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The Daily Record

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Strasse 5, 1.
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1755.

and THE DRESDEN DAILY.

THE FIRST DAILY PAPER IN ENGLISH PUBLISHED IN GERMANY.

№ 686.

DRESDEN AND BERLIN, SUNDAY, MAY 10, 1908.

10 PFENNIGS.

The Daily Record is delivered by hand in Dresden, and may be ordered at any Post Office throughout the German Empire. It is published daily, excepting Mondays and days following legal holidays in Dresden.

Monthly Subscription Rates: For the whole of Germany and Austria, mark 1.— For other countries, marks 2.50.

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GENERAL NEWS.

NEWS FROM ENGLAND.

JUDGMENT AGAINST THE TIMES.

An interesting law suit brought against the *The Times* by the London publishing firm of John Murray, ended on Friday afternoon by a verdict of £7,500 damages being awarded against the famous newspaper. The action arose in consequence of a letter published in *The Times* under the signature of "Artifex" stating that the price charged by the publishers for their edition of Queen Victoria's letters was extortionate, a statement which, in the opinion of the publishers, constituted a libel and caused them substantial loss. In the course of the action it transpired that the "Artifex" correspondence was really written by Mr. Hooper, the manager of *The Times* Book Club. An amusing feature of the case was the production of a letter from Miss Gertrude Atherton, the well-known American authoress, to *The Times* Book Club, in which she said that the editor of *The Times* might go to the devil. Mr. Justice Darling caused great merriment in court by remarking that if the editor took Miss Atherton's advice it would greatly increase the circulation of his paper supposing that the publication still continued. Plaintiff's counsel capped this witticism by saying that he hoped that circumstances did not account for the editor not being in court.

The case has aroused great interest in the publishing world, where the questionable methods adopted by the Book Club have long been a source of irritation. Defendants gave notice of an appeal against the decision of the court.

SERIOUS COLLISION IN THE CHANNEL.

A telegram from Portland states that the British steamer "Matiana" bound from London to Calcutta, was towed into that port on Friday. The captain reports that during a thick fog some twenty miles to the south of Portland his vessel came into collision with a German steamer. The "Matiana's" steering gear was broken and she sustained other damage. The German vessel was also bound for Portland, but he did not know to what extent she was damaged. A tugboat has left to succour the German steamer. At the time of telegraphing the thick fog continued.

Later: The German steamer, which proves to be the Hamburg-American liner "Brasilia," arrived here late on Friday night. She is extensively damaged, but not below the waterline, so that after undergoing repairs it is expected that she will be able to continue her voyage. Her arrival at Portland was retarded by the dense fog.

THE TRADE RETURNS FOR APRIL.

In spite of the Premier's optimism when dealing with the Board of Trade Returns in his budget speech, reported in yesterday's issue, these same Returns, upon closer examination, are creating something akin to consternation in England. It is pointed out that when the Returns for March were described as the worst of the first three months of the year, it was hoped that the figures for April would begin to show some improvement. Instead of this, however, the Returns issued on Thursday afternoon not only indicate larger decreases in both imports and exports than in any of the previous months of the year, but the decrease under the latter head is greater by a million pounds than the total amount of the diminution for the first quarter of this year. The actual totals for April showing this truly phenomenal falling off in British trade are:—

	Imports.	Exports.
April, 1908	£47,093,912	£30,705,938
April, 1907	£56,782,704	£34,416,866
Decrease	£9,682,792	£3,711,528

How black this comparison is may be gathered from the statement that the decreases for last month, which, as has been stated, were thought disquieting enough, were £5,600,000 and £1,800,000 respectively. The total tale of the summary of trade for the first

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four months of the year, as compared with the corresponding period for last year, now stands:— Imports, £19,997,424 less; exports, £6,310,473 less.

Turning to the detailed figures for the month, we once more find present those features which can only be viewed with the greatest apprehension by Englishmen. Taking first the falling-off in the imports, we learn that out of the total of over nine millions given above, no less than £8,424,404 of the decrease comes under the heading "raw materials." With a trivial exception, none of the material which should be pouring in to feed the workshops and factories is without the ominous minus sign before it. In the case of cotton it is —£3,800,000; in that of wool it is —£2,100,000, and so on. In striking comparison to these figures the purchases of manufactured articles from the foreign market only fell off by £1,277,346. The decreases are pretty evenly distributed, and the increases are:—Iron and steel, £122,400; ships, £4,800; cotton £57; leather manufactures, £123,000.

Taking next the exports, it is seen that almost the full force of the diminution fell on manufactures. There was but a slight decrease (£145,702) in the exportation of raw materials, owing to a natural fall in shipments of coal, so that Great Britain actually sold £3,565,459 less in manufactured articles to the foreign customer than in April last year. In every single branch of British industries the sales decreased with the solitary exception of machinery, which shows the trifling increases of £94,000. The largest decreases were: Iron and steel, £709,000; other metals, £352,946; and yarns and textiles, £1,829,000.

THE INDIAN FRONTIER TROUBLE.

Reuter reports from the frontier station of Shankargarh that the hostile Mohmand tribesmen have contemptuously rejected the British proposals.

NEWS FROM AMERICA.

THE ATLANTIC FLEET AT 'FRISCO.

Secretary of the Navy Metcalf, says a San Francisco cable, reviewed the combined Atlantic and Pacific fleets on Friday, the vast armada numbering forty-four warships in all. Mr. Metcalf made the inspection on board the U. S. cruiser "Yorktown". At the conclusion of the review the flag of Rear Admiral Evans as Commander-in-Chief was hauled down, and the command was assumed by Rear Admiral Charles M. Thomas. His broad pennant will fly until July 7, when Rear Admiral Charles M. Sperry will take command, on the departure of the fleet from San Francisco.

Rear Admiral Sperry has cabled to the Navy Department a tentative itinerary for the return cruise, and this has been tentatively approved by the Administration. The programme is substantially as follows: Leave San Francisco, July 7. Arrive Honolulu, July 15; leave July 25. Arrive Samoa, August 4; leave August 14, for Australia, two divisions of the fleet reaching Sydney about August 24, the other two divisions visiting Melbourne and rejoining the first two divisions at Sydney about September 1, so as to start for Manila. Arrive Manila about September 15, remaining there eight days, before leaving for Yokohama. Arrive Japan early in October, then visit Chefoo. Return to Manila for target practice. Arrive Colombo about December 15. Then, via Aden and Suez, for the Mediterranean and Malta, where manoeuvres will be held. Arrive Gibraltar about the first week in February, and Hampton Roads February 22, 1909—Washington's Birthday.

Later: Admiral Evans took leave of the officers of the Atlantic Fleet at a banquet held in his honour at San Francisco yesterday. In a characteristic speech he declared that for the maintenance of the world's peace more battleships and less diplomacy were necessary.

EMBEZZLEMENT BY A CASHIER.

A New York telegram states that the Alleghany National Bank at Pittsburg has been defrauded of a million dollars, embezzled by the Cashier.

(Continued on page 2.)