

and that the prospects for the near future are of a character to sustain and encourage those who have hitherto so manfully weathered the storm.

THE WINE TARIFF.

A London correspondent of Bonford's *Wine and Liquor Circular*, in a recent number devotes considerable attention to a review of the new wine tariff in the United States, and as many of the hints apply equally well to the importation of wines to this country, we incorporate them herein for the benefit of those interested in this extensive branch of trade.

The old rates of duties on wines imported to the United States were divided into three classes: wines under the value of 40 cents gold per American gallon (equal to about 0.88 of an imperial gallon) were charged 25 cents. gold per gallon, and wines under the value of \$1 gold per gallon, 60 cents. gold per gallon. All wines valued over \$1 per gallon paid a duty of \$1 per gallon, and, moreover, 25 per cent. of the invoice value, but this additional percentage was removed about a year ago. On case wines the duty was charged at the rate of three gallons per dozen instead of on the real contents, viz., $2\frac{1}{2}$ American gallons; though to find the value of such wines, and the category of duty they would fall under, the quoted price per dozen was divided by the actual contents of $2\frac{1}{4}$ to $2\frac{1}{2}$ gallons.

Everything seems, in fact, to have been done to annihilate any chance of a fair wine trade. But the actual rate of duties was not the greatest drawback to the honest wine merchant; his mightiest foe was the continued evasion of the same by unscrupulous competitors. Such practices were but a natural consequence of the whole system, and were carried on to a very large extent. The value of the wines imported was ascertained by the invoice which had been legalized by the American consul at the place of production, and the correctness of which had been declared on oath by the shipper. Beyond this the American consignee had to make oath that the prices quoted represented the true value, that he had received no other invoice for the goods, except the one produced, and was only indebted to the shipper to the amount appearing on the same in respect of the goods mentioned.

In spite of these provisions, it was a well-known fact that large quantities of wines were brought into the States at the lowest rate of duty, which should by their value have been classed for the high rates. Foreign shippers, some mere dummies, were induced to invoice wines at a lower price than that actually paid for them;

sometimes to their cost, or if they had not been paid beforehand, they would never have been able legally to recover more than the amount of the reduced invoice. The receiver did not scruple to make a false declaration at the Custom House, and thus the revenue was defrauded of large amounts, to its own detriment as well as that of honest dealers.

Measures were certainly adopted to stop these proceedings. The customs examined the wines; they had the right of calling a jury of merchants to assess the value in cases that seemed to be doubtful, and, more than that, they could at any time enter a merchant's office to search all his books and papers, and even seize them, in order to find entries or correspondence not agreeing with the invoices officially placed before them. But even this espionage and terrorism hanging over the heads of all the trade failed to obtain the desired result, and false entries still continued to be made. Besides, the whole system of duties, even if it had been, in every case, honestly applied, naturally developed a large trade in such low-grade wines, or compounds called wines, as could enter under the lowest rate, whilst finer wines from every country were only too much neglected. Good ports and sherries, for instance, were but rarely to be found, and the trade for such almost *nil*. Certe wines were imported in enormous quantities; in fact, two-thirds of the manufactured wines of this rival of Hamburg (six out of eight million gallons) are stated to have annually gone to America. These wines were used chiefly for the different mixed drinks peculiar to America, or as a cheapening blend of the genuine wines from Bordeaux and the Rhine. That, under such circumstances, the consumption of good wines remained small is not to be wondered at.

At last the trade was aroused to action. About three years ago a wine and spirit association was formed, which was powerfully supported by the leading importers of New York. The early abolition of some minor grievances was due to its exertions, and everything was done to obtain the support of the whole trade for the endeavor to bring about a change in the tariff. A great number of the trade from all the States was induced to join the association. Union gives strength, and so it was chiefly owing to the indefatigable exertions of this association, that at last the desired alteration of the tariff was obtained from Congress.

The new specific rate of duty is as simple as the previous one was complicated, and its easy calculation alone must save time and trouble to both officials and

merchants. All still wines in casks now pay 40 cents gold per American gallon. All still wines in cases \$1.60 per case of one dozen quarts or two dozen pints, bottles included. The duty on sparkling wines, to which we have not yet referred, had been a specific one even before, and remains the same, viz., \$6 gold per case of one dozen, with three cents per bottle added, and the only concession on these wines is an allowance of 5 per cent. for breakage. To the English trade a duty on sparkling wines of about 26s. a dozen would seem ruinous, but yet champagne was always imported very largely into the United States, and in fact was almost the only wine drunk by many Americans. These new rates of duty have, with one stroke, abolished all possibility of fraud, and have opened a fair chance for the larger importation and consumption of better-class wines of every description.

The stagnation of trade, however, in the United States during the last few years has greatly hindered the beneficial effects hoped for from the change being as yet felt. Besides the market is stocked to overflowing with a quantity of low-grade wines, which came under the old duty of 25 cents per gallon, and had been imported by speculators before the passing of the new act, in order to save the additional 15 cents per gallon now levied on this class. Until these have been taken gradually into consumption, and until trade in general has taken a turn for the better and confidence is restored throughout the country, it would be impossible to expect any great results from the new tariff, and indeed, under the most favorable circumstances, they will no doubt be but gradual.

The duties still paid on wines imported into Canada require the attention of the powers that be. Wine which costs 40 cents a gallon pays with us 30 cents per gallon duty, but if it cost 41 cents it pays 60 cents duty. The consequence of this is that false entries are made as in the United States before the change, as well as false invoices, it being an easy matter to reduce the price one or two cents, by which half the duty may be avoided. This legislation has the effect here also of inducing the importation of the cheapest class of wines, and operating to the injury of respectable houses who will not descend to such practices. It is really a premium of 30 cents a gallon offered to dishonesty, and there are sufficient other inducements without this additional one. It is to be hoped that the Dominion Board of Trade will give some attention to this subject at the meeting in Ottawa next month. A result also is that country people find