

the really material points of the situation, and, with prophetic spirit explained in advance how absurd would be in 1900 any attempt by Mr. Chamberlain to use tramp steamers of old types in calculating the comparative cost of shipbuilding in Great Britain and the United States.

"The proper form in which to put the question is: Can you build a ship to do the work of the City of New York or the Majestic or the Columbia in all respects for the same cost? To that question I would reply: 'Yes, or within as small a margin as would be likely to prevail in a similar case between any two British shipyards.'

"It is a fact that the 'first cost' of ships is not only not a prime factor, but it is not even a serious factor, in any competition that may occur between this country and Great Britain for a share of the traffic of the ocean.

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"If the current policy of naval reconstruction be pursued for another decade, till (1902), coupled with a vigorous and consistent execution of the measures recently enacted in behalf of the merchant marine, the question which forms the subject of this paper will be asked no more; unless, indeed, its point should be reversed and Englishmen be asking one another, can we build ships as economically as they can in United States?

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"Put the plans and specifications of the average English tramp in the hands of American shipbuilder, and he could not duplicate her. He would build a better vessel, of superior workmanship and neater finish in every respect. * * * Under these circumstances this branch of the subject may be dismissed summarily, with the statement that an English freight ship of the usual type could not be duplicated in this country at any cost."

The actual status today is as follows: As to the building of great steamers that, as Mr. Chamberlain explains, are to characterize future ocean commerce, we lead the world. He, himself, reports as under construction here for the foreign trade only one ship of less than 5,000 tons, but two steamers each of 5,000 tons, one of 6,174 tons, one of 7,500 tons, two, each of 9,760 tons, two, each of 11,300 tons, two each of 12,260 tons, and two, each of 20,000 tons; also that our shipyards are not merely new but specially established with reference to such work; that the vessels last noted as under construction are larger than any others now in existence; that:

"American shipbuilding plants as a rule are much newer than British establishments and better equipped with labor-saving appliances, so that American labor is more effectively employed, if employed, and the relative difference

in labor cost is not altogether so great as the relative difference in rates of wages. The efficiency of labor in the shipyard depends, however, on the steadiness of the employment, and the expensive tools, which make high-priced labor economical when busy, when idle, render such labor very costly. At the present time and for some months past our shipyards have been busy, labor fully employed, and the cost of building ships here has been cheapened."

And that assured prospects ahead are for even greater prosperity of American shipbuilding for years to come—which means further cheapening of the rate at which our shipyards can and will steadily claim an increasing proportion of the world's trade.

When to this is added Mr. Hill's experience already cited, it becomes evident, on the one hand, how immaterial is the comparative cost at which British and American yards will undertake to build tramp steamers of small size—which are going out of date, and for which our new yards are not planned; and on the other, how certainly, if present conditions are not interfered with by our laws, the United States will permanently lead in shipbuilding.

No Need of Special Legislation.

In this new situation, as in so many former ones, the old alternative is presented. By subsidy legislation, we can involve such high prices as to limit at once our use of American material, our employment of American labor, and our product of American-built ships. Or, by leaving our capitalists to compete—by founding new yards, utilizing new economies in method, and devising advanced types of vessels—we can better and cheapen our product and, continuing the progress of the last few years, create demand here for the material and labor to supply, not merely our own people, but the world.

Our capitalists are competent to deal with either end of the dilemma. Enact legislation offering them extraordinary profit in corraling the American market; and they will promptly so combine to limit production and raise prices as to pocket the treasury largess with least employment of labor and capital. But give them to understand that they must depend upon their own enterprise; and they will promptly put in sufficient capital and employ enough labor to earn, by conquering the world's trade, more for themselves and far more than by the subsidy bill they now hope to get without earning.

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN.

Mr. F. Hopkinson Smith, in a recent public address, is said to have called this work of Mrs. Stowe's "the most vicious book that ever appeared," and to have said further, "we are all alike, we are

all Americans. It was an outrage to raise the North against the South. The book was an appalling, awful and criminal mistake."

Mr. Smith's language may be somewhat crude, but his main idea seems to be one that is coming generally to the surface in the stirring of the nation's intellectual caldron. It is recalled, for instance that "Uncle Tom's Cabin" was blackballed by the first book-committee of the new public library of this city, on what were practically Mr. Smith's grounds. His speech, however, has set Boston a-bawling, and the Transcript informs the world that "Uncle Tom's Cabin" is a more accurate and reliable work than the constitution of the United States.

So we are reminded again to wonder how this generation, which is not making a particularly brilliant success of its own negro problem, would have settled that with which its fathers were confronted; and also how it would have relished dictation from a certain class of New England intellects.

THE OUTRAGES IN CHINA.

What we have printed from time to time of the outrages committed by the soldiers and others on the Chinese, since the troops began their march to Peking, is only a faint shadow of the reality. Sir Robert Hart, undoubtedly the highest authority on Chinese matters, during whose long years of administering his financial department of the Chinese government there has never been the misappropriation of a single cent, has two articles in the Fortnightly Review in which he shows that even the Boxers themselves have been outdone by the lust, the outrages and the rapine of the foreign soldiers. We must steadily bear that in mind when we are denouncing the barbarism of the Chinese forsooth. "For a century to come," said a bystander in Peking, "Chinese converts will consider looting and vengeance Christian virtues."—Central Christian Advocate.

DISCRIMINATES AGAINST SMALL NEWSDEALERS.

Newsdealers are somewhat wrought up over the fact that they are not permitted to buy copies of Bryan's Commoner at the publication office on the same terms accorded to the Western News Company. Mr. Bryan sells to the latter company a day ahead of sales to other patrons and the little dealers are forced to pay the company 3 cents a copy for the Commoner while it is furnished to the news company at a lower rate, thus giving the latter a monopoly of the business. If the dealers do not wish to buy of this concern they may send to Lincoln, but they must pay the same prices. Consequently sales here have fallen off considerably.—Chicago Times-Herald.