

American Aspirations vs. British Commerce.

No great movement has been more strikingly manifest in recent years than the tendency towards national, racial, and territorial alliances displayed in various parts of the world. Germany unity, the Triple Alliance, Intercolonial Confederation, and Commercial Union within the British Empire, as amongst the "modern instances" which readily occur to the student of contemporary history; and, on the other side of the Atlantic, there are indications of progress in realizing the idea conveyed by the phrases, "The Americas for the Americans." We took occasion in November, 1889, to direct attention to the Pan-American Conference, which, with characteristic energy, the United States have since turned to some account. Not only have they entered into closer relations with Brazil, and other South American states, but they made a great effort to draw certain British and Spanish West Indian Colonies into "reciprocal" trade arrangement with themselves. In the latter colonies the preferential rates granted by Spain to the United States will not be conceded to other countries, whilst the Brazilian tariff will bear comparison with that of McKinley, and the new Customs regulations have a very close resemblance in their objectionable features to those of the United States. A complete examination of the commercial effects of the new "Pan-American policy" is not possible as yet; but some data exists which is well worth consideration.

The reality of the movement is shown by the fact that reciprocity treaties have now been concluded between the United States on the one hand, and Brazil, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Santo Domingo, the British West Indies, Salvador and British Guiana—or their respective governments—on the other. At the end of May last the treaty with Brazil had been in force fourteen months: the imports therefrom into the United States rose from 94.9 million dollars—the total for the fourteen months ended May, 1891—to 135.2 million dollars—the total for the fourteen months ended May, 1892. The exports of American productions to Brazil, on the same basis however, had only extended from 16.1 million dollars to 17.0 million dollars—or a growth of 40.3 millions on imports against 900,000 dollars on exports. The reciprocity treaty respecting Cuba had, at the end of May, been in operation for nine months, with the result that for the nine months then terminated in contrast with the same nine months of 1890-91, imports from Cuba had increased from 44.6 million dollars to 54.9 million dollars, in comparison with an advance of exports from the United States to that market from 9.8 million dollars to 14.5 million dollars. The gain on imports is here represented by 9.7 million dollars, and on exports by 4.7 million dollars. A similar period is covered in respect of Puerto Rico and Santo Domingo. The imports from Puerto Rico were less by the difference between 2.2 million and 2.1 million dollars; the exports thereto were more by over 300,000 dollars. Santo Domingo, however, sent to the States nearly three-quarters of a million more imports, the States sending her less of their exports to the amount of over 13,000 dollars. With the British West Indies (Bermuda being included in the statistics) and with Salvador, treaties had operated for four months up to the end of May, and contrasting these four months of 1892 with 1891 we find the imports from the British West Indies increased by nearly 26,000 dollars and from Salvador by nearly 600,000 dollars; while the exports from the United States advanced in the one case by 118,000 dollars, and in the other fell off by over 32,000 dollars. With British Guiana the treaty had only been applied for the two months, April and May, and during this period, compared with the like term of last year, imports into the States shrank by over 343,000 dollars, and exports therefrom by 11,000 dollars.

These few figures will serve to show that too

much importance may be attached to the immediate effects of the exceptional treatment accorded by the contracting parties to American producers. Only in the case of Cuba is the extension of export business largely in favor of the United States; in some cases, as we have shown, the exports, under more favorable tariff conditions, have actually diminished in value. In this connection British producers, who require a stimulant to their courage, should note that Mr. Consul Hearn, of Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil), expresses his belief "that the mutual convention between Brazil and the United States is unlikely to have any effect on the demand for British goods;" and what is true of Brazil, may prove to be true also in the other markets temporarily deranged by the reciprocity alliances.

The importance of retaining and strengthening our hold upon the trade of South American States upon which we have always insisted—is only intensified by recent developments. When the present cloud of depression has lifted, the advantage will not be entirely ours; we shall have to reckon on the continued and artificially stimulated competition of the United States as well as of European nationalities. Our stake in the finances of South America is so large, that the neglect of opportunities for the development of legitimate trade there would be little short of disastrous. There are signs of better times in the near future, and one of the most hopeful was pointed out the other day by Sir Vincent Barrington in an address which he gave to the members of the South American section of the London chamber on his return from his travels in Brazil, Uruguay and the Argentine. He said he looked upon recent revolutions "which in themselves had prejudiced trade for a time, as signs that a healthy public opinion was being formed;" they were either purely local or directed against the arbitrary acts of individuals. Only by the pressure of public opinion can there be brought about that high standard of public morals which after all is at the root of good government, conducing as it does to material and commercial progress. Another means by which extended intercourse with South America can be encouraged is by entering into closer communication with representative commercial bodies there—in which connection the London chamber of commerce, on behalf of interested members, is now taking special action; and by the diffusion of reliable information such as that contained in the paper by Mr. Herbert Gibson, on the subject of the Argentine Republic, which will be found in another part of this issue. On the whole we need not fear, as yet, the application of American "aspirations," provided we ourselves pursue a policy of well directed enterprise in the western hemisphere.—*Chamber of Commerce Journal*, London.

British Agriculture and American Competition.

Among the papers read before the British Association for the advancement of Science in the section devoted to economic science and statistics, was one by Edward Atkinson, of Boston, on the continuance of the supply of wheat from the United States with profits to the western farmer. Mr. Atkinson said that while in 1870 and 1873 the price of wheat in Mark Lane averaged a fraction above 54s per quarter, so great had been the reductions in the cost of producing wheat in the Western States, 1,200 to 1,500 miles from the seaboard, that the farmer now derived as good a return for his capital and labor at 32s per quarter or less as he did in the former period at 54s. The application of the self-binder to the reaper in 1876 removed the only substantial limit to the production of wheat in the United States except the price, inasmuch as the area now occupied in its production was only 2 per cent. of the area of the country, omitting Alaska. The western farmers of the United States he declares, had thriven in the face of declining prices and advancing wages. They were not

heavily burdened with mortgages, and were creditors rather than debtors. He cited statistics from six typical states to show that while more than half the farms were free from mortgage, the total incumbrance was less than 25 per cent. on the assessed value of all farms.

This paper was followed by one by Professor Robert Wallace, of Edinburgh, on the agricultural situation in the United Kingdom, which bore also on American conditions. This writer expressed the opinion that foreign competition with the decided tendency to the increased cost, inferior quality and deficient supply of labor were the main difficulties the British farmer had to contend with. He referred to the importance of Hellriegel's discovery of the means for the accumulation of combined nitrogen in the soil by the aid of minute organisms contained in the wartlike processes of the roots of plants, and said that it had been recently demonstrated that in the United States clover could be grown successfully as far west as 96.4 degrees west longitude if planted as deep as spring grain, so that its roots are deep enough to resist drouth. The introduction of clover, he said, had enabled the western cultivators to sow winter wheat which under the treatment grow a much better and safer crop than spring wheat, the latter within a few years exhausting even the best soil if grown year after year on the same land. On exhausted land the yield was lowered to eight or ten bushels per acre, and cultivation ceased to produce a remunerative return. Land of this kind, however, if left down to grass and clover for a few years, would grow a crop of winter wheat yielding from 12 to 35 bushels per acre, and could be maintained in its renewed fertility by the growth of clover in rotation. Not only, therefore, he said, did the United States possess an immense area of land yet to break into cultivation, but inexpensive means had been discovered whereby the crop yield could be increased under a more inexpensive system of management.

These two papers led to a discussion which was opened by Professor Fream, of the College of Agriculture, at Downton, England. He said that the English farm laborer had no equal anywhere. Touching the probability of the soil being refertilized by the suitable rotation of crops in order to exploit the nitrogen in the atmosphere, so that wheat might sink to a lower level than it had ever been at before, he said that the English farmer in those circumstances would adapt himself to the case. The American producer, he contended, was at the mercy of the English consumer, but the English consumer was not at the mercy of the American producer, for there were other countries to fall back upon, such as India, etc. He said that, looking to the future, he did not think that the British agriculturalist had much to be afraid of. Another speaker said that what the British farmer had to do was to look most carefully round him in every department of his work and see what waste was going on. Farmers, he argued, should know more science in order to detect this waste, and learn to produce their crop more economically. Still another speaker said that commerce, manufactures, shipbuilding, etc., had been enormously benefited by the enlargement of the scale upon which they were carried on, and that they must look in that direction for the help to be rendered the British farmer. The other speakers who followed for the most part expressed the opinion that by careful application the British farmer would be able to hold his own. Skill in agriculture, it will be seen, rather than natural advantages is looked to protect the British agriculturalist in the stress of competition.—*Bradstreet's*.

A number of farmers and others of Brant township, Ontario, are seeking incorporation under the "Ontario Joint Stock Companies Letters Patent Act" as the Farmers' Binder Twine and Agricultural and Implement Manufacturing Company of Brantford, Ontario, (limited) with a capital of \$100,000. The head office and factory of the company will be in Brantford.