

THE OUTLOOK FOR BRITISH TRADE

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IN one of his classical popular lectures, Helmholtz expresses his opinion on the national aspects of scientific investigation in the following eloquent words :

In fact, men of science form, as it were, an organised army labouring on behalf of the whole nation, and generally under its direction and at its expense, to promote industrial enterprise, to increase wealth, to adorn life, and to further the moral development of individual citizens. . . . We are convinced that whatever contributes to the knowledge of the forces of Nature, or to the powers of the human mind, is worth cherishing, and may, in its own due time, bear practical fruit, very often where we should least have expected it.

Of the truth of the above, no one who has witnessed the general progress of science during the Victorian Era can fail to be impressed. And yet, so far as our own country is concerned, the statement that the labours of English men of science are carried on either under national direction or at national cost cannot be said to be the true one. In an interesting discussion on this question of the attitude of the State towards scientific investigation, which recently took place at Baltimore, Professor Osborn pointed out that a certain necessary class of State expenditure may be considered as being in the nature of unproductive investments, which look to the future rather than to the present requirements of the nation.

“Conspicuous amongst these are the funds invested in