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THE STATE OF THE IRON TRADE.

The present condition of the iron trade of the country is fully set forth in the recent report of the American Iron and Steel Association. Rather a discouraging view is taken of matters on the whole, and to the panic is ascribed a state of affairs on which no immediate improvement is predicted. The question of British competition is dwelt upon at length; and judging from the tone of the English industrial journals, there seems foundation for the belief that the foreign iron masters expect a reduction of duties in their favor, and, in any event, can afford to reduce their profits and continue shipments. The report strongly deprecates any reduction of tariff and advocates an increase, pointing its argument by citing the fact that during last year the British ironmasters sent to this country 371,164 tons of iron and steel, valued at \$25,000,000, and this while our own blast furnaces and rolling mills were lying idle. In other words, we paid to foreign manufacturers, prices for their goods which our own producers would, in the time of their distress, have been glad to have accepted.

In discussing the effects of the panic, it is stated that the home iron trade was more injuriously affected than any other industry. During December, signs of a revival appeared and some pig iron changed hands at a very low rate, but many of the sales then effected were merely speculative. January has been dull, and the present month has opened with no brighter promise. The stoppage of railroad orders is considered as the principal cause of the depression, for the reason that fully half of our iron production and importation has ordinarily been required for locomotives, bridges, car wheels, relaying tracks, etc. Until the railroad companies re-enter the market, there can clearly be no general improvement in any branch of the iron business. Subordinate causes of the continued dullness may be found also in the interruption caused by the panic in all operations largely requiring iron, and in the enforced economy of the people in dispensing with minor articles of iron manufacture which they could temporarily do without.

At the close of 1873, there were 650 blast furnaces in the country, which were either making pig iron or were prepared to make it. From 385 of these, reports have been collected and tabulated. Assuming that a proportionate number of the furnaces not heard from were out of blast and had a proportionate quantity of tons of pig iron on hand or unsold on January 1, 1874, the total number of stacks at that date, out of blast, would be 233, or thirty-six per cent of the whole number. The total amount of pig iron on hand or unsold would be 520,726 net tons, and the number of men out of employment, 21,141.

Fifty out of the fifty-seven rolling mills have sent returns. Of these 17 were running, December 31, 1873, 10 on full and 7 on half time; 33 were standing; 11,490 men were wholly unemployed, 10,150 were at work at half time; 37 mills were not selling rails, and there were 36,744 net tons of rails on hand and unsold at the above date.

This exposition of the state of the two leading branches of the trade is, at best, far from encouraging. Over 30,000 hands are wholly unemployed; and this aggregate does not include ore and coal miners, not directly connected with furnaces or mills, and who are also thrown out of work from the same causes. The iron ore statistics of the Lake Superior region show an increase in the amount shipped for 1873, as against that of 1872, of 211,002 tons gross. Much of the ore, however, mined was not shipped, owing to the panic. At the beginning of 1873, the price at Cleveland, for first class Lake Superior specular ore, was \$12; during the panic this fell to \$10, and it is believed that for 1874 the price will be as low as \$9. Iron Mountain ore will be \$8 delivered at St. Louis.

The total number of miles of railroad in operation, January 1, 1874, was 71,109, as against 67,104 a year back. Increase, 4,005 miles built, or considerably less than the figures of 1872, when 6,427 miles were constructed.

The report gives extended statistics of the comparative status of the British iron trade. The total export of 1873, of iron and steel, was 2,959,314 tons, estimated at \$188,897,940 less in amount than for either of two previous years, but greater in value. The export to the United States has fallen off fully one half; the figures for 1872-3 and 4, being 840,085, 795,734 and 371,164 tons. During the latter part of 1873, there was a decline in the cost of fuel and labor, which bids fair to be permanent, and the coming year, it is believed, will witness lower prices for iron in the British markets than prevailed during the previous year. The vessels built on the Clyde were 194 against 227 in 1872; the tonnage, however, exhibits considerable increase. The coal trade is said to be a reflex of the iron business, with declining prices as the rule.

The Iron and Steel Association is now in session at Philadelphia, and all the great establishments are fully represented. Such a gathering of capital and influence has never taken place in any iron convention, heretofore held in the United States. A memorial has been prepared for transmission to Congress, which prays for the repeal of the substance of the ten per cent reduction act, passed in 1872, affecting a large number of staple articles, suggests amendments to the bankrupt act, protests against proposed alterations in the tariff laws, against changes in the customs duties to be effected by laws now pending in the House, advocates the establishment of a department of industry, with subordinate bureaux of agriculture, commerce and manufactures, and discusses financial topics and a protective policy.

Two objects of considerable interest have thus far been exhibited. One is a twisted steel Bessemer rail from the Joliet Iron and Steel Company's Works, which is a beautiful piece of work, the rail being made into a complete spiral without developing the slightest flaw or fracture. The other is an ingot of steel, weighing 1,000 pounds, made direct from the ore, for the first time in this country, by the Blair Iron and Steel Company of Pittsburgh.

The proceedings of the convention bid fair to be of considerable importance, and will be made the subject of future comment in these columns.

OZONE—A NEW AND CORRECT METHOD OF SUPPLY.

The use of ozone as a disinfectant in hospital wards and public buildings has amply demonstrated its virtue as a purifier of air exhausted by breathing or poisoned with emanations from corrupt or decaying organic matter. The only bar to its more extended use has been the lack of a simple and trustworthy means of generating it, safely and continuously, by a process not involving scientific skill or costly materials.

The latest means suggested certainly bears the palm for simplicity, cheapness, and accessibility to all. It consists simply in the exposure to atmospheric action of common phosphorous matches moistened by water, the alleged result being the production of nitrite of ammonia and ozone—both active purifiers of air.

Knowing the efficiency of moistened phosphorous as a generator of ozone, the author of the match method, Mr. Sigismund Beer, of this city, set out one day to procure a quantity of that substance to use in sweetening the atmosphere of a room whose musty smell had successfully resisted the power of ordinary disinfectants. Failing to find any phosphorous at the drug stores in his neighborhood, it occurred to Mr. Beer that possibly lucifer matches might furnish the needed element in a condition suited to his purpose. He tried them, dipping them into warm water for a few moments, then suspending them in the obnoxious room. Their effect was prompt and salutary; and thereafter, by continuing their use, he was able to enjoy "the luxury of pure and refreshing air," notwithstanding the room was in the basement of an old cellarless house on made land, the air of which was further tainted by a quantity of moldy books and papers. In a paper lately read before the Polytechnic branch of the American Institute, Mr. Beer narrates a number of subsequent experiments with the same simple materials, the success of which convinced him that he had made a veritable discovery of great importance.

Touching the safety of the method he proposes, Mr. Beer is confident that no overcharging of the air with ozone or other injurious matter may be apprehended from the use of matches in the manner he describes. Both the ozone and the nitrite of ammonia are generated slowly, and their force is swiftly spent by combination with the impurities they are intended to remove. It is obvious that the supply of the purifying agents can be easily regulated by increasing or diminishing the number of active matches. In the room above mentioned, six bundles of matches were kept active—some near the ceiling, others near the floor—by daily watering.

In another instance a single bunch is mentioned as having sufficed for quickly purifying the air of a room in which several adults and children were lying sick, but in this case the air was fanned against the matches while they were carried about the room, thus heightening their activity. How long a match retains its ozonizing power, Mr. Beer does not say. In conclusion, Mr. Beer claims that, whatever may be said of his theory of match action, the fact is indisputable that, in the use of matches as he suggests, we have a handy, wholesome, and inexpensive means of freeing our houses from noxious exhalations and the long train of evils attendant on the prevalence of bad air. The matter is easily tested and certainly well worth trying.

EDUCATION AND BOOK KNOWLEDGE.

The high water mark of a very prevalent theory in education is reached in an assertion, by one of the foremost educators of the day, to the effect that what a man can write out fully and fairly concerning any matter, that he knows, and no more. Whatever falls short of this simple and certain test, we are told, is no better than sheer ignorance.

The phrase expresses, with axiomatic terseness, the controlling spirit of the schools; and for this reason, we suppose, it has been echoed right and left as a settled dogma in education. From the primary school up to the highest, excepting a few scientific schools, the grand test of knowledge is verbal expression. The pupil that recites best wins the prize; and as the most credit goes to that teacher whose pupils meet the standard required most completely, the tendency is to narrow the range of teaching to those things which can be most readily reproduced in formal phrases. The premium is paid for words, and naturally the teacher gives more attention to them than to the pupils' mental health or mental development.

Not that facility of verbal expression is to be despised or neglected. It is an art second to none, and worthy of proportionate culture. In many cases it is also a first rate test of knowledge; but to make it the ultimate test, in all cases, involves a double fallacy, subversive of the highest aim in education. It implies that all knowledge worth having can be expressed in words, and consequently can be communicated by words, either for informing another or for testing his information. It implies, too, that the possession of knowledge necessarily carries with it the power of ready and accurate expression.

The fact is, on the contrary, that relatively but a small part of what one may know can possibly be expressed in words; and much, even of that which can be formulated, may be thoroughly apprehended and practically used by one who could not begin to set it down in logical sentences.

Time was when book knowledge was thought to be the sole basis of scholarship. All teaching was book teaching, and it was no more than fair to expect students to prove their knowledge in book fashion. But that time is past. The bookish estimate of culture no longer satisfies. The library alone can no longer make a scholar; and every scheme of culture which pins the pupil's attention to letters is little better than a wall set round him to keep him from learning what he ought to know. That much of what passes for legitimate schooling is such a wall is recognized by everybody except the pedagogue.

Men of real culture are well aware that ability to do is vastly superior to ability to say; and they believe that the development of skill and power ought to receive at least as much attention in schooling as the mere accumulation of second hand facts; but all that sort of basic culture is not merely slighted but suppressed as soon as the test of verbal description is made supreme.

There are less than fifty sounds in the English language. If they were all devoted to the service of a single sense, all their possible combinations would be insufficient to express the distinctions which that sense might be able to recognize. There are five thousand times fifty fibrils in the optic nerve, as estimated by Helmholtz, each demonstrably capable of conveying many degrees of sensation of the several primary colors. One need not calculate the permutations of two hundred and fifty thousand to realize how meager the richest possible vocabulary of sight terms must be for the expression of sight experiences. Still greater is the poverty of language when used for expressing the infinite distinctions of thoughts and things which the whole man is capable of apprehending. Relatively, indeed, our words are but a clumsy sort of currency for certain common needs, no more sufficient for the complete expression of thoughts and feelings than bank notes are for the measurement of values. For the grosser exchanges of life, for marketable values, money answers well enough; but how shall one express in banker's figures, or set phrases either, the value of a kindly word, a mother's love, or a cup of water to one perishing of thirst?

The killing fault with the scholastic test of knowledge is that, from its nature, it fails to reach—as it fails to encourage—more than a single phase of culture, and that one of inferior grade. It measures verbal acquisition only, not skill or power; and since conduct rather than words, ability to do rather than facility in saying what has been done or ought to be done, is the ultimate test in life, and should be the paramount aim in education, the word test is necessarily deceptive as well as inadequate. The glib art critic, scarcely able to draw a straight line, might have at his tongue's end a greater array of fine art phrases than a Michael Angelo; and if suddenly called on to write out fully and fairly his knowledge of sculpture or painting, the master might be beaten by the mere theorist. So, too, the veteran shipmaster of a hundred successful voyages might make off hand a poorer display of nautical knowledge than the cadet fresh from the naval school, or possibly the concoctor of sea stories for a sensational newspaper.

THE IRON ORES OF MISSOURI.

The principal portion of the report of the Missouri Geological Survey for the past year is devoted to the iron ore deposits, which give the State so high a rank for mineral wealth. The geology of Pilot Knob and its vicinity is discussed by the chief geologist, Mr. Pumpelly, while Dr. Adolph Schmidt furnishes a general report on all the iron ores of the State. It is needless to add that the information thus given adds immensely to our knowledge of the character, distribution, and modes of occurrence of these interesting deposits.

Two principal mineral species are represented in the Mis-