

some inflammable article, by bringing such article into contact with an electric bulb cannot create a flame, whereas every day's experience shows instances of stores being set on fire by some article being thrown against a gas jet, or a gas jet being allowed to flash up suddenly so as to reach some substance usually out of reach of the flame when under control. It is quite easy to have electric lights so placed as to be absolutely free from danger by contact with goods, but it is difficult to place gas jets for illuminating purposes that are not liable to be the causes of a fire. Christmas window displays may be made more brilliant than day with electric lights so placed as to be absolutely free of danger. To get the same degree of illumination by gas is practically impossible, and any approach to such brilliance of lighting by gas as electricity gives involves quite serious risks of fire.

A passage in the report of Boston Cheap Underwriters' Association, dated 12th Buildings inst., reads:—

Most Costly. "There is reason for believing that some of the leading architects in this city have come to the conclusion that, considering the ease of construction, cost of maintenance and insurance, a "first-class" building, that is, a fireproof building, is a better investment for the owner of real estate than is a "second-class" building. The first cost may be a little greater, but in the judgment of the authorities named the depreciation which takes place in six or eight years in a second-class building is far greater than that which occurs in the case of a first-class building, thus fully offsetting the difference in the original investment."

The conclusion of Boston architects has long been the conviction of all who have had any experience in handling buildings of any class. A cheap structure, unless for merely temporary use, is always more costly in the long run than one well built. Deterioration of all buildings begins the moment they are complete. In the first or second year repairs are needed, and the cheaper the structure the sooner these annual repairs become a serious item. The annual outlay on a cheap building for renovations soon amounts to a large percentage of its rental value, and in a few years the repairs account amounts to a sum equal to the original cost. The danger of fire is largely increased by cheap work in buildings. Even a very costly edifice may be a bad fire risk, owing to cheap work having been done in some part of it owing to the architect's neglect, or the builder's incompetence, or worse. The "Insurance Press" makes, in this connection, a very pertinent remark:—

"Fire insurance men no longer consider solely the finished structure. The hazards which they must measure are built day by day as the structure proceeds. The analysis which underwriters must make in order to fix rates of insurance equitably and scientifically extends to the lowest level of the foundations and to the highest point of the roof. Materials and methods concern them vitally."

The most hazardous parts of a building are only exposed when under construction. Flues, for instance, in the most costly edifice may be very defective, but the danger of them is only manifested by a

fire, usually said to be mysterious in origin, as it is to all but some bricklayer or carpenter who scamped his work and exposed the building to a fire risk that would not have existed but for his neglect. First cost in a building is no basis or guide for an estimate of what it will yield as an investment. The fire risk is very rarely considered as a factor in calculating what revenue a building will return. Were this recognised, as it should be, there would be a general demand for fireproof wood for use in all manner of structures. Were this precaution adopted, the fire risk would become a more reasonably negligible factor than it is at present, when so many fires occur from, or are materially increased in intensity by the use of wood that is readily ignited. The increased sense of security alone in a building where fireproof wood is used is worth the extra cost, and the ultimate saving it is so highly calculated to effect adds materially to the value of a building from an investment standpoint.

A German semi-official report **German Report on** gives a table showing the relative **British Trade.** percentages of the world's trade conducted by Great Britain, the British Empire, Germany, the United States and France. They are as follows, as quoted by the "Evening Post":—

RELATIVE PERCENTAGE OF THE WORLD'S TRADE.

	1900.	1890.	1882.
Great Britain.....	17.4	18.4	19.7
British Empire.....	31.8	31.5	31.4
German Empire.....	11.8	10.9	10.3
United States.....	10.9	9.9	9.2
France.....	7.8	9.7	11.9

Percentages derived from the various trade returns of different countries, all made up on a different system, can only be approximately correct. The probability is very great that the returns of the country where such statistics are compiled will be more accurate than those of foreign countries, as the compiler is certain to be more familiar with the trade returns of his own country and have more authentic reports for reference. Assuming, however, the reliability of above percentages, they do not favour the theory that other countries are making serious inroads into British trade. Great Britain still holds 17.4 per cent. of the world's trade as against 11.8 by Germany, 10.9 by United States and 7.8 by France. The old land has only lost 2 per cent. of the world's trade in eighteen years, during which time the trade of Germany and the States has been largely developed. Some of the trade Great Britain has lost has gone to her Colonies, so it is still "all in the family." It is well to remember that Great Britain has a population of only half the United States and many millions less than Germany. The increase in population of these rivals since 1882 ought to have increased their trade far more than it has done; in fact, in proportion to population, the percentage of the world's trade done by the States has declined heavily since 1882.

From official reports, already published, it is certain that the volume of British trade this year will be the largest on record, and the largest also ever transacted by any country. The alleged decadence of Great Britain is a myth.