

British Bread Supply.

Our contemporary, the *Engineer*, has published an article (reproduced in this issue) on the connection between our naval strength and the security of our food supply. This is a text on which we have preached, to deaf ears it must be confessed, at all times during the past eight years, whence it is the more gratifying to find that our conclusions are accepted by this authority. That cheap bread is our backbone as a great manufacturing nation is the first article of the British commercial creed; under the present conditions we are (*pace* Mr. Howard Vincent) in full command of that commodity, wherefore the nation seems to have made up its mind that this blissful state of affairs must in the nature of things last as long as the British Isles. As is well said by the *Engineer*, we are "quite content to let the morrow take thought for itself." Nor can any exception be offered to the further proposition, "that this crass satisfaction has its origin . . . in pure ignorance, and this ignorance is very largely due to the circumstance that neither those who speak in public, nor those who write for and control the press of this country, pay one-tenth of the attention to the subject that it really deserves." For our part we should say that, considering the admirable organization of the great daily papers of London, and their boundless facilities for obtaining correct information on topics of public interest, and for placing that information before their readers in a form easy of assimilation, their attitude of supine indifference on Great Britain's food supply is little short of a crime. For what is the issue involved? Nothing less than the existence of the greatest, and in many respects the most beneficent empire, that the world has ever known. If this appear a large proposition it will not require long periods to prove it to the hilt. The British Isles depend mainly on cheap bread, and under existing conditions, that bread can only be forthcoming so long as peace reigns on the ocean. Let us fall out with a great naval power, such as France, or even Russia, and where will then be the cheap freights on which our cheap loaf depends? Mr. South Taylor, in discussing Captain Warren's memorable lecture at the London Chamber of Commerce some four years ago, freely admitted that the very first consequence of our engaging in hostilities with any power possessing anything like a navy would be to trouble the price of bread. And if that happened in the green tree, what would take place in the dry? The floating fortresses that are our pride are, in one sense, delicate structures, of which the numbers might be sadly diminished by the contingencies of six months naval warfare. Is our fire tough enough to bear, after half a century of comparative luxury, the hardships, and perhaps ten times the hardships that sorely tried our robust grandfathers? They at least grew their own bread, if at times they had to pay a famine price for it; they raised their own beasts; they knew nothing of the thousand little comforts brought over the sea, which constant enjoyment has made us regard as necessities. The latest political doctrine seems to be that a well ordered state should supply its working population with fair wages, decent homes, and an eight hours day, but what would be the temper of our great cities should beleaguered Britain be suddenly bereft of these good things? If these contingencies appear like the nightmare, let us take back our recollection to the month of June 1870. Any man who had ventured to number the days of what was believed to be the greatest military empire of the world, would have been derided as a visionary. Two months elapsed, and at Sedan that empire lay in the dust. Surely history has no meaning if it does not teach that the greatest earthly powers may be broken by the fortune of war, and that the greater the power the greater and the more ir-retrievable the ruin.

The practical question is what is to be done while we have yet fine weather. Our contemporary endorses our proposal for national gran-

aries, though it does not make use of that term, nor, in our opinion, does it go far enough in this direction. It observes that: "There does not appear to be any insurmountable obstacle to the storing in this country of as much grain and flour as would give us time to look around us, in case war broke out—say, sufficient for a couple of months' demand. These stocks would, of course, be in addition to those normally in the country, and would represent so much capital lying idle. The whole operation might be carried out in a way that would scarcely disturb the market in any way." The stock suggested appears to us insufficient. Situated as we are, at least six months' provision of breadstuffs would be indispensable, while a clear year's stock would be still better. That would place the nation in security against almost any contingency, for then, if necessary, every acre of corn-bearing land in Great Britain might be ploughed and sown. On the other hand we are not prepared to say that such operations, even on the minor scale contemplated by the *Engineer*, could be carried out without any disturbance to the market; but what amount of commercial inconvenience should be allowed to weigh against our existence as a great nation; for that, and nothing else is at stake. For the rest, no time could be more favorable to such an operation than the present, when the world's granaries are positively groaning with stocks.

The second remedy proposed by our contemporary is a large reinforcement of our naval power, and that again appears highly expedient. The proposition that what Captain Sommes did in the American Civil War with one ship could be repeated in a European conflict with a hundred vessels is hard to contradict. It may freely be granted that prowling cruisers like the *Alabama* could not work their full measure of destruction until our navy had been virtually annihilated; but what the strong navy school leave out of sight is the fact that every single capture by such marauding birds of prey would appreciably raise freights. Now high freights must mean dear food for this country, while very high sea carriage would simply spell famine prices. That any navy could keep our ocean highways perfectly secure we do not believe, but a powerful fleet—that is, a fleet much stronger than we can now boast—might do much, while that, combined with national granaries, stocked with six to twelve months' supplies, should place us in reasonable security. The cost of such measure, considerable as it must be, is but the due insurance of our national existence.—London *Miller*.

Toronto Dry Goods Trade.

The wholesale dry goods houses have been very busy this week. The break in the weather promising an early spring has brought a large number of buyers to the city, and they have been liberal purchasers. The advent of another cold snap may cause a temporary slackness, but if the word of the weather prophets giving their experience of past seasons similar to the present we are promised a fine early spring. All seasonable lines have received attention, but a specially good business is being done in carpets, curtains and general house furnishings preparatory to the numerous moving, marriages, etc., in the month of May. The number of houses in this line are limited, though there has been an increase in recent years. It is necessary to carry a large stock to make. Silks seem to be stiffening. All the manufacturers are talking higher prices. One broker had a cable from his house instructing him to advance the taffeta and silk gloves 1s per dozen.

Dress linings continue very scarce, and the difficulty dealers find in supplying the demand is attracting special attention to this feature in the dry goods situation. They are not made by any but the Montreal Cotton Mills Company

the syndicate having decided not to manufacture them. The capacity of their mill at Valleyfield has been taxed to its utmost, but, as is generally known, it has failed to keep up with the consumption. The directors have been rather slow in recognizing this fact, and it was not until quite recently that they decided to increase the capacity one half by the erection of an addition to their already large works. This will not be completed for a year or so. In the mean time the company have turned as many of the machines as possible on linings, and it is hoped that they will be able to keep the market fairly well supplied. At least one coast factory has had to shut down for lack of material, and in another instance a representative of the firm has gone to the States to make purchases.

Payments so far this month have been rather better than in February, and a further improvement is expected as soon as the roads improve. Toronto jobbers are not anticipating much better results from Manitoba, the Territories and British Columbia, and it is felt that many of the retailers there will have to be carried until the next crop. It is felt that the time has come when the farmers in those provinces should devote more attention to mixed farming, so that they may have a source of income all the year round. In Ontario, for instance, the month of May is one of the best for cash receipts, due to the money coming in from sales of eggs, butter, milk and young animals.—*Empire*.

Growth of the Glass Industry.

The Boston *Commercial Bulletin*, in a review of the growth of the glass industry in the United States, says. The American glass industry is comparatively young. Shortly after the civil war the window glass manufacture started, and has been increasing rapidly ever since. The growth of plate glass production has been even more astounding. Not more than a dozen years ago we imported almost our total consumption from Europe, but now we do not import anything in that line except mirror plates, and that business will probably cease in a few years. When our manufacturers take more care in the mixture they use in making this glass and produce a whiter and purer material and give it the necessary finish, foreign importation will stop. There is no doubt about our manufacturers being able to do this.

As for plate glass for ordinary purposes which eight or ten years ago was imported to the extent of about 86,000,000 square feet per year, American is of such quality and can be sold comparatively so low that it has entire possession of the market. Statistics best show this wonderful growth. Eight or ten years ago the consumption of plate glass was the amount imported, that is about 86,000,000 square feet. This year the factories of this country will turn out about 15,000,000 square feet. This branch of the business is cutting heavily into the common window glass trade.

The growth of the common window glass industry has like the plate glass industry been phenomenal, yet it has not reached that point where the foreign product is excluded. Large amounts are imported yearly along our Atlantic seaboard, despite the fact that there is a heavy duty on imported glass. These importations are possible because of the fact that freight rates from Europe are so low and New England is such a distance by rail from the domestic glass factories, which are in the natural glass belt.

The Toronto *World* says: The manufacturers of barbed wire have decided to reduce prices in Ontario and Quebec, the reduction to be equivalent to one-fourth of a cent per pound. The manufacturers met some time ago and resolved to confine the reduction to a certain portion of Ontario, but as this decision caused considerable dissatisfaction, it has now been decided to extend the cut to the whole of the two provinces named.