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The Dye Industry.

FOLLOWING on the agreement which has at last come about between the dye-makers and the dye-users, the Cabinet decided, on December 1, to introduce a Bill for the protection of British dyestuffs. This was promptly presented to the House of Commons on December 2 by Sir Robert Horne, President of the Board of Trade, read a second time this week on Tuesday, and is expected to be passed into law before Christmas.

The Bill is quite short, and prohibits the importation into the United Kingdom of all synthetic dyestuffs, colours, and colouring matters, and all organic intermediate products used in their manufacture, for a period of ten years and no longer. The Board of Trade will, however, have power by licence to authorise the importation of any of these products, and for the purpose of advising it with respect to the granting of licences a Committee will be constituted, consisting of five persons concerned in the trades in which the above goods are used, three persons concerned in the manufacture of such goods, and three other persons not directly concerned in the production or use of dyes. One of the latter three persons will be chairman of the Committee. The Board may charge in respect of a licence a fee not exceeding 5*l.* The Act will not apply to goods imported for exportation after transit through the United Kingdom or by way of transshipment.

If, as is expected, this Bill is passed into law the British dye manufacturer will be relieved that the promises of the Government have been re-

deemed, and he may now set himself with redoubled energy to secure that his products are beyond reproach, and to erect plant for the manufacture of dyes not yet produced here, which are urgently wanted by the dye-users. Such will, no doubt, be imported under licence for a time, but a period of ten years should be ample for establishing in this country a great industry which will provide every possible requirement of the dye-user, and a combination of chemical manufacturers, if it can be brought about, ought to place the economic position of this industry beyond fear of attack.

The great advantages to be derived from co-operation in the dye industry, so well indicated by the great German combination, the "Interessengemeinschaft," have evidently been realised in America, for, according to the *Times* of December 1, five of the largest chemical works in the United States—namely, the General Chemical Co., the Semet Solvay Co., the Solvay Process Co., the Barrett Co., and the National Aniline and Chemical Co.—are to merge their interests, and the combination is to possess a capital of about 60,000,000*l.* This sum is about as large as that of the German Trust, but the scope of the American company will be rather wider, including, as it will, the distillation of coal-tar, the fixation of atmospheric nitrogen, and the manufacture of heavy chemicals.

This is an important step in the direction of the consolidation of interests in America, and, in view of the protective legislation which is now being considered by Congress, everything points to the firm establishment of the dye industry in that country. The output of dyes is already high, being about 30,000 tons per annum, and the wide interest that is being taken in the field of industrial organic chemistry is further shown by the fact that there are nearly 200 firms engaged in the manufacture of crude products, intermediates, dyes, lakes, medicinal preparations, flavouring media, photographic chemicals, synthetic phenolic resins, synthetic tanning materials, and explosives.

It is much more important to give attention to developments of this kind than to over-emphasise the relation of the dye industry to war products in order to enlist the sympathy of the public for its protection. In an article in the *Observer* of December 5 Prof. H. E. Armstrong expresses the opinion that, had the dye-users taken active and financial interest in the British Dyes Corporation during the war period, the present situation would probably not have arisen.