

No. 5.

Office of the High Commissioner for Canada, 17, Victoria Street, London, S.W.,

SIR,—

10th May, 1899.

We have the honour to acknowledge Mr. Cox's letter of the 9th instant, on the subject of the increase in the wine duties.

(2.) There is no dispute as to the expansion of the trade in colonial wines from some 20,000 gallons in 1882 to some 720,000 gallons in 1897. The quantity, however, imported from the colonies is still less than 4 per cent. of the total importation into this country, and there is reason to believe that, under favourable conditions, the trade would have advanced to much larger proportions than it has now attained.

(3.) The figures relating to the imports of British produce into Australasia and the Cape were given in consequence of your remark that the colonies principally affected by the increase in the wine duties discourage, by highly protective tariffs, the consumption of British goods. You express the opinion that the figures given of the imports of British produce into Australasia should be read with the figures of the exports of Australasian produce to the United Kingdom. We therefore beg to state that, according to the Colonial Office List, Australasia exported in 1896 nearly £25,000,000 of goods from the United Kingdom, £31,000,000 from British possessions, and £7,000,000 from foreign countries. On the other hand, the exports from Australasia to the United Kingdom were £9,000,000, to British possessions £28,000,000, and to foreign countries £8,900,000. These figures seem to emphasize the conclusions set forth in our previous letter.

We are, &c.,

STRATHCONA, High Commissioner for Canada.

JULIAN SALOMONS, Agent-General for New South Wales.

D. TENNANT, Agent-General for the Cape of Good Hope.

ANDREW CLARKE, Agent-General for Victoria.

W. P. REEVES, Agent-General for New Zealand.

JOHN A. COCKBURN, Agent-General for South Australia.

WALTER PEACE, Agent-General for Natal.

E. H. WITTENOOM, Agent-General for Western Australia.

HORACE TOZER, Agent-General for Queensland.

P. O. FYSH, Agent-General for Tasmania.

No. 6.

Office of the High Commissioner for Canada, 17, Victoria Street, London, S.W.,

SIR,—

10th May, 1899.

We beg to acknowledge your letter of the 6th instant, respecting the increase in the duties on wines imported into this country, and transmitting a copy of a letter from Messrs. Burgoyne and Co.

It will be observed from the enclosed memorandum from Mr. Burney Young, the commercial agent of the Government of South Australia, that up to the time of our interview with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and our subsequent communication with you, the Australian wine trade held (and we think, with the exception perhaps of Messrs. Burgoyne, still hold) very strong opinions as to the prejudicial effect the new duties are likely to have upon the important industry with which they are connected.

In addition to what Mr. Burney Young has stated, we think it right to quote the following letter, dated 24th ultimo, which the High Commissioner received from Mr. J. Gambier, the manager of the firm of Messrs. Burgoyne and Co., and honorary secretary to the Australian Wine Trade Committee:—

“The Chancellor of the Exchequer has kindly consented (we learn through Sir Howard Vincent) to receive members of the trade interested in colonial wines respecting the new tariff. My committee, having already placed their interests unreservedly in the hands of the Agents-General, who are, we understand, to be introduced by you to the Chancellor of the Exchequer tomorrow, feel that such proposed interview may now probably be considered unnecessary. I am desired to ask you to be so good as to convey to the Chancellor of the Exchequer the high appreciation expressed by my committee of his kindness in proposing the interview, and to state that, should he wish to see any members of the trade, my committee hold themselves at his disposal.”

Messrs. Burgoyne and Co. make some reference to the decrease in the importation of Cape wines. There is, however, no parallel between the circumstances of thirty or forty years ago and those which exist now. The wine produced in the Cape at the present time is largely consumed in South Africa, and exported to various European countries where the conditions are more favourable than in the United Kingdom. The Government of the colony have, however, been making strenuous efforts to promote viticulture, but it is claimed that the development of the trade with the United Kingdom in recent years has been prejudiced by the duties that have been charged, and that its expansion will be still further retarded by any increase such as that proposed.

We do not propose to attempt to explain the circumstances or motives that have led to the present action of Messrs. Burgoyne and Co. The representations made by us have been the expression of the views of the various colonial Governments interested, and have been confirmed by official communications received from Australia and the Cape since the publication of Messrs.