

## BRITISH, FRENCH, AND AMERICAN STEAM SHIPPING.

### *REPORT BY CONSUL SPRAGUE, OF GIBRALTAR.*

I have to confirm my former observations with regard to the serious decline which the mercantile shipping interests of the United States continue to experience within this and other neighboring consular districts in the Mediterranean and Levant Seas.

Few are the American merchant sailing vessels that are now to be seen navigating in these waters, and as to merchant steamers under our flag, not one reaches these shores. On the other hand, the navigation by British mercantile steamers in the Mediterranean and elsewhere, in connection with the trade for the United States markets, increases.

No less than 297 steamers under the British flag have called into this port during the past year, for the purpose of coaling, bound direct to ports in the United States, most of them loaded with large and valuable cargoes from distant and neighboring foreign ports. The aggregate registered tonnage of these 297 steamers amounts to 316,032 tons.

France having for some time past obtained no marked improvement in her mercantile navigation interests, consequent to the increased number of British steamers accepting low rates of freight for all parts of the globe, which has obtained for British shipping a very firm hold on the carrying trade of the world, has lately brought forward a marine merchant bill, under the expectation that it may better her shipping interests in every way.

This bill grants a bounty, not only for the construction in France of ships, but also permits their earning a bounty for every 1,000 miles of sea traversed in their voyages. It seems to be a case of pure protection for her shipping interests, and the earnest matter with which the British officials in France have represented the matter to their government, as likely to prove very prejudicial to the interests of British shipping, suggests itself whether the legislation of some similar system in the United States might not be the means of promoting an early and direct improvement in the condition of our mercantile shipping interests, without creating any onerous effect upon the finances of the country. As can be seen by the table of navigation accompanying this report the total number of arrivals at Gibraltar during the past twelve months has been 4,082 steamers and 603 sailing vessels, of which 3,032 steamers and 253 sailing vessels were under the British flag, showing an increase of 435 steamers and a decrease of 300 sailing vessels on the preceding year.

Two lines of steamers have lately been established between the Mediterranean and New York, the "French General Transatlantic" and the "Italian Florio" companies. They consist of very superior sea-going steamers; accept cargo at a reasonable rate of freight and offer good accommodation for passengers, as they register near 2,000 tons each.

The French steamers leave Marseilles for New York, touching at Barcelona, Cadiz, Teneriffe, and West India ports. The Italian steamers leave Palermo for New York, calling at this port to coal and provision both on their outward and homeward passages, while the French only call in here on their

homeward passage. Both lines of steamers invariably land some cargo at this port, which is shipped at New York consisting generally of flour, wheat, alcohol, and tobacco.

I apprehend these steamers will eventually seriously interfere with the carrying trade, at present almost exclusively conducted by our sailing vessels between New York and this market, and be the means of establishing a fresh source of competition to the detriment of the mercantile shipping interests of the United States.

HORATIO J. SPRAGUE, Consul.

UNITED STATES CONSULATE,  
Gibraltar, October 2, 1880.

## IMPORTS AT GIBRALTER FROM THE UNITED STATES.

### *REPORT BY CONSUL SPRAGUE.*

As already often mentioned, the Gibraltar market, with the exception of the usual retail trade to meet the actual local wants of the town and garrison, is one of circumstances, as regards any important traffic in the sale of merchandise, especially as to the article of tobacco imported direct from the United States. This article being a monopoly in Spanish territory, the moment the Spanish revenue officials relax their vigilance for their own private benefit, trade is brisk, while when proper strictness is shown, as required by duty, the reverse occurs.

### TOBACCO.

For some time past the tobacco trade has been particularly quiet, and the importations during the past twelve months direct from the United States have only reached 1,252 hogsheads of Kentucky and Virginia leaf and 553 cases of tobacco cuttings, against 1,693 hogsheads and 2,535 cases during the preceding year.

The falling off in this particular branch of trade connected with the United States may perhaps be somewhat attributed to the fact of Lord Napier of Magdala, the present governor of Gibraltar, showing a great inclination to please the Spanish Government by discountenancing, to the utmost extent of his power, every act tending towards the encouragement of smuggling from this garrison through the Spanish lines and neighboring coast of Spain, by introducing local police and port regulations, which are undoubtedly of a restrictive and vexatious character, and which eventually will limit the general trade of this free port.

Lord Napier's policy is no doubt founded upon a friendly disposition towards Spain on account of Great Britain's retention of Gibraltar, which has generally been regarded as a thorn in the sides of the Spanish Dons; but such is the peculiar nature of the Spaniards on the sea-coast, I apprehend the appreciation of the British governor's policy is limited to a few, who are probably far away from the scene where contraband has been more or less carried on.

I am assured that Oran, a sea-port in Algeria, is now becoming the center for the illicit trade of tobacco into Spain by her eastern shores, indicating that a different course of policy is being pursued on the part of the French authorities to what those of Gibraltar are now disposed to adopt.

### BREADSTUFFS.

The moderate prices at which wheat and flour are ruling in the United States render it more than probable that the wants of this market will in future be chiefly met by direct American importations, to the prejudice and interference of the regular supplies usually arriving from Marseilles and other breadstuff markets in the Mediterranean. I can already perceive a falling off in the importations from these quarters, while those direct from New York are increasing and promise to be more important in future, offering a further well-grounded reason for the disquietude which seems to

pervade the principal markets of Europe for breadstuffs, consequent to the gradual increase in the shipments of American wheat to Europe, in view of the immense yield in the United States.

#### PETROLEUM.

No facilities have yet been granted for depositing any quantity of petroleum in this garrison, therefore no encouragement offers for speculation in this market. The yearly importations have reached 33,706 cases, against 48,893 cases during the preceding year.

#### ALCOHOL.

The importations of American alcohol during the past twelve months have been 92 puncheons and 2,020 barrels, showing a large excess on previous recent years, no doubt the result of its moderate cost in the Western States, which has permitted importers to command the market over foreign supplies. I must, however, observe that American alcohol is less appreciated than the German, which generally obtains a higher price here. Whether the merits of German alcohol be the result of better distilling, or from the substances distilled from, I cannot say, but certainly the trade gives it the preference, it being considered of a softer and more delicate flavor, and is preferred for reinforcing wines and other purposes, a matter which I presume is better known to our distillers than to any one else.

#### COAL

The coal trade continues as active as ever, and it cannot be otherwise, in view of the constant daily arrival of steamers, which can always count upon obtaining the required supply of fuel at a moderate price, accompanied with quick dispatch.

HORATIO J. SPRAGUE, Consul.

UNITED STATES CONSULATE,  
Gibraltar, October 2, 1880.

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