age of a number of years, the official statistics show that about two-thirds of what Great Britain imports from the States are raw materials out of the manufacture of which she makes considerable profits and necessary articles of food. It would be indeed alarming if Great Britain were so impecunious that she could not pay for raw materials and needful food without financial embarrassment! Although an American banking journal declares "this cannot go on forever," there is no sign at present of its continuance during many years having created any embarring financial conditions in either country.

THE WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION ACT.

Mr. Chamberlain on the Cost of Insurance.

The passage of the Act which made employers' liability insurance necessary, let loose a flood of suggestions to employers of labour, hints to workmen, and complaints from insurance brokers and agents regarding reduced rates of commissions. In the somewhat heated discussions as to what constituted a just charge for covering risks under the Workmen's Compensation Act, the insurance experts very naturally resented the somewhat irritating assumption by Mr. Chamberlain of superior knowledge upon a question which only time and experience can answer, and about which trained actuaries are doubtless gathering all the information obtainable since the law became operative. The insurance companies' champions replied to Mr. Chamberlain's harsh criticism of the rates named by them for the unknown risks with spirit. That the celebrated Secretary of State for the Colonies remains far from convinced that the actuaries and insurance managers are better qualified than he is to adjust premium rates in connection with the new Act has again been made evident. In addressing a large meeting in the Free Trade Hall at Manchester, on the 15th ultimo, Mr. Chamberlain referred at great length to the Workmen's Compensation Act.

He not only re-iterated his belief in the accuracy of the calculations of cost of insurance made by the Home Secretary and himself, but he also advised manufacturers to take the "risk" themselves, or to join in mutual insurance rather than to pay the rates asked by insurance companies. The speech in question ought to prove very interesting to insurance officials, employers of labour, and Canadian admirers of the gifted Colonial Secretary, and we, therefore, reproduce the following extracts. Mr. Chamberlain said:—

"The Workmen's Compensation Act is an Act which has established for the first time the principle that when a man is injured in the ordinary course of his employment without willful misconduct on his own part he is entitled to charge the compensation for that injury as a liability upon the business in which it took place. I do not think that any one will deny that the establishment of that principle is an enormous boon to the working classes of this country. I am told that it is resented by some employers, and that we ourselves have lost valuable and influential support in consequence of that legislation. If that be true I regret it, and I think it is due to misapprehension. I do not believe that any employer, any kindly-hearted and generous employer, would say that the old system was a satisfactory one, in which an honest and industrious workman, by no fault of his own, might not only be subjected to pain and suffering, but might have become for himself and his family a suppliant for parish relief because he was deprived of employment. I will go further, and I will say that, as far as I know, there are very few generous and proper-spirited employers who would ever allow their working people to suffer in such a manner. But if the old system under which that was possible was to be altered, what alternative was there? There was only one alternative suggested, and that was the alternative known as Mr. Asquith's Bill; and as to Mr. Asquith's Bill, although I believe it was brought in by that gentleman with the best of intentions, though I believe he is honestly anxious to write his name large as a social reformer, yet I say that Bill was a mistake from the first line to the last, and that if it had been carried it would have placed upon the shoulders of the employers a much greater charge than any we have placed, while it would have done infinitely less good to any of the working men.

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"Now, I believe that a great deal of the opposition to our Bill is due entirely to the idea that the cost of it will be excessive and will be injurious to trade. In the course of discussion in the House of Commons we were opposed chiefly from the other side of the House and chiefly by large capitalists and employers. Among them were two who were especially prominent —Sir Joseph Pease and Mr. Bainbridge, both large coal owners. They told the House of Commons again and again that if this Bill were passed it would ruin the small coal owners. They did not care about themselves, but it would ruin the small coal owners, because it would impose a tax of at least 3d. per ton, and I think they once urged that it might even rise to 6d. upon the cost of getting coal? What are the facts? The Home Secretary and myself had made a careful calculation, not only about that business, but about every other business, and we were prepared to say what the cost would be likely to be upon any business that might be named to us. We said the cost on coal would not exceed 1d. per ton, and we believe it would be less. Now I will tell you something. There is a great institution which is called the Northumberland and Durham Miners' Relief Fund. After this Act was passed, I gather from their report that they made an offer to the coal owners in the district, among whom is Sir J. Pease, to take the whole of the responsibilities upon themselves for seven-tenths of a penny per ton! That is less than three farthings a ton, and the employers refused it. I suppose because they thought it too much. I call upon Sir Joseph Pease and Mr. Bainbridge to give, as I think they will feel it is due to their own honour to give, some explanation of the enormous exaggeration of which they were guilty in the House of Commons when they declared that this Bill would cost 3d. or 6d. a ton. I give you that illustration chiefly to show that these calculations were accurate. They have been proved to be correct in other trades. Take the cotton trade. I thought that the cost in ordinary weaving or spinning establishments would be beween 1s. and at the outside 2s. per cent. on the wages. I believe the employers, should