

THE WORLD COMMERCE OF GREAT BRITAIN.

Early in the year the daily press acquainted the world with the fact that the foreign trade of the United Kingdom had reached a total of over £1,000,000,000 for 1906. More detailed information as to the commerce of the Motherland is just now of special interest, in view of Imperial Conference deliberations. Compared with 1905 the record-breaking results of 1906 were as follows:

	1906.	1905.	Increase.	
	£	£	Amount.	%
Imports.....	607,988,000	565,020,000	42,968,000	7.6
Exports	375,673,000	329,817,000	45,856,000	13.9
Re-exports of foreign and colonial merchandise	85,163,000	77,780,000	7,383,000	9.5
Total.....	1,068,824,000	972,617,000	96,207,000	8.2

To those pessimists who regard Britain as having passed her commercial zenith, the foregoing figures afford matter for reflection. To be sure, the year does not show what the old-time mercantilists called a favourable balance of trade, since imports considerably exceeded exports. But to apply the adjective "unfavourable" to Great Britain's trade balance is altogether a misapplication of the term. As a matter of fact its exports in the long run are practically balancing its imports—otherwise the country would be constantly running into debt for the latter. The apparent anomaly is explained when it is remembered that a considerable portion of the exports of Great Britain are invisible—though none the less real on that account. These include vast amounts of capital invested abroad, and such important services as the carrying of foreign goods and the transacting of insurance business throughout the world. The income derived from foreign investments, and the payment for services abroad comes, not in gold necessarily nor chiefly, but in the form of the country's so-called "excess" of imports.

As to the world distribution of Great Britain's exports the following table from The Economist of London gives details:

VALUE OF EXPORTS.

To British Possessions, &c.	1906.	1905.	Inc. or Dec.	
	£	£		£
East Indies.....	50,672,000	47,629,000	.. +	3,043,000
Australasia.....	27,712,000	23,452,000	.. +	4,260,000
Canada.....	13,647,000	11,909,000	.. +	1,738,000
South Africa.....	15,262,000	16,360,000	.. -	1,098,000
West Indies.....	2,188,000	2,012,000	.. +	176,000
Hong Kong.....	3,054,000	3,717,000	.. -	663,000
West Africa.....	3,059,000	2,827,000	.. +	232,000
East Africa.....	1,227,000	1,058,000	.. +	169,000
Other possessions	4,443,000	4,474,000	.. -	31,000
Total.....	121,264,000	113,438,000	.. +	7,826,000

To Foreign Countries.	1906.	1905.	Inc. or Dec.	
	£	£		£
Russia.....	8,873,000	8,169,000	.. +	704,000
Sweden.....	5,599,000	5,195,000	.. +	404,000
Norway.....	3,725,000	3,341,000	.. +	384,000
Denmark.....	4,873,000	4,129,000	.. +	744,000
Germany.....	33,627,000	29,704,000	.. +	3,923,000
Holland.....	11,615,000	9,684,000	.. +	1,931,000
Belgium.....	11,592,000	10,056,000	.. +	1,536,000
France.....	20,495,000	18,143,000	.. +	2,352,000
Portugal.....	2,605,000	2,248,000	.. +	357,000
Spain.....	4,641,000	4,246,000	.. +	395,000
Italy.....	11,185,000	8,893,000	.. +	2,292,000
Austrian territories.	2,369,000	1,857,000	.. +	512,000
Greece.....	1,411,000	1,170,000	.. +	241,000
Turkey.....	8,009,000	6,691,000	.. +	1,318,000
Egypt.....	8,936,000	7,849,000	.. +	1,087,000
Japan.....	12,913,000	9,662,000	.. +	3,251,000
China.....	12,237,000	13,137,000	.. -	900,000
United States.....	27,789,000	23,916,000	.. +	3,873,000
Mexico.....	2,326,000	1,880,000	.. +	446,000
Central America.....	1,029,000	968,000	.. +	61,000
Chili.....	6,084,000	4,461,000	.. +	1,623,000
Brazil.....	7,653,000	6,618,000	.. +	1,035,000
Uruguay.....	2,229,000	2,020,000	.. +	209,000
Argentine Repub.	19,430,000	13,063,000	.. +	6,367,000
Other countries..	23,074,000	21,339,000	.. +	1,735,000
Total	254,409,000	216,379,000	.. +	38,030,000

From this it appears that while exports within the Empire increased last year by about £8,000,000, those to foreign countries increased by £38,000,000—a circumstance that is being used in Britain as an argument either for or against inter-Imperial tariff reform, according as the disputant's own views are *pro* or *con*. To The Economist it seems a strong reason why Britain "should decline to discriminate against foreign countries in order to give protection to the colonies in the home markets."

From recent Board of Trade returns The Chamber of Commerce Journal compiles this summary showing how Great Britain's commerce compares with that of her three greatest rivals:

	Imports		Exports (Domestic)	
	1905	1906	1905	1906
	£	£	£	£
Germany ..	356,441,000	329,527,000	286,582,000	306,250,000
France ..	191,156,000	209,177,000	194,675,000	201,747,000
United States	245,655,000	275,222,000	333,213,000	369,325,000
United Kingdom	487,240,000	522,825,000	329,817,000	375,673,000

In the case of Germany, Belgium, France, Italy, Egypt, Japan, and United Kingdom, the import figures given in the above summary represent imports for home consumption only, *i.e.*, excluding re-exports. In all cases the export figures are intended to represent exports of domestic produce. In most cases, however, they include a certain amount of "nationalized" goods, *i.e.*, goods originally imported for consumption, and which, if dutiable, have been charged with duty, but which are subsequently re-exported.

To any critic who had narrowed his outlook so as to include only exports, it doubtless seemed in 1905 as though Great Britain were overtaken in the race for commercial world supremacy, and passed by the United States. In 1906, however, the Old Land regained its lead in exports—though it may be argued that this was due partly to the fact that the United States found its domestic markets so stimulated as to tax its productive resources for home demands, and thus cause slackening of com-