

## FOREIGN COMPETITION WITH ENGLISH MANUFACTURERS.

THE London Times publishes a letter on this subject from "H. Herries Croed" and "Walter Williams, junr.," who write from Brussels. It is explained that Mr. Croed is an ironmaster, and Mr. Williams the honorary secretary to the Associated Ironmasters of South Staffordshire. They state—Belgium and France have thrust us out of foreign markets to an extent which the public will hardly credit, and of which the trade itself is scarcely aware. They have almost monopolized in Russia the trade in all matters of manufactured iron for railway purposes. They make the rails, they supply the locomotive engines, the tools for stations and the pillars that support them, and they build the carriages. Russia is now in the first stage of railway development. For a long time to come she will be the best customer in Europe for iron in all its various forms of manufacture, notwithstanding her present exceptional produce in that high class material which even we ourselves occasionally buy of her for the manufacture of steel. And yet in this market, great and remunerative actually greater and more remunerative in promise, the Belgian and the Frenchman hold the principal position, and are in a fair way of obtaining an absolute monopoly. A like state of things obtains in Spain. There, again, England is thrust aside, defeated by Belgium and France. We cannot compete with their producers either in price or in continuousness and certainty of supply. Nor is this all. Even at home, even within our own boundaries, these industrious and pushing people are challenging our supremacy, and that not unfrequently with success. In bar iron, in rails, in engines for agricultural purposes, and even in locomotives for railways, they have lately been obtaining orders even in our own market here at home. How and why is this? How is it that our position in so great an industry is slipping from under us? It is a question of grave import; and these are facts calculated to create great anxiety, not only to the capital which embraces it in its operations in English counties, besides the Scotch, Welsh, and Irish districts, but to a large population of special habits and industrial skill, dependent upon the maintenance of our mines and our ironworks in full activity and progressive development. To these latter the question which we have asked is of far greater moment than it is or can be either to the State or the capitalist. The State may lose, and yet exist and carry on with loss more or less; the capitalist may be compelled to make a sacrifice in converting his fixed capital into movable, but he can carry that diminished capital and undiminished reputation and administrative ability to Belgium, to France, to Spain, or to Russian Poland. There in any and in all of those countries he will find great coal fields of excellent yield, upon or near which he can establish ironworks, where, with the appliances that his capital can command and his administrative experience manage, he will, with the aid of native labour, cheerfully furnished at a comparatively nominal rate, far outstrip the hampered efforts of this country, seize for himself that profit of which a large proportion would have been public property, and leave the discounted and combative artisans of England a burden to the country and a difficulty to themselves. To the artisan of Great Britain, to the unemployed of her manufacturing districts, this question is of the extreme importance. Their life or death hangs upon its prompt solution. Transfer of themselves is simply an impossibility. Foreign nations have a superabundance of labour with which, untrammelled as they are by legislative restrictions, they can, with the aid of the improved processes obtained by them from us, proceed independently and triumphantly in the path on which they have entered so promisingly, and which unless we can cross it, must conduct them to absolute monopoly. This question they propose to consider at length in future communications. They have gone to Brussels, with letters of introduction from the Secretary and Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and they state that the Belgian officials have been untrifling in aiding them in prosecuting their inquiry.

A Wolverhampton correspondent writes.—A leading engineering firm in this district has for some time past, been supplying itself with Belgian iron, notwithstanding that its works are surrounded on all sides by iron rolling mills. An ironmaster, who also produces wire, informed me only yesterday that he had bought Belgian iron in preference to using his own in his wire mill, because he could get more for his own iron than he had to pay for the product of Belgium, which he received in Birmingham at a cost for carriage of only 2½d. from Antwerp. From that port to our English ports it is now being carried at a freight of 7½d. On those terms it is now being delivered in West Hartlepool, Hull, and other places.

U. S. CLASS LEGISLATION.—We fully agree with the Boston Journal that the time is approaching when it will be necessary for the people of this country to examine carefully and critically the principles which underlie the entire system of taxation. Our policy with reference to duties upon imported merchandise has always been unsettled and vacillating, while the imposition of internal revenue taxes has been so recent, that neither our public men nor their constituents have had time to arrive at well defined and matured opinions in reference to them. Our representatives at the National Capitol, instead of seeking for a broad basis on which to build up an enduring national policy, too often yield to the persistent and collective appeals of partizan and distinctive interests, each class endeavouring to secure for themselves certain real or supposed advantages. Thus, while Congress caters to a certain interest in Pennsylvania or Ohio, it not unfrequently happens that another equally important interest in New York, or some other State, is unfavourably affected. In

framing such important laws as those relating to the revenue, it is clearly the duty of our representatives to free themselves from all party bias and all purely class considerations, acting with a single eye to the development of the vast resources of the country, the diminution of its burdens, and the best economy of its expenditures.

It is said that nearly all the leading manufacturing and commercial interests of the country are now represented, by deputations, at Washington, each clamoring for legislation for their own enrichment regardless of the rights of others. Among the foremost of these may be mentioned the woolen interest, and, from the persistent efforts made by this branch of industry for more protection, one would suppose that it was of more importance to the country than all the other interests combined. We do not wish to be understood as opposing the efforts of wool growers or wool manufacturers. If they can make it apparent that they are entitled to more protection let them have it, but if they imagine that there is the only interest that is suffering, or that there is of paramount importance, they have very much to learn. A local contemporary grows eloquent over the misfortune of the woolen manufacturers. It tells us that there is no less than fifty millions of dollars invested in this branch of industry, and, as these manufacturers are making no money, it calls for the immediate aid of Government. Now, the shipping interest of the United States has been among the greater sources of the National prosperity in years gone by. It has stimulated industry by affording increased facilities for the energy and enterprise of the whole American people. But, through fortuitous circumstances, it is now in a crippled and sorry condition. The deterioration of this element of our National greatness may be justly considered one of the greatest calamities of the time. There is at least \$30,000,000 invested in this great arm of commerce, and yet what has Congress done or what does it propose to do to help it retrieve its fallen fortunes? Practical cruisers did much to cripple our maritime commerce, but the finishing blow was given when the present unwelcome taxes were imposed. Even British journals admit that American merchantmen used to beat British vessels in all the ports which were common to both of them. But the use of steam for propulsion, and of iron for construction, has changed the conditions under which the competition must take place, and has thrown all the advantages into the hands of the European ship-owner, simply because the American law prevents the American ship-builder from getting his vessel at the lowest rate. If the first outlay of capital on so expensive a thing as a steamship be raised twenty-five or thirty per cent. by duties, we may be quite sure that one of two things will happen. Foreign ship-owners will do all the foreign business of the country which makes such suicidal enactments, or else its own ship-owners will invest their money in ships built and registered elsewhere.

The following extract from the report of the Secretary of the Treasury, fully bears out all we have said on the subject, in this and previous articles. "No single interest in the United States, fostered although it may be by legislation, can long prosper at the expense of other great interests. Nor can any important interest be crushed by unequal or unequal laws, without other interests being thereby prejudiced. For illustration: The people of the United States are naturally a commercial and maritime people, and of adventure, bold enterprising, persistent. New, the disagreeable fact must be admitted, that, with unequal facilities for obtaining the materials, and with acknowledged skill in shipbuilding—with thousands of miles of sea coast, indented with the finest harbours in the world—with surplus products that require in their exportation a large and increasing tonnage—we can neither profitably build ships nor successfully compete with English ships in the transportation of our own products. Twenty years ago it was anticipated that ere this the United States would be the first maritime power in the world. Contrary to our anticipations, our foreign commerce has declined nearly fifty per cent. within the last six years.

The prices of labour and material are so high that shipbuilding can not be made profitable in the United States, and many of our ship-yards are being practically transferred to the British Provinces. Unless the causes which prevent the building of ships in the United States shall cease, the foreign carrying trade, even of our own productions must be yielded to other nations. To this humiliation and loss the people of the United States ought not to be subjected. If other branches of industry are to prosper, if agriculture is to be profitable, and manufactures are to be extended, the commerce of the country must be restored, sustained and increased. The United States will not be a first-class power among the Nations, nor will her other industrial interests continue long to prosper as they ought, if her commerce shall be permitted to languish."

These are the reasons why American tonnage is shut out from the great branch of traffic, for which we have equally good, if not better facilities than other people, and which we see others profits enough to induce independent capitalists to compete even with subsidized lines. And Congress will confer a lasting benefit upon the whole country if it will devote a share of its attention to such legislation as will afford one of our most valuable interests a reasonable chance for recuperation.—N. Y. Shipping Post.

MASSACHUSETTS WEAITH AND GENEROSITY.—The Boston Daily Evening Globe for November 3th, has an article on "Factory Girls," which shows that, while the manufacturing corporations "are making dividends to stockholders from 3 to 10 per cent, the girls in the mills are badly overworked, underpaid, and, at the same time, subjected to a rigor of discipline which admits of no relaxation until nature itself gives way."

THE POST OFFICE AND THE TELEGRAPHS.—Shortly before the resignation of the last ministry, a bill was drawn up providing for the purchase and working by Government of the telegraph lines of the United Kingdom. The project was put forward after a long correspondence with the principal officials of the leading telegraphic companies, not only of England, but also of some of the nations of the Continent. It is understood that Lord Stanley of Alderley takes great interest in the promotion of the scheme, and also that the present ministry have given it their approval. There seems no reason why telegraphs should not be put under the management of Government, equally with the Post-office, to which they are so valuable as auxiliary agents—the one having become the complement of the other in the great machinery of the world's correspondence. There is no doubt that, if the scheme be adopted, the public will be able to send messages at a considerably lower rate than they are able to do at present. Besides the details of the working of the various lines would be carried out with far greater compactness and expedition. It has been shown over and over again by the most distinguished of our political economists that, when certain institutions assume a certain degree of magnitude, they can be more easily carried on by one great managing power rather than by several distinct bodies, each of which has to undertake expense little less than that by which all the distinct branches could be maintained under the centralising system. Under this principle the Post-office unquestionably comes, and we see little or no reason why it should not apply also to telegraphs, for their vast network spread over the three kingdoms has now become so extensive and complicated that the intervention of Government seems inevitable. The most noticeable feature of the scheme proposed is the adoption of an uniform rate for a given number of words as respects any distance, the rate being much lower than that at present followed. And here it may be added that, though the English companies have reduced their prices since their first constitution, their rates are still much higher than those which prevail on the Continent and in the United States. Under the plan recommended the Government would have to construct new lines in addition to those already existing. The postal arrangements would be made to coincide as much as possible with those of the telegraph offices, and the establishment of a central telegraph bureau corresponding to the General Post-office will make a remarkable addition to the details of the project. The several staffs of the existing companies will, it is presumed, pass into the employment of the Government, while such officials as managing directors and secretaries will have to be provided with fresh appointments or else pensioned off. It appears advisable, considering the advantages to be derived from such a step, that Government should proceed at once to buy up and work the telegraphic lines of the United Kingdom, even at a loss, for not only would the public benefit by the prevalence of the low tariff, but more liberal terms could be entered into with foreign Powers, and correspondence with the Continent greatly facilitated. It is only just to add that the details of the scheme have been drawn up by Mr. Selamone, of the General Post-office, whose services in similar matters have been gracefully acknowledged by Mr. Gladstone in the House of Commons.—European Times.

## A Repairing Dock for Bermuda.

The London Times of the 13th December says.—

"A stupendous specimen of engineering work is now in progress in the yard of Messrs. Campbell, Johnson & Co. at Silver-town, facing Her Majesty's dockyard at Woolwich—namely, an enormous wrought-iron floating dock, capable of receiving ships of the Bellerophon class, for the Government service at Bermuda. The plates of iron, bolts, girders, &c., used in the construction of the dock, will amount to about 8,000 tons weight, consisting of 48 water-tight compartments, by five longitudinal bulkheads and seven transverse main ribs. It will be fitted with load chains, and balance and air chambers, for the special purposes of floating, sinking, and careening on the sides. When loaded to its requisite draught of water, the ship intended for repairs will be brought into the dock, and as the water is allowed to flow out of the chamber, the ship will ground on the blocks. The caissons having been put in position at each end of the dock, the water running under the ship then flows into the air chamber, and leaves the vessel dry. When the repairs are completed, the water will be admitted into the dock through culverts or sluice valves in the caissons in the usual manner, and the ship will float out without danger or difficulty. The contractors, it is stated, have suggested to the Board of Admiralty the addition of movable floors or traps for the facility of docking and repairing ships of light burden without loss of time. The ways are of sufficient buoyancy to float the ship when the repairs are sufficiently advanced to admit of their being completed afloat, and the dock will be once ready for the reception of a second ship without an hour's delay. The dock will be double-bottomed. The bottom platings and main ribs are composed of 3-plating and the inner skin 1-inch. The interior will be lined with bales of oak wood to protect the iron, and also to afford greater facility for shoring up the ships. The dock will be 350 feet in length, 72 feet in depth, 54 feet clear on the inside, and 124 feet over all. The majority of the plates, which are all of Welsh iron, rolled by Messrs. Rhymney & Co., are 20 feet by 8 feet 8 inches. The work is superintended by Mr. Barnaby, a Government official attached to Sheerness Dockyard, and will be completed and in readiness to be towed out to Bermuda in the summer of 1868."