

THE QUEBEC ELEVATOR.

Commenting upon a somewhat slurring remark by a Western paper to the effect that the Government is guaranteeing interest on \$200,000 for many years to build a 1,000,000-bushel elevator at Quebec, while the C.P.R. has already an elevator at that city, which is hardly ever used, the Quebec Chronicle says that we in the West do not understand the situation: "The fact that the C.P.R. has a small elevator at Quebec can have no significance as against a project which is intended to handle a new trade brought here by another company. Everybody who has studied the transportation problem is calling out for better facilities for handling grain, because unless they are promptly provided the St. Lawrence route will inevitably become congested. There can be no question as to the necessity, if Canada is to compete for the grain trade, of ample facilities at this port. Here we have a deep water harbor freely accessible to the largest class of ocean vessels, and open to navigation nearly the whole year round. No one who intelligently examines the situation can fail to see that it is vital to the trade of this country to have the most adequate facilities at Quebec."

STORY OF ACETYLENE GAS.

An interesting bit of history recently given in Electricity concerning acetylene gas shows the remarkable genesis of that peculiar article. It was discovered, as is well known, some years ago, by Thos. L. Willson, of St. Thomas, Ontario, and this was while smelting for metallurgical purposes. From time to time he used a great deal of rock salt in his furnace stock, and also limestone as a flux; whenever these two were fused together, the slag produced by the intense electrical heat included a dirty grayish substance, wholly unlike anything he had ever seen. He simply dumped this stuff into the stream near his furnace. One day, when the pile of slag was so large that it top rose above the surface of the water, and a minute or two after dropping the slag as usual into the stream—some of it going under and some remaining above the water in a red-hot state—the sizzling and steaming was followed by a bright burst of flame. The next time rock salt and limestone were used the blaze again appeared over the slag after it had been cast into the river, and, it being at night, he was much struck with the brilliant white light, so that, on again having a batch of the queer grayish residue to dispose of, he did not waste it, but saved and poured over it some water for experiment. To Mr. Willson's surprise there was not any flame, but after puzzling a while over this feature he held a lighted match over the pile, when instantly there was a white, glowing flame.

MATTERS IN THE UNITED STATES.

The weekly letter of Henry Clews & Co., New York, says:

"We have now reached the end of the fiscal year of the United States, and the official returns enable us to make a comparison between the two most remarkable years in the foreign trade of the country. Taken as a whole, the trade of last year exceeded that of the year preceding—the total of imports and exports combined being \$1,924,000,000 for 1898—99, and \$1,847,000,000 for 1897—98, showing an increase of \$77,000,000. The increase, however, has been entirely upon the imports which exhibit a gain of \$81,000,000, while the exports have declined \$4,000,000. The increase in the imports deserves attention.

About three-fourths of that gain has arisen during the second half of the year; which shows that it has been almost entirely the consequence of the great revival of business which set in with the opening of 1899. This expansion in the imports, however, can hardly be regarded as an indication of a tendency to over-trading, whether comparison be made with the importations of previous years, or with the volume of the exports. Last year's imports fell \$82,700,000 below those of 1895—96, \$67,700,000 below those of 1896—97, and \$34,900,000 below those of 1894—95. The following comparison of merchandise imports with the merchandise exports for each of the last six fiscal years will show the extreme moderation of last year's importations, when measured by the volume of exports:

	Imports.	Exports.
1898—99	\$697,000,000	\$1,227,400,000
1897—98	616,000,000	1,231,500,000
1896—97	764,700,000	1,051,000,000
1895—96	779,700,000	882,600,000
1894—95	731,900,000	807,500,000
1893—94	655,000,000	892,100,000

"It will thus be seen that although the excess of exports over imports was last year less by \$85,100,000 than for 1897—98, yet it is fully double the average surplus of the four preceding years, and in fact has never been approached in any previous period of our history. It is not easy to put an exact value upon this extraordinary condition of the trade balance as an indication of what may be the future proportion as between imports and exports.

As to our exports of manufactured goods, it is difficult to forecast how they may compare with the largely increased movement of the last two years. It is certain, from the orders already received from foreign sources for railroad supplies, that our shipments of that class of products will very largely surpass all precedents. But it is far less certain what will be the movements in other kinds of manufactures. A large proportion of the industries have passed under the new system of consolidation; what is to be the effect of that change upon exports remains to be demonstrated by experience.

So far as respects the future of the import trade—if the large increase of the past year has been due to the renewed prosperity of the country, it seems reasonable to assume that that gain will be maintained for so long as the recovered prosperity is maintained. Perhaps the trade of the last six months may afford some indication of the direction the foreign balance may be expected to take during the new fiscal year. It is therefore of interest to note that while, for the second half of 1897—98, the excess of exports over imports was \$305,500,000, the surplus for the same portion of the year just closed was only \$195,100,000—a decrease at the rate of \$221,000,000 per year.

"In order to get a true conception of the balance of our trade operations with other countries, it is necessary to add the specie movement to the merchandise account; thus:

Imports	1898—99.	1897—98.
Merchandise ..	\$697,077,000	\$616,049,000
Gold	88,954,000	120,391,000
Silver	30,696,000	30,927,000
Total	\$816,727,000	\$767,367,000
Increase		\$59,360,000
Exports.		
Merchandise.	\$1,227,443,000	\$1,231,482,000
Gold	37,522,000	15,406,000
Silver	56,319,000	55,105,000
Total	\$1,321,284,000	\$1,301,993,000
Increase		\$19,291,000
Surplus	\$504,557,000	\$534,626,000

"These figures show that, combining the merchandise and specie accounts, the excess of exports was, for last year, \$504,

557,000, and for 1897—98, \$534,626,000; and for the two years together, \$1,039,183,000. Against this must be set off a net debtor balance, consisting of interest payments, travellers' credits, ocean freights, etc., etc., which it seems to be generally conceded may be fairly estimated at about \$175,000,000 per year. Making a deduction of \$350,000,000, we have \$689,183,000 remaining to creditor account on the two years' operations. As we have probably no very important amount of floating funds now to our credit in the hands of European borrowers, it appears probable that this balance, less the \$20,000,000, indemnity paid to Spain, approximately represents the net amount of American securities sent home from Europe within the two last fiscal years."

PATENT OFFICE RECORDS.

The Commissioner of Patents, of the United States, has submitted his annual report for the fiscal year just closed. It shows that during the year there were received 35,352 applications for patents, 2,292 for design patents, 91 for re-issue patents, 1,861 for registration of prints, and 1,610 for caveats, making a grand total of 41,390 applications of all kinds. There were 25,404 patents granted and trade marks, labels and prints registered, all but less than 2,000 of these being patents. The number of expired patents was 16,670. The surplus or the amount of receipts over expenditures was \$60,891. On the first of July there were 2,989 applications awaiting final action by the Department.

VALUE OF DEEP-SEA FISHERIES

The average value of the product of agricultural lands per acre or square mile is often computed, but probably few of us have seen similar computations relating to the sea. Professor Heusens, writing in the German geographical periodical, Globus, has figured out an average of this sort for the North sea, which is well-known to be one of the world's great sources of value derived from fisheries. He says the value of the fish caught in the North sea yearly by the countries bordering it is about \$41,000,000. The yearly catch is never known to be less than \$37,500,000 nor more than \$45,000,000. The North sea, including the Skager Rak or gulf between the southern part of Norway and Sweden, has an area of 225,884 square miles, and, therefore, the average value of the North sea fisheries each year is \$18.15 for every square mile of the sea. England and Scotland take the lion's share of the wealth of these waters, the annual value of the English fisheries being about \$21,250,000; Scotland, \$6,650,000; Holland, \$4,750,000; France, \$3,120,000; Germany, \$2,500,000; Norway, \$950,000; Belgium, \$900,000; Denmark, \$400,000.

—According to the bureau of statistics the Island of Jamaica has 185 miles of railway, and 937 miles of telegraph. The Island of Barbadoes has 24 miles of railway, 470 miles of wagon road, 24 miles of telegraph line, 35 miles of police telegraph line, and 600 miles of private telephone line. Barbadoes is a station of the West Indian & Panama Telegraph Co., the distance from New York being 1,820 miles, from Porto Rico 449 miles, and from Liverpool 3,705 miles.

—"Sir," began the book canvasser. "I have a little work here—" "Sorry," interrupted the busy man, "but I have a great deal of work here. Good morning!"—Chicago News.