

of concrete and granite in the construction of Dry Docks, but we are surprised at the argument advanced by Alderman Stephen, in his speech supporting the concessions to the company. Alderman Stephen said—"The whole matter in dispute was narrowed down to a fine point, viz., that of sidewalls. The company and the Council place different constructions upon a clause of the contract. But the company had entered into a contract with the contractors for the work upon the understanding of the clause. To make any alterations in the contract now would open up a large avenue for 'extras.' The only difference between the two is this—shall 2000 yards of the facing of the dock be built of granite, at a cost of \$21 a yard, or of concrete at \$6 a yard—a difference of \$30,000."

As a matter of fact, the company had no right to enter into any contract until the plans and specifications had been laid before and accepted by the City Council of Halifax; but, admitting that the exigencies of the case required that the contract between the company and the city should not be adhered to according to the strict letter of the law, it appears passing strange that the Council should concede to the company the right of using a cheap material in the construction of the dock without demanding on behalf of our citizens either a deduction from the bonus of \$200,000 granted by the city, or improvements equal in value to the difference in the cost of siding with concrete or granite. Considering that the widening of the dock will increase its cost by eight or ten thousand dollars, and that the substitution of concrete for granite will diminish its cost by \$35,000, the Council should indeed have good and sufficient reasons for presenting the company with the difference of \$25,000.

Alderman Pearson said:—"The contract calls for the expenditure in this city of £198,000, which certain Aldermen, by their demagogic arguments, will cause us to lose."

Alderman Pearson is a member of the Board of Works, and should know whereof he speaks; but if he has given the question of dock construction and contract-letting the study it deserves, he must know that there is not infrequently a wide margin between the contract price and the actual expenditure on the work contracted for.

As a naval officer and a gentleman, Sir J. E. Commerel is respected by all classes of our citizens, but in a business matter such as the construction of a first-class graving dock, we are not called upon to make concessions on this score. The company contracted with the city to carry out a certain agreement; by the concessions made, the Council pledges itself to pay the company ten thousand dollars a year for twenty years, as formerly agreed upon, and at the same time releases it from an expenditure of \$25,000. If there are good and sufficient reasons why this should have been done, the Council should take the public into its confidence; otherwise suspicions, which may be quite false, will be aroused; and when the day for explanations is passed, some of our civic fathers may find themselves in an awkward box.

THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON TRADE—FINAL REPORT.

The final Report of the Royal Commission on the Depression of Trade and Industry in Great Britain, over which the late Lord Iddesleigh presided, has been published. The result of the inquiry has been the presentation of three reports. The first embodies the views of the majority of the Commission, but to it are appended certain reservations and remarks by some of the members. The second report is presented by Lord Dunraven and three other members of the Commission, while the third report is signed by Mr. Arthur O'Connor, who differs from the entire body of his colleagues. Practically, the Commission divides on the question of Free Trade, the chief minority report embodying the opinions of the gentlemen who are recognized Fair Traders. The first portion of the report of the majority deals with the method of enquiry. The report states that the Commissioners selected four typical industries for investigation, namely, the iron and coal trades, the textile industries, agriculture and shipping, these being in turn sub-divided into the various minor trades that are associated with them. The report states—summarizing very briefly the answers which we received to our questions, and the moral evidence given before us, there would appear to be a general agreement among those whom we consulted:—

(a) That the trade and industry of the country are in a condition which may be fairly described as depressed.

(b) That by this depression is meant a diminution, and in some cases an absence of profit, with a corresponding diminution of employment for the laboring classes.

(c) That neither the volume of trade nor the amount of capital invested therein has materially fallen off, though the latter has in many cases depreciated in value.

(d) That the depression above referred to dates from about the year 1875, and that, with the exception of a short period of prosperity enjoyed by certain branches of trade in the years 1880 to 1883, it has proceeded with tolerable uniformity, and has affected the trade and industry of the country generally, but more especially those branches which are connected with agriculture.

As regards the causes which have contributed to bring about this state of things, there was, as might be expected, less unanimity of opinion; but the following enumeration will, we think, include all those to which any importance was attached:—(1) Over-production; (2) a continuous fall of prices, caused by an appreciation of the standard of value; (3) the effect of foreign tariffs and bounties, and the restrictive commercial policy of foreign countries in limiting our markets; (4) foreign competition, which we are beginning to feel both in our own and in neutral markets; (5) an increase in local taxation and the burdens on industry generally; (6)

cheaper rates of carriage enjoyed by our foreign competitors; (7) legislation affecting the employment of labor in industrial undertakings; (8) superior technical education of the workmen in foreign countries. After dealing at length with the nature and extent of the depression, the authors of the report, proceeding to the question of remedies, say they have but few definite recommendations to make. They say:—"The great object to be aimed at is, we need hardly say, the cheapening of the cost of production so far as it can be done consistently with the maintenance of sound quality and good workmanship. In the competition for business, which has become so intense during the last few years, this will be the only means of securing success, and we have natural advantages in this respect such as are possessed by few of our rivals. We think also that the increasing severity of the competition of foreign countries is a matter deserving more serious attention than it has received at the hands of our commercial and industrial classes. We cannot, perhaps, hope to maintain, to the same extent as heretofore, the lead which we formerly held among the manufacturing nations of the world. Various causes contributed to give us a position far in advance of other countries, which we were well able to hold for many years; but those causes could not have been expected to operate permanently, and our supremacy is now being assailed on all sides. In order to do so, however, it is obvious that we must display greater activity in the search for new markets, and greater readiness to accommodate our productions to local tastes and peculiarities. In the matter of education we seem to be particularly deficient as compared with some of our foreign competitors; and this remark applies not only to what is usually called technical education, but to the ordinary commercial education which is required in mercantile houses, and especially the knowledge of foreign languages. In the course of our inquiry we have frequently experienced the want of accurate statistics with regard to the details of our home trade. We would strongly recommend that steps should be taken to procure fuller information both as to the production of the leading industries of the country and as to the distribution of our industrial population. If annual returns on some or all of these points could not conveniently be prepared, they might be issued at intervals of two, or at most three, years. In addition to the natural result of an accumulation of capital, which is proceeding at a more rapid rate than the demand which will alone enable it to be profitably employed, one of the commonest explanations of the depression or absence of profit is that known under the name of over-production; by which we understand the production of commodities, or even the existence of a capacity for production, at a time when the demand is not sufficiently brisk to maintain a remunerative price to the producer, and to afford him an adequate return on his capital. We think that such an over-production has been one of the prominent features of the course of trade during recent years; and that the depression under which we are now suffering may be partially explained by this fact."

Nova Scotians should take note of the fact that in England there is an accumulation of capital seeking in vain for profitable employment, and should make a determined effort to advertise the great natural resources of this Province in that country. No part of the world presents a more inviting field to the capitalist; nowhere else can money be invested to greater advantage than here, and it is not creditable to our enterprise that the fact remains unknown in the great financial centre of the world.

BRITAIN'S NEW PROVINCE.

When, on New Year's Day, 1886, the annexation of Burmah was proclaimed, it was generally believed that a valuable possession had been cheaply secured. But it must be confessed that the operations of 1886 have shown the work of occupation to be more difficult than that of conquest. Among the mountains and jungles of Burmah, warlike tribes have incessantly harassed our advancing troops. The plundering Dacoits have swept like a pack of hungry wolves through all the unprotected parts of the country. It was only at the very end of the year that the Ruby Mine column reached the mines, which lie only about sixty miles north-east of Mandalay. More recent despatches, however, show that the resistance of the native chiefs is almost at an end. Several have already submitted; some have accepted employment from the British government; the priestly authority, a very important power Burmah, has pronounced in favor of British rule. General Roberts has called on the patriarch, and together they have made conciliatory comments on the agreement between Buddhism and Christianity on the subjects of justice and mercy. All will be well in that quarter.

A glance at the condition of Burmah will enable us to judge of the importance of its annexation to India. It opens a highway to trade with China. Indeed the Chinese have long had most intimate dealings with the Burmese. Chinese customs and dress prevail in Burmah. The Chinese work the Burmese mines and buy Burman raw cotton, ornamental feathers, edible birds' nests, ivory and precious stones. The mineral wealth of the country, consisting in gold, silver, iron, copper, tin, lead, and precious stones, is vast but undeveloped. This is also true of agriculture and the other sources of wealth; for the Burmese are a non-progressive race, and their political institutions do not encourage progress. It is high time that some foreign power gave an impulse to their sluggish national life. The ruby fields, covering about 100 square miles, are said to be worth 12,000 to 15,000 pounds sterling a year; though, as they were regarded as the exclusive property of the king, reliable information concerning them is scanty. These will probably be taken over by the Indian government, and it is likely that their productiveness will be largely increased. It is expected that Sir Charles Bernard or Sir Leppel Griffin will receive the lieutenant-governorship of Burmah, with General White in military command.