

LETTER FROM LONDON, ENGLAND.

LONDON, Friday Morning, May 18, 1866.

FLOATINGS.

The wind in the British Channel last Friday blew from West South-West. On Saturday it shifted westward, and has since blown from North to East. The arrivals of vessels from the Atlantic have been, to a fair extent, early this week, but have fallen off the last few days. Amongst the arrived, there are only four grain and seed-laden vessels reported at ports of call, viz.:—Two with wheat from Odessa; two with maize, one from Philadelphia and one from New York.

The Floating Grain Cargo Trade.—As might have been expected from the extraordinarily severe financial crisis, which attained its height last Friday, transactions in the floating grain trade, and in the general corn trade, have been limited, every prudent trader confining his engagements to a minimum. Notwithstanding the crisis, grain prices have been steadily maintained. The total amount of business transacted during the last eight days amounted to 19 cargoes, viz., 16 of wheat and 3 of maize.

Wheat.—The war influence, though cast in the shade, at least for a time, by the deranged state of the money market, has still exercised its influence in maintaining last week's prices. In the few transactions which have taken place, full prices have been paid, the upward tendency being checked by the prevailing high discount rates.

Wheat arrived 12 cargoes.

Maize.—The demand has been fairly active at last week's prices. For fine cargoes, which are scarce, 6d. more has been paid.

Maize arrived, two cargoes.

Barley.—The demand has been quiet at about last week's rates. No sale has been reported.

In Rye no transaction has taken place. Last week's prices are nominally quoted, viz: Danubian, Eno, or Odessa, 27s. to 28s. per 480 lbs.

Beans.—This article continues scarce, no sales have been reported this week, and prices are nominally unaltered, viz: for Barbary Beans about 41s. to 42s. per 480 lbs.

GENERAL REMARKS.

The weather in the United Kingdom this week has been similar to that of last week—uncongenial, more like winter than spring. The barometer has indicated a higher atmospheric pressure, but the temperature has been low and on several nights frosty. The wind, which last Friday blew West and North-West, has turned to North and East, blowing at times with great force. The sky has been generally cloudy and foggy; rain has fallen in many parts of the United Kingdom, and in some places heavily. Since yesterday the weather has assumed a more settled appearance.

The prevalence of rain at a time when sunshine was most required, and of harsh easterly winds, instead of a genial balmy temperature, has had an unfavourable effect on vegetation, which is generally in a backward state now, under the blighting influence of chilly easterly winds in daytime, sharp, nightly frosts, and cold rain to boot. The growing cereal crops have changed their luxuriant appearance to one of little promise. The wheat crop, on the heavy land especially, is spindly, and has assumed an unhealthy yellowish colour; and the late sown spring corn has, in many places, been nipped. On some loamy lands the plant is sparse. The fruit trees which were at the time in bloom, have been extensively damaged by frost, and in consequence a small fruit crop is in prospect this year. Potato planting has been nearly completed. This operation has been later this year than usual. Mangold wurtzel planting is drawing to its close. Turnip sowing has commenced, and is progressing.

Supply.—The supply of home-grown wheat has been this week at most markets smaller than in previous weeks, owing principally to the diminished number of corn stocks in the country. The deliveries of home-grown barley and oats have dwindled down to very unimportant quantities. The following is a comparative statement of the quantity of corn returned as sold in 150 towns in England and Wales in the week ending May 12th, 1866, and the corresponding week in the years 1862 to 1866, according to the Act of Parliament, 27 and 28 Vic., cap. 87, with the average prices for the same periods:

Wheat.			Barley.			Oats.		
1866.	qrs.	per qr.	1866.	qrs.	per qr.	1866.	qrs.	per qr.
1866...	59,964	at 45s 9d	6,441	at 36s 4d	1987	at 24s 10d		
1865...	74,669	" 40s 11d	8,837	" 29s 7d	1865	" 23s 3d		
1864...	68,066	" 38s 9d	11,721	" 30s 8d	1864	" 24s 8d		
1863...	68,575	" 46s 2d	6,585	" 34s 4d	1863	" 22s 1d		
1862...	52,477	" 58s 8d	9,220	" 37s 8d	1862	" 22s 4d		

Imports.—The imports of foreign grain into the United Kingdom amount this week to an average quantity, the larger proportion consisting, as usual, of wheat. The imports of maize rank next in degree of importance. Those of barley exhibit a slight falling off compared with the large importation of preceding weeks. The imports of oats are to a fair extent, and those of flour show a considerable diminution.

The British Corn Trade.—The disastrous events of the last eight days will occupy a conspicuous place in the annals of finance. The panic of Friday the 11th of May, 1866, will be long remembered in connection with the breaking down of the renowned discount company, Overend, Durney & Co., (Limited), which brought business in almost all the branches of business to a sudden stop. Trade appeared paralyzed, and did not recover from the shock till the suspension of the Bank of England Charter Act. The panic has subsided as rapidly as it had risen, and although distrust has not yet entirely disappeared, the worst is past, and confidence is gradually returning. It is satisfactory to notice that in the midst of this crisis the corn trade, amongst other trades, has perhaps suffered the least. True, its activity has been arrested: all prudent men, as became the doubtful occasion, hauled in, instead of launching out into new operations; but prices of most articles, so far from giving away, have kept steadily in an upward direction, though checked by the high 10 per cent. minimum Bank of England rate. It is to be hoped that this crushing high rate, at which no profitable business can be carried on any length of time, and which must seriously interfere with legitimate enterprise, will soon be lowered. The threatening war on the continent has been the mainspring of the firmness in the corn trade this week, strengthened by the latest less favourable harvest prospects in the United Kingdom, the growing cereal crops having suffered through night frosts and cold rains. Added to these facts, the further diminution of stocks of grain in farmers' hands (in some places quite exhausted), and the moderate imports of foreign grain into the United Kingdom, without the prospects of any important augmentation from any quarter for some months to come, has been taken into account. At the same time the consumption of breadstuffs has continued as large as usual at this season of the year, and may rather increase, in consequence of the stock of old potatoes running short; the new crop being in a backward state, will not be available till a much later period than last year. Political affairs at home have been thrown into the shade this week by the momentous financial crisis. Even the Reform Bill has been lost sight of for a time. There is, however, good reason to believe that both the franchise and the redistribution of Seats Bill, will, with slight modifications, become law this session. Abroad, war preparations have continued, though all parties have shown more hesitation in precipitating the outbreak of war. Wise counsels are at work on the part of England, France and Russia, to bring about a peaceful solution of existing dissensions. A Peace Conference is spoken of. No sacrifice in behalf of peace can be too great, compared with the horrors of war—the miseries it creates—the ruin it inflicts, even on unborn generations. For the sake of humanity it is to be hoped that so fearful a scourge may be averted. It is not like a mysterious visitation of cholera, an earthquake or an extensive conflagration. War entails evils purely of man's own creation and his own power to avoid.

Italy appears to have been carried away by a fervour akin to desperation. Nothing short of the possession of Venetia seems likely to allay the frantic ardour of the Italians. Neither national bankruptcy nor the possibility of defeat, and the destruction of the flower of their youths, when brought face to face in the deadly encounter with the well-trained Austrian soldiers, can stop them in their maddened career. But in Austria and Prussia the people are not led away by an idea, and well may their statesmen hesitate to leap into the unknown future, considering the little at best they have to gain, and the fearful issues at stake. The present financial crisis in Europe offers but a bitter foretaste of what may be expected when the terrible realities of war come generally to be felt.

The following is a brief summary of the movements of the trade in the United Kingdom this week, in relation to its principal articles:—

Wheat.—Under the influence of the financial panic, Millers, Dealers, and Bakers have acted with great caution, abstaining from entering upon engagements of importance. The comparatively small quantity that

has changed hands has been at fully late prices, in some markets 1s. to 2s. dearer. For Flour the demand has been quiet at about late prices. In Barley there has not been much business doing, but late prices have been maintained. Oats—Heavy sorts, which are scarce, have fetched quite as much money as last week; but in order to dispose of light sorts, which abound, a slight decline has had to be submitted to. Beans—Owing to scarcity, prices have again advanced 1s. to 2s. per qr. Peas have been steady in price, with a moderate amount of business doing.

Maize.—Good sorts have been in fair demand at last week's prices.

The Foreign Corn markets are reported as follows:

The Baltic ports have continued firm in price, with few grain shipments in progress. In the Danube the trade has continued quiet, and prices of Maize slightly lower; other articles unaltered in value. At Odessa, according to latest advices, a firmer tone has gained ground for Grain, which had a hardening effect upon prices, with a fair amount of business doing. At Trieste, the rise in the currency has caused large operations in Grain at reduced prices.

In France the trade has been steady, with a rather improving tendency. The latest reports about the growing cereal crops are not of the same favourable turn as previous ones, it being stated that the sharp easterly winds and the cold rain had caused the growing Wheat crops to assume a yellowish hue, but at present no positive damage is apprehended. The Rye plant has sprung into ear, and appears generally satisfactory.

CIRCULAR TO MANUFACTURERS AND CONSIGNERS OF POT AND PEARL ASHES.

WE commend the following Circular to the attention of those interested:—

The close of reciprocity between Canada and the United States, leaving operators in Ashes more dependent on Great Britain for a market than hitherto, we take occasion to draw the attention of manufacturers to the rule observed there, of deducting one-eighth of the gross weight as tare, irrespective of the actual weight of the cask, and to urge the importance of using only heavy barrels, as shippers lose in Ashes any deficiency on this proportion, and of course regulate prices accordingly.

In order, therefore, to secure full prices, let all barrels be strong and heavy, weighing, when, thoroughly seasoned, at least one-eighth of the gross when full; thus, for example, a barrel weighing 800 lbs. gross should be 75 lbs. tare; 700 lbs. gross 85 lbs. tare; 800 gross 100 lbs. tare &c. Any proportion below this is a loss, while anything above is so much gain to the shipper. Barrels, moreover, must be of the legal dimensions, 20 to 22 inches diameter of head, and 30 to 32 inches length of stave, as longer or smaller are condemned and forfeited. Suitable timber, careful seasoning, and good workmanship are also most important. When obtainable, use only white oak or white ash, as these are reckoned best; let the barrels be amply covered with substantial wooden hoops, and be as air-tight as possible, else the Ashes are liable to deterioration by the action of the air, to loss in weight by scrapings, and the barrel itself to be damaged and forfeited through the liquid Ashes eating through the seams.

The virtual close of the American Markets, which have hitherto absorbed the bulk of inferior Ashes, will necessitate increased care and skill in order to the production of only first sorts, as no other promises to command a price for Britain, at all remunerative to the producer. The grades established by law are 1st, 2nd, and 3rd sorts, and unbranded Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, an additional eighth being taken off the selling price of firsts for each grade below. Thus unbranded No. 3 would have five-eighths deducted from the selling price.

First sort Pot Ashes contain at least 75 per cent. of alkali, and first Pearls 65 per cent., each grade below being 10 per cent. less. Imperfect leaching, and adulterations, are the fruitful causes of inferiority. The utmost care in leaching is necessary, especially when using field-ashes; if the ley does not come off clear it should be run through a second time, or as often as necessary to obtain purity, else nothing but inferior Potash can be produced. No adulterations, of salt, lime, sand, or foreign substance whatever, should be used, as the utmost purity is necessary to the requisite per centage of strength. As the manufacture of Pearl Ashes requires practical experience and skill, we only add on this branch that the deficiency in strength, which causes so large a proportion of Pearls to be classed second sort, our inspectors, in most instances, attribute to the working in of settlings. This should, of course, be guarded against.

In packing, the Ashes should remain till quite cold, and be emptied by coolers into the barrel, with as little breakage as possible, and the coolers used should be of such size as that the contents of two should amply fill the barrel; in no case, however, should wood, raw ashes, or other substance, be used to fill up the barrel, and even of lime, no more than a sprinkling sufficient to absorb any surplus moisture. In forwarding, the name or initials, both of owner and consignee, together with the tare and a running number, should be neatly and legibly marked in paint on one end of the barrel, and both marks and numbers specified in the shipping receipt and letter of advice, that the consignee may readily identify the property of each consigner respectively, and the confusion and delay often occasioned by neglect of this simple requisite be thereby avoided.

AKIN & KIRKPATRICK,
General Commission Merchants,
Montreal.

June, 1866.