

own empire. Comparative independence of the United States in the supply of this staple may be achieved within the lifetime of the present generation.

British and American Cotton Trade.

There is a rather marked contrast in the tone of the reports on the cotton trade from England and the United States.

Returns just received from Fall River for the past quarter show that the mills there are now enjoying the most prosperous season ever known in cotton manufacturing of that leading cotton mill centre of the States. Corporations representing 46 mills have paid dividends of \$538,880 on a capital of \$18,123,000. The total dividends paid for the corresponding quarter of last year amounted to \$233,250. In addition, the mills have added as much more to their surplus or reserve funds, and most of the mills have unburdened themselves of debts and interest accounts, and have made extensive alterations and additions. The demand for goods has not only absorbed their accumulated surplus of some months, but is beyond the present ability of the mills to take care of. Contracts are now made that will extend into October, 1893. The average mill which was paying 2 per cent. quarterly is now yielding 7 per cent. upon the selling prices of its shares.

On the other hand, the reports from the great cotton manufacturing centres of Lancashire are at the present most depressing. A writer in *Blackwood* for July, W. A. Abram, draws a particularly gloomy sketch which has agitated the trade considerably. He says,

"Taken in the bulk, it may be said that north and west of Bolton the spinning branch of the trade has been steadily going backward these twenty years. In the towns of Preston, Blackburn, Burnley, Darwen, Accrington, Haslingden, Rawtenstall, Bacup, Colne, Clitheroe, Padiham, Great Harwood, Oswaldtwistle, Chorley, Wigam, Warrington, Lancaster, and numerous populous villages between, one may look in vain for a new cotton spinning mill built since 1875, whilst a large number of old spinning mills having been burnt down are not rebuilt and many an old mill has had its machinery cleared out and sold as old metal, and been demolished as useless. The number of spindles running in Blackburn and Preston has been diminished by hundreds of thousands. In two of the smaller towns cotton spinning has threatened to become extinct by the suspension of business by owners of existing mills and the impossibility of securing fresh tenants even at the lowest rentals. Observers at a distance imagine that cotton spinning in Lancashire must be doing well, and point to Oldham where numerous spinning mills of the largest size have been reared, fitted with the most improved machinery, and started since 1870; but Oldham alone no more suffices to show Lancashire trade flourishing than one swallow makes a summer. When and where is it to stop? We are told that the whole of the trade with India, China, and Japan in the coarser counts of cotton yarn up to 24's twist is regarded as already gone; and it is anticipated that in counts of yarn up to 30's that trade can and will be taken entirely by Bombay before half a dozen years have passed. Lancashire is not able to bespeak much sympathy in its continuous losses of foreign, colonial, and Indian trade from the country outside its own borders; perhaps because other interests, in other provinces of the kingdom, are also suffering more or less severely, and are

quite absorbed in their own peculiar difficulties and troubles."

Mr. Abram refers to the competition of the Bombay cotton mills as carried on under conditions that are manifestly unfair to English mill workers. There has been the most scandalous overwork. People in the Indian mills have worked from sunrise to nightfall, and the wages earned were from 7d. to 8d. per day, or about a sixth of what would have to be paid under the same conditions to a Lancashire power loom weaver! England's trade with the British East Indies, in cotton piece-goods, in the year 1891, shows a decrease of £1,844,203 on a total value of £18,063,907. That is an immense decrease to have taken place in a single year. Ten years of this rate of diminution would suffice to wipe out the trade altogether, and to complete the ruin of so much of the staple Lancashire manufacture and industry as subsists by the supply of the markets of India—equal, roundly, to one-third of the entire export of cotton piece-goods. But whilst the trade of Lancashire with India in these fabrics has been falling off with such startling rapidity, within the years 1885-90 the number of cotton-mills in India has increased from 87 to 137; of spindles from 2,145,646 to 3,274,196; of power-looms from 16,557 to 23,412; of operatives employed from 67,186 to 102,721; and the quantity of cotton used in the mills of India from 2,088,621 cwt to 3,529,617 cwt.

Such is the cloudy picture drawn by Mr. Abram, but happily his views are not shared in by all, even of those in the trade who are suffering most from the present stagnation. J. C. Fielden, himself a Lancashire manufacturer, has an article in the August *Blackwood* in which he shows that the total output of goods has increased 20 per cent. in the past twelve years, and that "there is no fear of overtaking the world's real requirement in these goods seeing that it would take an extra crop of at least 10,000,000 bales of raw cotton to get a supply to the rest of the world equivalent to our home consumption of goods." The markets of India are only a small section of the world's market, and when that trade is supplied by the native mills other markets can be found. He does not see anything dreadful in Indian competition. The disturbance of trade there will be only temporary, and he contends that the very growth in Eastern Asia "is the true basis upon which a constantly expanding and profitable trade can be secured, and that if such efforts be directed in the paths for which India's resources and people are especially adapted, then untold benefits will accrue both to them and to us."

Mr. Fielden founds his faith on the future prestige of Lancashire in the unrivaled skill of the English operatives, the consummate organization of the industry, and the climatic advantages which Lancashire possesses. On this last point he cites a report of Colonel Shaw, late Consul in Manchester for the United States, to the effect that the advantage of climate in Lancashire over Lowell was quite equal to a protective duty of 7½ per cent. The high protective tariffs of other nations tend to restrict the possibilities of trading, but he shows that the £1,500,000 of the British annual export trade to America consists of such high-class goods as cannot be produced in that country, and cannot be excluded by her tariff. "So far as competition is concerned—viz., the competition of two parties in a third or neutral market, Lancashire," says Mr. Fielden, "has practically no rival. Now and again excessive stocks of foreign goods, fostered and developed under Protection, find their way into a neutral market; but after having examined several such cases—notably from Belgium and the