

vessels for foreign trade in 1860, when the tonnage of the United Kingdom was only four millions and a half. In short, the United States merchant navy in 1860 was much more than half as large as that of the United Kingdom: in 1888 it was little more than one-eighth. Yet there are people who grumble at Free Trade.—*London Daily News*.

This "internal trade" of the United States is that wherein only American built vessels are employed, including all trade between different ports in that country—coastwise and river—and from which all foreign vessels are excluded. Although not as large as the trans-Atlantic steamers, those engaged in the coastwise trade are as staunch, strong, seaworthy, fast, comfortable, safe and as elegantly furnished and equipped; and they reflect most creditably upon American enterprise. According to the *Daily News*, in 1888 the total tonnage of the British Empire was 9,209,883, of which 7,427,753 belonged to Great Britain, the balance, 1,782,130 tons, being distributed among the different dependencies. While the *Daily News* may be correct in its general statement, it is evidently badly astray when it says that the merchant navy of the United States in 1888 was little more than one-eighth that of the United Kingdom. It evidently had reference to the 943,784 tons 'registered for over-sea.'

The sentence, "Yet there are people who grumble at Free Trade," involves an inquiry. By it is sought to be conveyed the impression that Free Trade is conducive to the building up of vast commercial navies by all those countries which practise it; and that Protection works contrariwise. The *Daily News* displays the fact that in 1887 only two European countries had over a million tons of merchant shipping: Norway, with 1,503,572, and the German Empire with 1,240,182 tons; France coming next with 972,526 tons, and then Italy with 895,625 tons. The inquiry is concerning the benefit Free Trade is to the British Empire outside of Great Britain. Why is it that all the balance of the Empire possess but 1,782,130 tons of shipping, as against 7,427,753 tons for Great Britain? If the fact is of any value it proves that the policy of Great Britain is to suppress ship-building everywhere else than in Great Britain, and that British Colonies and dependencies stand in no more favorable position in this respect than foreign countries.

To Americans it is a lamentable fact that their shipping "registered for over-sea" does not maintain the prestige it did thirty years ago; and it is evident that the most salient cause is that this part of their mercantile navy does not receive the protection and encouragement accorded to what is known as their coastwise and river shipping. In this latter business it is unlawful for any foreign vessel to engage; for no foreign vessel is permitted to convey either freight or passengers between ports in the United States.

The transition from sailing vessels to steamers in the carrying trade of the world occurred when the United States was engaged in suppressing a most formidable rebellion; and when that country recovered from that struggle it was to find that Great Britain held almost entire control of ocean transportation. The United States had previously abandoned a feature of its tariff laws by which discrimination was made in favor of American vessels; and ever since the war political influences there have prevented the re-establishment of such discrimination. In 1850 from eighty to ninety per cent. of the foreign

commerce of the United States was carried in American ships—now they carry not exceeding ten per cent. In 1850 the value of that foreign trade amounted to about \$300,000,000, while in 1887 it was \$1,500,000,000; and for years that country has paid the shipping of other countries about \$100,000,000 annually for freights on American exports and imports, while American vessels have been paid not exceeding one-tenth of that amount. For many years Great Britain has been paying large subsidies to her steamship lines, aggregating from \$3,000,000 to \$5,000,000 a year; in one instance at least guaranteeing to one line a net annual dividend of eight per cent. This may be a species of Free Trade, but it is strongly flavored with Protection.

On the other hand the pay accorded by the United States to its own ships for carrying its mails to foreign countries in the face of foreign competition is ridiculously small as compared with what other nations pay for similar service, and more than mean and parsimonious as compared with what it pays American vessels engaged in its coastwise and river trade, where there can be no foreign competition. During the last year for which the facts are attainable, the United States paid \$44,500 for the transportation of mails on steamers plying on Arkansas rivers, and only \$13,715 for carrying the mails across the Pacific Ocean to Japan. It paid \$54,700 for river mail service in Washington Territory, and only \$42,593 to all Asiatic and Australian ports. It paid \$79,637 for carrying the mails on the rivers of Florida, but only \$47,997 for sending them to all Central and South American countries and the entire West Indies, except to Havana. It paid \$20,879 for steamboat mail service on the Ohio River between Paducah and Louisville; \$101,566 to subsidize stage coaches in Nevada; \$239,568 in Washington Territory; \$163,893 in Idaho, and \$417,000 in Colorado, and but \$86,890 to all American steamers carrying the American mails to all foreign countries.

It is one of the strangest phases of American politics and statesmanship that this anomalous condition should exist.

#### FLAX AND ITS PRODUCTS.

DURING the first three months of the year 1889 the importations into the United States of manufactures of flax aggregated \$7,445,199, and the importations of flax and substitutes thereof, unmanufactured, aggregated \$6,086,957, a grand total of \$13,532,156. This is at the rate of over a million dollars a week.

The soil and climate of both the United States and Canada are quite as well adapted to the successful cultivation of flax as is that of Ireland, Russia and Germany, and yet the industry on this side the ocean is almost entirely neglected, or carried on in such a desultory manner that it can scarcely be taken into account when considering the extent of it in the two countries. It indicates an astonishing short-sightedness on the part of Canadian and American farmers and manufacturers that flax is not more extensively grown, for it could be always counted on as a sure crop that would produce an average of about fifteen bushels of seed per acre, worth a dollar a bushel: two and a half tons of flax straw worth \$20 per ton, from which could be produced a thousand pounds of flax fibre, worth \$200 a ton. It would seem to any thoughtful person that this is a matter worthy of consideration.