

subject to seizure, he would find means of satisfying his creditor in the shortest delay possible. A business man then at almost any moment might know and count upon his available resources, and it would produce in a short time that independent and self-reliant character whereby honesty would be substituted for smartness, and legitimate business for scheming. A lively sense of responsibility is necessary to purify the atmosphere of commercial enterprise, and the remedy suggested would be at least a step towards that direction.

AGRICULTURAL DEPRESSION.

The important subject of the agricultural depression in England has been recently very fully treated by two high authorities, Mr. Giffin, the eminent economist, and Mr. Shaw Lefevre, M.P., in an address delivered at Reading. Mr. Giffin's letter is addressed unofficially to the President of the Board of Trade. Both have treated the subject of the agricultural depression of the last few years. Mr. Giffin in discussing it has endeavored to arrive at an approximate estimate of the national loss. A rise in rents or in the price of labor, or a fall in the price of agricultural products, would not be a national loss, although the interests of the farmers might be seriously affected thereby. A deficiency in the harvest, on the other hand, is a loss to the entire nation. Mr. Giffin furnishes a table taken from the trade returns, shewing that the increase in the imports of agricultural produce in the years 1877-79 over those of 1867-69; was no less than £54,000,000, the amount having been £79,000,000 in the former period and £133,000,000 in the latter. Mr. Giffin estimates the increase of population at 3,520,000 and the increased supply for them at £12 per head or £42,000,000, and as the difference was £54,000,000, he ascribes to the deficiency in the harvests the increased annual importation of £12,000,000. It is quite impossible to follow Mr. Giffin in his elaborate calculation as to difference of price, which of course is an element in the calculation. The result of the whole may be briefly stated, the final comparison being between the years 1872-4 and recent years. The decline in production is estimated at £14,000,000 as compared with 1867-69 and £5,000,000 additional as compared with 1872-4. The rise in rents £5,000,000—rise in wages, £5,000,000—fall in price, £14,000,000, and an additional fall of £2,000,000, the maximum of the debits being £45,000,000, and the average £38,000,000. It must be borne in mind that the above figures are averages, and that in particular districts of the country

the depression was specially severe. There would obviously be wide differences between the extremes. Mr. Giffin estimates the income of the United Kingdom at £1,200,000,000 per annum, and as the actual loss by deficiency of crops is only from £14,000,000 to £18,000,000, the maximum would be about 1½ per cent. on the income as the national loss. On the other hand Mr. Giffin points out that part of the cost of the imports consists of freights earned by British capital and labor, and that the loss by fall of price, which is about equal to that by decline in production, is a national gain. The saving to the community by the fall in price must, he argues, have helped to compensate the loss from deficiency of harvests. Mr. Giffin propounds no plan for removing or mitigating the agricultural depression, but he strongly argues against any measure that would have a tendency to raise prices. Every rise of 10 per cent. means the annual payment of £14,000,000 to foreign countries.

Mr. Shaw Lefevre, approaching the subject from a different point of view, does not materially differ in his conclusions as to the extent of the depression. Mr. Lefevre occupied himself more than Mr. Giffin with the consideration of remedies for the farmers. He deprecated quite as strongly any increase in the price of food, but favored a reform in the land laws and the surrender of some Imperial tax in aid of local rates. The *Times* has a long article on the subject, and it is obvious that some remedial measures must be devised. It ought to be noticed that the English landlords have remitted rents during the last four years to the extent of 10 to 15 per cent. or about £40,000,000 sterling. This however only represents about double the average increase of rent during the last few years. It is desirable that people on this side the Atlantic who are so much interested in the export of agricultural produce should clearly understand the position of the British farmers and land owners, and should be made aware of the improbability of any change being made that would have the effect of increasing the price of food. It may be interesting to state in round figures from Mr. Giffin's table the increase in British imports in 1880 over 1867: Live cattle, from 4 to 10 millions; meat, fish, &c., from 13 to 39 millions; wheat and flour, 28 to 39 millions; barley and other grain, from 15 to 28 millions; vegetables, from £676,000 to nearly 4 millions.

CANAL TOLLS.

Our neighbors in New York State are discoursing with much earnestness the

policy of abolishing all tolls on the Erie Canal, and defraying the cost of management and repairs out of the public revenue. That is very much what Canadian policy is expected to be, whatever may be the decision in New York. The experience of the last year was not by any means what was anticipated from the abolition of the tolls on western-bound produce, which it was hoped would have caused an increase in the volume of business on the canal. There were reasons for the falling off however, irrespective of the new policy. There was a decrease in the shipment of grain from the west, and there was an unusual competition between the trunk lines of railway. Nevertheless the important fact is that the charges on west bound freight were higher than they had been with tolls included. The truth is that the day has long since passed when the Erie Canal exercised an important influence on the charges for carrying merchandise; and the other water channels on our Welland and St. Lawrence Canals and the Mississippi River are not likely to exercise any controlling influence as against the great trunk lines of railway terminating at different ports on the Atlantic seaboard. It seems now an established fact that the bulk of the western traffic will be carried by rail; and, owing to the number of trunk lines and the competition in freights to Europe at the various ports on the seaboard, there seems little probability that the canals will be much employed; and yet in the face of all these facts there are persons wild enough to propose the expenditure of a large sum of Canadian public money in the construction of new waterways to be used in carrying traffic for nothing, while their maintenance would be a charge on the public at large. It may be hoped that the efforts which are being made in various localities to promote such works will be without result.

There are in New York, persons who advocate the enlargement of the Erie, so as to make it a ship canal, but it seems highly improbable that they will meet with any success. There is some coquetting going on just now between the Federal and State authorities on the subject of the enlargement. It has been proposed that Congress should grant \$15,000,000 to New York State, conditionally on its enlarging the Erie and Oswego Canals, so that they shall pass war vessels 25 feet wide and 200 feet long, and merchant vessels of 600 tons carrying capacity. This proposition is brought forward as one for the defence of the Northern frontier, but there can be little doubt that it is a mere excuse for obtaining the aid of Congress to the enlargement. On the other hand