threatened are not to be safeguarded in that way. The latest intelligence from Russia gives hope that the present difficulties arising out of the attitude of some other countries towards China may be overcome.

A NORTH AMERICAN ZOLLVEREIN.

Among the number of interesting contributions which have been recently made to the subject of the United States-Canada trade question is a letter written to the New York Journal and Bulletin of Commerce. The writer after pointing out the immense border line between the two countries, which he describes as "without doubt the longest stretch of unwatchable frontier between any two countries in the world," and that "two-thirds of all the irritation arising between the Governments of Great Britain and the United States grow out of our relations to, or trade with, Canada," suggests that a zollverein be formed of all North American countries. The plan outlined is not entirely new and consists of "a customs union for Canada and the United States, allowing a perfectly free trade between them for their own respective products—each opening a free market to the other—and also for any imported merchandise from other countries after the duties (which shall be uniform at all seaports) shall have been paid thereon."

There was a time—and not many years ago—when a scheme of this kind, if advanced by the United States, would have been thoughtfully considered in Canada and might have received the support of one of the great political parties. Within recent years there has been on all sides a growing conviction that Canada ought to strengthen the political ties that unite her to the mother country by closer economic relations. Seldom has a customs tariff been so generally approved of in the Dominion as the law now in force giving Great Britain a preference in Canadian markets. This is accounted for on grounds other than sentimental. By her industrial conditions Great Britain is a natural purchaser of Canadian products. Frequent changes in tariff closing the channels of trade and destroying invested capital are not to be feared from a free trade country. There are gigantic industrial undertakings which Canadians hope to accomplish with the assistance of British capital. And among other advantages the British markets are freer from bankruptcies than those of any other country.

The United States, it is true, has attractions for Canadian producers. We do not undervalue them. If a fair arrangement can be arrived at between the two countries by which a freer interchange of products across the border line is possible, it will be welcomed. But the border line must still exist for economic as well as political purposes. The British trade connection cannot be sacrificed for an American connection, while so long as Canada is practically dependent upon the customs tariff for revenue an entire abolition of customs between Canada and the United States is quite impracticable.

COTTON GOODS.

Canadian manufacturers of cotton goods have apparently held the home market well within their control the past year. Imports from foreign countries have fallen off, while it is generally recognized the consumptive demand has been stronger than for some years past. The United States sent to British North America in the twelve months ending June 30th, 1897, 29,460,000 yards of cottons, while during the same period in 1898 the exports had fallen off to less than half this amount, being only 14,116,228 yards. The one reason that can be ascribed for this marked decline is the increase from 30 to 35 per cent. to which cottons were subject during the year. Canada is one of the United States' best foreign markets for cotton goods, China alone exceeding the Dominion in the amount of her purchases. It might be added that to China the exports of both the United States and Great Britain were smaller during the past fiscal year than in the previous year. Canadian manufacturers are also interested in the China market and found the same difficulties in the way of trade, viz.: During the first half of last year the very low price to which silver had fallen, and the consequent disorganization of exchange with silver-using countries, told heavily against the export trade. For several months exporters were practically out of the market, and the entire decrease was confined to the first half of the year. Since January there has been a marked recovery, and the first six months of the calendar year 1898 compare favorably with the corresponding period of 1897.

The British manufacturers have, in spite of a small increase in tariff, about held their own in the Canadian market. In the British fiscal year ending December 30th our imports of cottons from the mother country were 26,026,900 yards as against 27,674,000 yards the previous year. It will be remembered that during the latter half of this period the 35 per cent duty was subject to a deduction of one-eighth which makes the duty little more than the old rate of 30 per cent., while Canada is one of the three most important markets of the United States in cotton, Great Britain sells to thirty countries more cottons than to the Dominion, and yet on equal tariff conditions we import about the same quantity from each country. The total exports of cottons from the United States in 1899 amounted to 270,507,818 yards, while in the last fiscal year the exports of Great Britain totalled 4,792,994,000 yards.

Protection given to Canadian manufacturers in the shape of high tariff duties is calculated to injure American more than British manufacturers. In denims, tickings and cottonades Canadians have for years had close competition from the United States. The Americans make the great bulk of their goods for the home market, the needs of which are very similar to those of Canada. These British cloths have too much filling to be popular here, and it is in other descriptions that the British manufacturers hold their trade in Canada. The exports which the United States still make to Canada are largely printed goods. These are sold, not so much on their price as their pattern, and so long as the United States manfacturer is able to offer goods in attractive designs which are not produced in the Dominion or in the mother country, which now has the preference in a lower duty, there will be found a market in Canada.

FIRE LOSS THROUGH ELECTRICITY.

Attention has been called from time to time in these columns to the necessity of care in electric lighting of premises and frequent examination of insulation of electric wires. Instances have been not few during the last ten years in the United States and Canada of fires occasioned by electricity and serious losses thereby. A valuable publication, which is most instructive in this particular, is the periodical report of the National Board of Fire Underwriters. We give an extract from the last quarterly report, which gives details of 317 fires caused by electricity in the United States between April 10 and July 11. Additional reports were received of losses aggregating $448,200 from fires supposed to be due to electricity, but