

SEEKING FOREIGN TRADE.

Up to a certain point in the industrial development of the United States, says the Iron Age, there was no thought of the possibility of overproduction; and this idea applies with equal force to Canadian industries. There was, says our contemporary, always room for more factories in the pioneer days, because the demand for their products grew both with the increase of population and with the improvements in the standard of living. This is still true to a certain extent, but the factory capacity in many lines has been developed beyond the needs of the home market, even after having displaced an important share of the former import trade. And yet the tendency of productive capacity is to increase. A concern doing a profitable manufacturing business is tempted to add to its plant whenever larger orders come in, while people on the outside, seeking fields for investment, naturally select one in which others have won success, without always considering how much it may be crowded. Hence the present need for wider markets than our own country offers—in some lines to tide over those seasons when for any reason the home demand falls off, and in some others because the capacity, both of machinery and of highly specialized workers, is greater at all times than is needed for the home trade. Otherwise these facilities must become idle.

The attention of the world has been attracted lately to some important American exports of railway, bridge and ship-building materials. Of course merit and enterprise have contributed to the development of this trade, and yet the success of Americans in securing certain orders may have been due to the inability of competitors—for temporary reasons—to accept them. In other cases, perhaps, orders have been lost to European concerns through their failure to consider the possibility of America figuring as a competitor. At another time, when the pressure of work in certain engineering establishments abroad has been tightened, and the proprietors are no longer napping with regard to the capacity of Americans to compete for foreign business, such orders may be more difficult to obtain.

Important as some of these orders have been, if we are to control an important share of the export trade of the world we cannot depend on occasional shipments of a cargo of rails here, a lot of locomotives there, or a bridge yonder. The demand for such items of production is not steady, even if all the orders come to a single country. But there must be considered also the smaller articles of consumption—those within the buying capacity of individuals and suited to individual use, but yet of such a class that their manufacture must be confined to the countries which have reached the highest degree of industrial advancement. Already our exports of builders' hardware amount to more in value than our exports of steel rails; mowers and reapers to more than locomotives; bicycles, typewriters and sewing machines, to more than heavy machinery. What is more, a demand for these lighter lines, when once started, will continue to grow, in whatever part of the world, whereas the demand for railway material and the like will always fluctuate and be dependent on circumstances beyond ordinary control.

But the traffic in these smaller products is not going to grow without careful nursing. The countries that buy our wheat for the reason that they must do so or starve are not obliged to buy American small manufactures, because similar articles and possibly as good ones may perhaps be bought elsewhere for less money. That country will possess a great advantage in respect to exports whose manufacturers and merchants are most alert to cultivate different markets and to open channels for the sale of goods, instead of merely making them and holding them for sale. There are some things which are staple the world over. That is to say, if a railway is to be built in India, or Africa, or anywhere else, rails must be bought, and while types may differ somewhat, and the weight per yards, practically a rail is a rail, certainly one does not have to go abroad to urge its use. Likewise, a single order, say, for railway material, may reach a large total in value—large

enough to cover a handsome commission to the agent who makes the sale. On the other hand, a line of smaller manufactures, to amount to as much as a single order for rails or a bridge, may represent a year's distribution over an entire continent, through the hands of thousands of persons, making the store of profit of each very small. Such articles are bound to come into use, but they are not bound to be ordered from any one country. Whatever else may be true, it may be depended upon that the advantage with respect to the exporting of a great many manufactures will rest with the country whose producers and manufacturers study most carefully the tastes of people abroad, and thus become prepared to supply goods to suit in style, quality, appearance, size of package, method of shipping and the like. Everybody knows how careful the American manufacturer is to consult the wants of the home trade; no less care is needed in selling goods everywhere else.

BOOTS AND SHOES IN BRITISH GUIANA.

Imports into British Guiana are mostly from England, some come from the United States. Surinam imports from England and Germany; Cayenne from France. Men's low shoes sell here at \$1.20 to \$1.68; a few at \$2.40 to \$3.84. Boots sell up to \$5. Split hide and satin hide are used; calf quarters and kid uppers in black. Tan shoes are popular. Footwear for this market must have wide fittings, 4 and 5 English. The Portuguese, who number about 12,000, universally wear shoes made on the Mexican last, which is pointed and has an upward curve to the toe. Out of a total population of 278,000 in this colony, 217,000 people are black, coloured, or East Indian coolies, a majority of whom go barefooted a great portion of the time, for the reason that their occupation or their personal comfort does not require them to be shod; nor will their limited means permit the expense. Hence the conformation of their feet is such that to crowd them into the elegant and fashionable American boot, on the special occasions like Sundays or holidays, would induce such a fine frenzy of misery that neither religious devotion, peace of mind, nor graceful deportment would be promoted. It is estimated that about 5,000 pairs are made by hand in this city. Probably not more than 30,000 of the total population wear shoes habitually the year round. During the year ended March 31st, 1898, boots and shoes to the value of \$137,590 were imported into British Guiana, of which \$10,000 worth came from the United States and the balance from England. A portion of this importation went to Surinam, Dutch Guiana. —United States Consul at Demerara.

TRADE OF FIJI ISLANDS.

If an improvement in the trade between Canada and Australia is not brought about it will not be for want of reports from Mr. J. S. Larke, the commercial agent of the Dominion at Sydney. Mr. Larke's last report deals with the trade of the Fiji Islands. He says that the imports for the past few years show very little improvement, being £229,000 for 1898, as compared with £244,000 for 1897. The exports for the past few years have largely increased. Of the trade of the islands, Canada's share last year was £3,656 for imports and £11,359 for exports. The imports comprised flour, timber, some vegetables and merchandise, while the exports were principally sugar. In regard to New South Wales, Mr. Larke says that the wheat acreage is 1,800,000, as compared with 1,632,000 last year.

BELGIAN DEMAND FOR REFRIGERATORS.

The firm of Dutry-Colson, rue des Champs, of this city, requests names and addresses of manufacturers of refrigerators. This firm is thoroughly reliable and one of the largest in its line in Belgium. There is a good field here for American refrigerators.—United States Consul Le Bert, at Ghent.