

the council and committee. They refer to local taxation and the system upon which it should be levied, the railway rates, currency reform, the readjustment of the beer duty and the rules with regard to brewers, the conditions of tenancy, the marking of foreign meats and produce, the adulteration of food, the tithes rent charges, but in not one instance is the remedy of protection suggested or hinted at as a means of improving the condition of agriculture. In not one instance is the imposition of foreign corn and produce suggested. It is easy to quote here and there a suggestion by some obscure person—obscure in public life if not in his own particular locality—of a protective duty, but we cannot find any thinker or statesman responsible to the world and to posterity for his opinions, who would suggest the suicidal remedy of protection in the mother country in order to build up the manufacturing interests. The other day a report was published in the London "Times" from Mr. Aubrey Spencer, who was appointed by the Royal Commission on Agriculture, to examine into the question. The "Times" of the 10th April, 1895, has an editorial on the subject from which I quote the following:—

We printed on Saturday an abstract of a very instructive report prepared by Mr. Aubrey Spencer for the Royal Commission on Agriculture. This report is no very pleasant reading for the land-owners and agriculturists. * * * The main causes of the depression appears to be the continuous fall in the prices of farm produce, which has not been accompanied by a corresponding reduction in the cost of production. And the cause has been intensified by a succession of unfavourable seasons. Complaints are heard of high rates, heavy tithes and an excessive land tax, but such complaints are, perhaps, rather the signs of the depression which undoubtedly prevails, than a correct diagnosis of the cause. * * * As for remedies, Mr. Spencer has no panacea to suggest. * * * As the rise and fall of prices are beyond the farmer's control, while the cost of production is, to some extent, within his own control, it seems obvious that it is in this direction, if any, that a practical remedy must be sought. * * * The farmer has the remedy in his own hands. * * * Old methods are being superseded, and he must either learn new methods or succumb. Great as is the interest of the country in the welfare of its agriculture, its interest in the welfare of its international trade is much greater.

Then the "Times" goes on to indicate the lines upon which agricultural reform ought to be based, and in not one is there the slightest indication that an import duty upon foreign corn or products would be in the slightest degree in the interests of the farmers. If the revenue policy of the mother country had been so disastrous, some indication of it would be seen in her trade returns. Some of these returns are very instructive reading, and I think the time is opportune for placing in available form some of the results of an examination into British statistical reports.

Mr. FLINT.

Take the growing wealth of the country as represented by the income tax. In 1871, the amount of property taxed to income was £131,802,902. This has grown steadily from that date to 1891, the last return which I find available, to £587,251,084. One penny on the income tax in 1871 produced £1,654,277. One penny on the income tax in 1891 produced £2,214,000. This shows an enormous increase in the value of property taxed to income, but there may be some property taxed to income which might possibly escape taxation; and the return might not give a fair representation of the whole growth of the wealth of the country. But there is another return. I find that when in 1877 the profits from the foreign and colonial investments of the mother country were £28,200,000, in 1891 they had run up to £55,200,000. There has been a steady and progressive development from £28,000,000 in 1877 to £55,000,000 in 1891, showing that whatever may be the depressed condition of a few industries caused by the peculiar condition of things, the substantial wealth of the country is steadily growing.

Take the British import trade, and let us see how that has been affected by this terrible, narrow-minded policy which the Conservatives of this country bewail as the result of the stupidity of English statesmen. In five years, from 1855 to 1859, Great Britain imported £169,000,000 on an average. In the next five years she imported £235,000,000 on an average. In the following five years she imported £286,000,000. In the next five years she imported £346,000,000. And in the ensuing five years she imported £375,000,000. And from 1880 to 1884 she imported £408,000,000. And in the year 1891, £435,000,000. It is true that 1891 represented about the highest mark. There was a falling off in the imports in 1892 and 1893, owing to the depression that has been referred to by various speakers. But the import trade of the mother country, by five year periods, has grown in an enormous ratio. This import trade must represent growing wealth, growing means of purchasing the goods of foreign countries, and a growing development of the whole country, notwithstanding individual cases of depression.

Let us take the exports of Great Britain. We find that her exports, from 1816 to 1842, when this magnificent policy, calculated to hasten the development of the resources of the country and make it great and prosperous, the policy of protection, was in full swing, averaged £40,000,000 sterling. The export trade reached its highest limit under protection in 1842, when the exports amounted to £50,000,000 sterling in round numbers. Free trade, as it is established in Great Britain, reached almost its full development in 1848 or 1849, and in the five years up to 1852 the export trade had grown to £72,000,000. In 1853, it was £98,000,000; in 1854, £97,000,-