



BRITISH TRADE AND REVENUE.

The Commissioners of Customs in their annual report, advert to the causes of the decline in the revenue from the customs during the past year, and they state that they cannot confidently expect that the tide which has apparently turned to a more hopeful flow of prosperity will produce its effect on our revenue by increasing its receipts until the demand for labour is once more in excess of its supply, and general employment at improved wages has become the realised consequence.

The Revenue Customs diminished in 1879 in comparison with that of the preceding year to the extent of £460,676; that of Ireland, notwithstanding the severe distress which prevailed in parts of it during the latter part of 1879, increased by £39,700. It appears that the total value of the imports in the year 1879 was £362,991,000, against £368,770,000 in the year 1878, being a decrease of £5,779,000, or 1·5 per cent. After a great increase in the total value in the year 1877, when the amount reached £394,419,000, the highest on record, it fell to £368,770,000 in 1878, so that the figures given for the year 1879 represent a very considerable decrease upon the diminished value of the previous year, and, comparing the results of the two years 1877 and 1879, there is a diminution of 31 millions, or 8 per cent. The total weight of the principal ores, metals, and metal manufactures of all kinds imported in 1879 was 1,736,000 tons, and the value £13,213,000.

The quantity of spirits of all kinds imported in 1879 was 13,546,000 gallons, against 12,211,000 gallons in 1878, or an increase of 1,335,000 gallons, equal to 10 per cent. The total value of spirits in 1879 was £3,000,000. The importation of tobacco of all sorts was comparatively small, being only 42,452,000 lb., against 93,059,000 lb. in 1878, a falling off of 50,607,000 lb., or 54 per cent. The large importations in the three previous years had the effect of keeping up the stock in the bonded warehouses to a very high figure, there being a diminution in the stock of only 18,156,000 lb., or 13·4 per cent, as regards the year 1878, but an increase of 7 per cent upon the stock of 1877. The decrease in the importation of wine is as conspicuous as in 1878, having fallen from 16,452,000 gallons to 15,162,000 gallons, or 7·8 per cent. The following figures show the decline that has taken place since the year 1877, when the diminished importations began—viz., 1877, 19,568,000 gallons; 1878, 16,452,000 gallons; and 1879, 15,162,000 gallons.

The increase of £1,000,000 in imports from British possessions is the net result of increases and decreases of no considerable amount. The largest increases are those of £1,000,000 in the value of the imports from the Dominion of Canada—three quarters of a million in the value of those from New South Wales, £636,000 in those from the British West Indies, and half a million in those from New Zealand. The decreases are to be found under the heads of India for £2,000,000, Mauritius for £246,000, and some other smaller sums not indicating any changes of importance. There was a decrease of 3 per cent in the value of the exports upon the year, those for 1879 being £191,531,758, as against £192,848,914 in 1878. The Commissioners think it scarcely necessary to notice any other country than the United States of America in tracing the cause of the increase in British exports, as seen in the total value for the foreign countries. The total value of the exports to the United States increased from £14,552,076 in 1878 to £20,321,990 in 1879, or 39·6 per cent. The difference is to be found chiefly in the large quantities of iron of all kinds. In order to show the relative value of the principal articles exported from this country, the Commissioners have had the following list prepared, showing the goods exported in 1879, in the order

of their total value, and grouping together all that can be fairly designated by a common title:—

Cotton manufactures, including yarn, £63,974,053; woollen manufactures, including yarn, £19,575,396; iron and steel, unwrought and wrought, £19,417,363; apparel, &c., including haberdashery, hats, and umbrellas, £7,924,348; coals, cinders, and fuel, and products of coal, peat, or shale, £7,708,591; machinery and mill-work of all sorts, £7,279,205; linen manufactures, including yarn, £6,549,094; chemical products, &c., including alkali, bleaching materials, manure, and medicines, £6,167,753; articles of food and consumption, comprehending beer and ale, biscuit and bread, butter, cheese, corn, fish, provisions unenumerated, British spirits, and British wine, £6,026,604; jute manufactures, including yarn and bags empty, £3,601,080; leather of all sorts, including saddlery and harness, £3,566,054; hardware and cutlery, including implements, £3,392,480; copper, unwrought and wrought, £3,082,479; books, printed paper, stationery, and prints, £2,764,024; silk manufactures, including yarn, £2,391,944; earthen and china ware and clay manufactures, £1,975,744; oil seed and other sorts, £1,733,026; skins of all sorts, including foreign dressed in the United Kingdom and raw hides, £1,380,133; wool, sheep and lambs, and other sorts, including foreign dressed in the United Kingdom, £1,379,968; pickles, sauces, and oilman's stores, including candles and soap, £1,226,879; arms and ammunition of all sorts, £1,092,213; painters' colours, £1,039,914; furniture, household, and oil cloth, £816,459; glass of all kinds, £783,033; caoutchouc, manufactures of, £761,717; lead, pig, rolled and sheet, £566,966; cement, £551,888.

Comparing 1865 and 1879 this country consumed in the latter year seven times as many hundredweights of imported bacon and hams, more than three times as much beef, nearly three times as much cocoa, twice as much butter and cheese, and nearly three times as much corn. These facts point to a rapidly improving condition of the labouring classes. The exact figures of these increases were:—Bacon and hams, from 713,346 cwt. to 4,917,631 cwt.; beef, from 344,431 cwt. to 812,237 cwt.; butter, from 1,083,717 cwt. to 2,045,399 cwt.; cheese, from 853,277 cwt. to 1,789,721 cwt.; cocoa, from 7,464,982 lb. to 26,155,788 lb.; and corn of all kinds from 49,492,111 cwt. to 136,743,743 cwt. Eggs, for which we are mainly dependent upon France, owing to the neglect by British farmers of the small industries, were sent in 1865 to the number of 364,000,000, and the ready sale here induced the producers to increase the poultry farms sufficiently to send us more than double the number last year—namely, 763,000,000. This item of eggs may undoubtedly be reckoned as a home consumption, although it is a probable that a portion of the other articles previously named are received by the merchants in this country only to pass them on to other markets. Of fish, the culture of which is not at all developed as it might be, we imported under half a million cwts. in 1865, and 1,160,140 cwts. last year. Currants and raisins, dependent as they are upon the weather, within the limited area of the production, increased but slightly; but twice as many oranges and lemons were consumed last year as fifteen years before—namely, 3,433,059 bushels, as compared with 1,566,745. Potatoes advanced from 806,753 cwt. to 9,357,179. In coffee, the increase was from 1,232,120 cwt. to 1,609,336 cwt.; while of tea there were 63,000,000 more pounds imported last year than in 1865, the total import being 184,076,472 lb., of the value of £11,262,593, or about half a million sterling more than the total cost of the British Navy in this present year of grace.