

BRITISH TRADE.

There is a general admission of a bad trade, and the Government returns to some considerable extent corroborate it, as these columns have had to record; but whence its source no one seems able to determine, nor from what quarter relief is to come. All eyes are at present turned towards America, because it is understood that business is really reviving there, and it has heretofore been found that the state of trade on one side of the Atlantic, whether for good or evil, when a change comes, is soon reflected on the other. But we must not forget that the rival industries of America are in a constant process of development, and that with each returning year she exports more of her own manufactures and imports less of ours; so that we are bound to entertain only subdued expectations from that quarter of the world. Nor is there any steady upward movement as yet discernible in sympathy with the reported revival of business in America. On the contrary, evidence of unabated depression continue to force themselves on our notice.

The latest is a report of the shipbuilding trade in Glasgow for the last as compared with the two previous years, and it confirms as far as that enterprising port or entrepot of northern trade is concerned the view now so universally prevailing, that even in favored localities our national industries continue to lose ground. We learned from the Glasgow Herald on the 19th that during this year 211 vessels of a total capacity of 193,438 tons were launched, as compared with 296,854 last year, a falling off in this important Glasgow industry of 103,396 tons, which is suggestive of a loss of employment to thousands of artisans, as the deficiency would mean the discharge of as many men as could build within the twelve months more than 100 ships of over a thousand tons each, as well as so much loss of trade to those who supplied last year the materials, steel, iron, timber, &c., &c., to construct such a fleet. Yet this would have been considered an immense business as lately as 1879, when only 174,750 tons were launched on the Clyde. But in 1883 the tonnages supplied there reached 419,734 tons, of which the present return is short more than half.

Notwithstanding this decline in the trade, the boiler-makers' and shipwrights' societies of the Tyne and Wear sent their delegates to a meeting last week, in reference to a notice of a 12 1/2 per cent. reduction of wages being given by the employers, and it is stated that it was unanimously resolved not to submit to any further reduction, either on time or piece work, so that another strike and disorganization of the labor market may be looked for in that quarter shortly. Two and six pence in the pound seems certainly a rather formidable reduction on a week's wages at one slap. But the men might be sure it signifies one of two things: either that the masters have not sufficient work on hand to keep the men employed at a profit to themselves, or that their returns will not justify their going on at their present rate of expenditure; and neither case is the wisdom of a strike very apparent. The slate quarrymen at Llan-culinas have a better chance of obtaining a concession from the masters, because slate can only be obtained from certain districts, but shipbuilding interrupted in one port flies to another. The housebuilding trade, all over the country, also depends very much on the slate quarries of North Wales, and the owners, or those who work the quarries at a royalty, may by and by reimburse themselves for an advance of wages by raising their prices, if the strike continues long enough to produce a brisk demand, but this does not apply to shipbuilding, where the stoppage of the work for any length of time may destroy the reputation of the port, and cause it to be shunned by shipowners, who want vessels for a special purpose, to be completed in a specified time.

And if we look to the East, instead of the West, there is not much to reassure us. The news from Burmah is not quite so favorable to a speedy opening of a large trade on the Irrawaddy as it looked when the great success achieved by General Pendergast and our troops by capturing the King and apparently putting an end to the war was first published. There appear now to be some further difficulties, and armed insurgent bands, by land and by water,

have to be put down before much regular business can be established on the upper reaches of the river, and our supply of teak is not likely to be either increased or cheapened for some months to come. Perhaps the reverse, for it always happens that while a people are in a disturbed and unsettled state, the industries of the country are greatly interrupted and neglected. No doubt we see only the brightest side of the picture at this distance, as it is presented to us by the victors. There is evidently a great deal of work to be done by our generals and diplomats out there before trade will be established on a good working basis. Even Rangoon may depend for much of its supplies on the native craft, or lumberers, bringing the teak down the river; and though every facility will doubtless be afforded by British cruisers, native confidence will probably be wanting till the administration is settled. If the native merchants are not afraid of British interference with the river traffic, they may be doubtful of marauding parties composed of their own people, for public disorder and political revolutions are the opportunities of desperadoes in all communities.

The close of the year being now upon us, and the Christmas holidays, at this present issue, in full festivity, the timber and building trades have settled down into their customary quietude at this season. On all sides we are admonished that the year's work is done, and nothing new in the way of business will be undertaken till 1886 puts in its appearance, and imparts new hopes to those who have despaired of a trade revival during 1885. It is not yet time to reckon up the business of the year, but we may take a survey of the distribution of our timber imports up to the end of November, as these form a good index to the state of business in the various parts of the kingdom to which they refer themselves, and altogether form a body of useful information to be obtained, for the moment, in no other work, not even from the Board of Trade publications.

Though the imports up to the end of November exceeded by 151,933 loads the supply of timber goods at that date last year, very little of the excess had found its way to great depots of the trade.

London, the Leviathan of the realm as a swallower up of cargoes, is not accountable so far for a stick of the excess. For the month of November, it is true, it took in some 43,000 loads more than the November preceding; but in the total reckoning for the eleven months it is more than 30,000 loads short in the comparison. It must not on that account be concluded that we are without a sufficient supply here. On the contrary, though keeping within such reasonable limits, London is as well prepared for a better demand, probably, as any part of the country. Liverpool in like manner is well within bounds. It has only just turned the corner by less than 2,000 loads, and cannot therefore be accused of overtrading in timber. One year (1877) Liverpool imported more than half as much as London, but never since. The difference now between these two great emporiums is about in the proportion of 13 1/2 to 6. But London apart, there is no other port that approaches the timber trade of Liverpool. Hull which is next in dignity, has also to acknowledge a slice of the surplus over its last year's import, up till the end of November; till which return it was in arrears. Now it stands in advance by about 30,000 loads. But this is more than off-set by Cardiff, which is above 40,000 loads behind. The greatest spring appears to have been made by Grimsby, which if not a chief timber port seems to be fast becoming one, and fully alive to all the local advantages it possesses. Of the excess aforesaid, Grimsby has seized the huge cantle of 63,000 loads—like a young Hercules throwing a bullock across his shoulders, and walking off with it, as if there was nothing remarkable in the circumstance. Hartlepool just maintains its ground modestly, as if in no hurry to put forth its strength. It is even about 17,000 loads short of last year, and finds itself nevertheless in tolerable good case to meet any improved demand likely to take place when the days get longer. Newport (Monmouthshire) has its trade well in hand too, as if doing a steady business a little within the mark by about 4,000

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loads less than twelve months ago. If not a spring Grangemouth may at least be said to have taken a long, a very long stride, that is, from 127,000 to 174,000 loads. But Grangemouth has a heavy duty to perform, as Glasgow looks to it for its east country timber goods, and therefore 40,000 loads more or less is no great object to that small but ever busy port of the Firth of Forth. Sunderland has gone ahead by 7,000 loads; and Swansea has fallen in the rear by 10,000, while Greenock has taken a cut in of 17,000 loads, and increase rear, of nearly 20 per cent. on the figures of last year, and Leith 13,000 loads. Montrose is perhaps flooring trade in better heart for 10,000 loads of the surplus have gone there. Newcastle, suffering from the general complaint of poor trade, and not at above letting us know it, has, nevertheless, taken a small surplus of 8,000 loads to carry on with. It is one of those places which are always busy, but which in the busiest time delights to complain that it has not half enough to do. Thus its figures do not always correspond with its lamentations.

Most of the Scotch ports, besides those we have mentioned, have imported short, and likewise all the Irish ports of any note except Waterford and Dublin. Even Belfast is 6,000 loads in arrears, and has dropped far astern of the capital with which in the timber trade it used to compete. Dublin up to date has imported more than four times as much as Belfast, and the southern ports look very small indeed in the comparison. It will be seen that already the total import up to November 30th, wanted but a trifle of 6,000,000 loads; and it needs no divination to forecast that the December returns are not likely to fall far short of those for the same month last year, as to the timber trade, so that the supply is pretty sure to be a full average one, upon the whole. And it is greatly to the credit of the trade that with so large an importation, on a very dull year, it goes on just as steadily as if the business to be done was as good as over. But it has at least provided itself with the means to do a good trade, and though, as we have said, few signs of its present themselves to us on the surface, they may work upwards in a short time, and be palpable to us all. According to American ideas, we ought to congratulate ourselves that the bank raised its rate of discount from 3 to 4 per cent. last week. They argue that a cause of dull trade is a cheapness of money. This does not quite conform to

the experience of our own country; but if we find that the rise of bank rate is no check to business, we shall be half inclined to adopt their theory.

Four per cent. may possibly be the happy medium, the palladium of trade, the talisman of safe business. To be very high at 6 or 7 per cent., we know is bad, and at under 2 per cent. our cousins over there say it is so. Between these two extremes there is possibly a middle term in which trade especially rejoices. Let us hope that our great financiers will hit upon it ere long, and that the trade of the new year may be more prosperous than that of the one which is now taking leave of us. It will yet be something to be thankful for if we find it no worse.—*Timber Trades Journal.*

WOOD-WORKING PATENTS.

- The following list of patents relating to the wood-working interests, granted by the United States Patent Office, December 29th, 1885, is specially reported by Franklyn H. Hough, solicitor of American and Foreign patents, 925 F. Street, N. W., Washington, D. C.
- 333,295—Dove tailing machine, automatic switch for—C. Graff, Logan, Utah Territory.
 - 333,228—Sash fastener—J. Hutch, Canton, Ohio.
 - 333,240—Sash or door fastener—C. Longbottom, Bradford, County of Cork, England.
 - 333,191—Sash weights, chill mould for—B. Anderson, Urbana, Ohio.
 - 333,438—Sash, window—L. L. Arnold, Buffalo, N. Y.
 - 333,339—Saw guide—H. W. Roberts, Duncan City, Mich.
 - 333,244—Saw mill, set works for—T. J. Leacy, Milwaukee, Wis.
- PATENTS ISSUED JAN 5.
- 333,604—C. M. Stovenson, Syracuse, N. Y.
 - 333,664—Saw mill carriage—T. W. Peck, Milwaukee, Wis.
 - 333,843—Sawing machine, fire wood—I. Gillmore, Dewitt, Iowa.
 - 333,562—Saw table gauge—D. W. Standefer, Oakland, Cal.
 - 333,777—Saw Buck—H. Palmer, Banon, Conn.

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