

*Free Trade and the Cotton Question with reference to India, being a Memorial from the British Merchants of Cochin to the Right Hon. Sir John Hobhouse, Bart., M.P., President of the Board of Control.* By Francis Carnac Brown, Esq. Eppingham Wilson, London.

Mr. Brown gives in the outset some account of himself, which it is necessary that we should transcribe in order to a more correct appreciation of the matter before us. He says—

“My family has been established on the coast of Malabar, for a period of more than seventy years. My father, the late Mr. Murdoch Brown, besides having been extensively engaged in commerce there, was the first and the oldest English proprietor of land in South India. To his property I succeeded, and I now hold it. He was the person of whose services, from his perfect knowledge of the language and his intimate relations with the Princes and people of the country, the East India Company made use in obtaining the first subsidiary treaty concluded with the Raja of Travancore; and he was specially requested by them to negotiate in their name with the Raja of Cochin, not then a tributary.

“After Mr. Brown's decease, it was I who, fifteen years ago, first brought to the notice of the Government of Madras the circumstances and condition of Cochin; a representation which led to its tardy restoration to the rank of a British port. My connection, therefore, with it, and with the Province of Malabar, in which it is situated, is not only hereditary, but direct, personal, and intimate, and such as no other Englishman has had. It is for this reason that I presume to present the memorial to you, and that I now respectfully beg leave to draw your attention both to its statement and to its prayer.”

The writer then goes over the past and present history of Cochin, in which it is unnecessary that we should follow him, however interesting the facts may be. The memorial which he presents, is signed by six firms of British merchants, and one native firm, who have gone and established themselves at Cochin, and are now embarked in an increasing trade, principally with England direct.

“They pray—first, that the Government of Her Majesty will cease longer to treat the produce of the two tributary and wholly dependent states of Cochin and Travancore, on its importation by the Memorialists into England in British ships, like foreign produce coming from the possessions of Spain, Holland, or Brazil, kingdoms not tributary, but altogether independent and powerful; secondly, that all frontier duties imposed on goods and produce passing from the territories of the East India Company into those of the two native states may be abolished, and the trade of three conterminous countries closely united together by nature, and forcibly separated only by warring custom-houses, may at length be freed from the suicidal taxes and impediments which have hitherto vexed and strangled it.”

Mr. Brown urges the claims of Cochin to be erected into a free port.

“Like Singapore, Cochin is a good port, with a few miles of dependent territory, situated in the heart of native states, and altogether isolated by them from the Company's territories; freely open to the sea and to a long line of coast, north and south, and communicating with the countries in the interior by numerous navigable rivers and by a natural Backwater, upwards of two hundred miles long, capable of being greatly and beneficially extended for another 100 miles at a trifling comparative outlay. The countries in the midst of which it is situated, are as fertile as any on the globe; they are inhabited by a civilised and intelligent people, who, until the dominion of the East India Company, fifty years ago, had carried on for ages an unfettered and lucrative commerce in all the great staple commodities, their own spontaneous growth, which form the basis of the increasing trade of Singapore with Europe, and with the neighbouring islands and states of the Eastern Sea. For eight or nine months of the year, the winds prevailing north of the Line in the Indian Ocean ensure a quick, safe, and certain voyage to Cochin and the ports on the Malabar coast, to ships sailing from every part of the extensive coasts washed by that sea, both in Asia and Africa. We have seen that in the time of Fra Bartoloméo, numerous vessels from Muscat and the Arabian Gulf were in the practice of making thither two yearly voyages; and we have seen what steps were taken, on the accession of the Company, to cause the winds of heaven to blow over a desert ocean; and annihilate an ancient, active, and most beneficial commerce. So bent were the Company at that time on extinguishing all direct trade between India and other countries, especially with England, that the Court of Directors scrupled not to send out a positive order, designed to ruin the only British merchant (the late Mr. Brown), who was then engaged in the trade from Malabar. This was the return Mr. Brown received, when no longer wanted, for his acknowledged gratuitous public services.”

“The resources of the native states of Travancore and Cochin are great, but must