care it never goes back to its former price.

It must be remembered that this is not only a

question affecting the French Treaty: America treats us far worse than France does. None of our manufactures are taxed less than 20 per cent. there, and in some the tariff goes nearly to 100 per cent. To take a single instance: the duty on carpets is 50 per cent. for Axminster, and over 60 per cent. for Wilton. Is it fair to import their manufactures here free? If there were the slightest chance of shaming them into a different policy, there might be some reason for continuing this one-sided traffic, but there is not; they will never concede us better terms, unless we have something to offer them in exchange. They must be made to see that we are determined to obtain reciprocity even at the cost of a return to import duties. Let us hope that future Chancellors of the Exchequer will have the strength of mind that Sir Stafford Northcote does not give them credit for, and be able to remove such duties when they have secured their object. Their temporary imposition cannot be accused of being a 'war of tariffs'. We should under no circumstances increase the tax on French wines in retaliation for their taxing our manufactures, but we should put a small tax on their manufactures, sufficient to give them an inducement to lower their tariff on our removing it.

Admitting that unrestricted trade would be the greatest boon the world could attain, our present system is only carrying us further away from it every year. We have jumped too far and must retrace our steps. To attain real free trade you must go through a stage we have missed, that of—*Reciprocity*.

At present our policy is not even consistent. We admit luxuries—such as silks, kid gloves, watches, &c.—free, but we heavily tax tea and coffee, which are almost necessities of life to the poor. By the abolition of many other import duties we have not only deprived ourselves of a fair source of revenue, but are causing the ruin of our manufacturing trades. The hasty removal of those duties, though it may have benefited the consumer for the present, will ultimately be injurious to him, and must end in increase of direct taxation, and in wide-spread distress among the working classes.

C. HALFORD THOMPSON.

FIRE RECORD.

Kingston, April 1.—Bowden's Machinery Hall, damaged. Loss \$150; covered by insurance; cause, incendiarism.

Toronto, April 1.—Building owned by a Mrs. Ellwood, and occupied as a dry goods store and dwelling by Mrs. Brock, damaged. Loss on building \$100, on contents \$650.

Yarker, March 30.—Store owned by Henry Dear, and occupied by Buckles and Drury, tin-smiths, damaged. Loss on building covered by insurance.

Gaspé Basin, March 30.—A new hotel, belonging to Geo. Stracker, with its contents destroyed.

Kingston, March 31.—Saddlery shop belonging to Mr. Roy, destroyed. Insurance, Royal, \$2,500.

Belleville, April 2.—Shed in rear of Hyman's fur store destroyed and stable adjoining damaged. Loss covered by insurance.

Rochesterville, March 28.—Brewery belonging to Wm. Rochester destroyed. Loss \$2,000; insurance \$1,200.

Hull, March 28.—Residence of D. Gow destroyed. Loss \$800.

East Templeton, March 28.—Stables and two horses belonging to Mr. Strathrand destroyed.

Mount Forest, March 29.—Building owned by Jas. Scott, occupied by Jno. Knowles as a furniture store; and building owned by J. McMullen and occupied by J. Sheppard as a general store, destroyed. A greater part of the contents were saved but were damaged by removal. Insurance.—Sheppard, in the Mercantile, \$2,000; McMullen, in the Royal, \$1,000; Knowles, in the Western and Waterloo Mutual, \$400.

Owen Sound, March 29.—Steamer "Silver-spray," which was being fitted up to take her former route, totally destroyed. Insurance, \$5,000.

Montreal, March 30.—Store of Lavigne & Renaud, and residence of Mr. Lavigne, considerably damaged. Insured.

Lake Opinon, March 29.—Saw and shingle mills with all the machinery, belonging to Poole Bros., destroyed. Loss 3,000; no insurance.

Floranceville, N. B., March 31.—House owned and occupied by John Hamilton destroyed.

Dartmouth, March 30.—Stable owned by Edward Tufts destroyed.

Montreal, March 30.—Premises occupied as a hat factory by Jos. Cedrus damaged. Loss light.

Montreal, March 30.—Hay and grain loft, the contents of which belonged to J. Norman, destroyed.

St. David, Dauberivierre, March 30.—Farm building, and live stock belonging to Mr. Carrier destroyed.

Correspondence.

THE SUGAR DUTIES.

To the Editor of the *Journal of Commerce*.

SIR,—My attention has just been directed to an article on the sugar duties in your issue of the 8th instant. Permit me to make a few remarks on it.

1. "The Canadian sugar duties have operated to prevent the importation of grocery Sugars."

This is a mistake. The household consumer prefers "refined." The "grocery sugar" referred to by the writer is the "vacuum pan" sugars which are now largely exported from the sugar colonies. It cannot be brought here to compete with the "yellow refined," the greater part of which is subject to 1*c.* per lb. specific duty, whereas much of the "vacuum pan" sugar from the sugar colonies would not pay more than 3*c.*

These sugars are injured by the voyage, their bloom being destroyed, and the greater part of them are now used by the refiners in Great Britain.

This is the class of sugar which is often made purposely of a very low colour, or is artificially coloured in order to be introduced into the United States at a low rate of duty, for refining.

2. "Now it must be borne in mind that when the sugar duties were adjusted in 1868 the intention of the Government was to encourage the industry in question, etc."

The writer seems to assume that the difference between 3*c.* charged on sugar under No. 9 and 1*c.* on all sugars above that standard was "an encouragement" to the refining industry. The British Tariff never made a difference of less than 1 to 1½ between the lowest and highest specific duty on sugar. That was intended to be a "free trade" tariff, but here a difference of 1 to 1½ is supposed to encourage "the industry in question."

The writer overlooks the fact that a pound of sugar "under No. 9" cannot by any process be converted into a pound of refined sugar.

The difference in the specific duty is not protection.

The writer further seems to assume that the refiners used only sugar paying 3*c.* specific duty, whereas the greater part of the sugar they used paid the higher rate; and when they produced stove-dried sugar in Canada, by far the larger part of the sugar they consumed must have paid the higher rate.

3. "It is admitted that the United States have abandoned their excessive bounties, etc."

In calculating a drawback the maximum of refined sugar that can be extracted from the raw sugar should govern the result. If the drawback be more you make it an object for refiners to work specially for export in order to get an undue advantage of the revenue.

In establishing duties a reasonable margin may be allowed, even from a free trade point of view, to the refiner, who has to regulate his production according to the demands of his customers.

The United States Congress has now a Tariff