

English yarn-spinning machinists are still busy perfecting spinning frames, and there has been lately put upon the market two new forms of fly-spinning machinery. A new form of ring spinning is being adopted in a mill at Keighley and meeting with unique success. It is claimed that it combines many of the advantages belonging specifically to mule-spun yarns, while the rate of production, which is always a good deal less on the mule, is about equal to that of the cop frame. The principle of this new machine is a combination of a live, or revolving ring and revolving traveller. The effect, it is claimed, is to produce a very soft or slack twisted yarn of any count desired. This will be a great advantage to manufacturers, enabling them to regulate to a nicety their yarns as regards twist. The yarns can be spun with equal facility with or without oil, while a further advantage, the inventor asserts, is that on this principle it is possible to spin a 60's yarn from an ordinary 60's top.



### BRITISH AND FOREIGN COTTON TRADE.

In the economic section of industrial history, we have been occasionally warned by well-informed writers that among the grave questions of the future will be: What must we do in order that we may continue to obtain trade and wages for our increasingly congested populations? Also, what must be done to maintain our home markets and profitable exchanges and to secure Colonial markets? The queries are of vital importance to Lancashire, and particularly to those large groups of working-men, who, under the spell of the Cobden Club, have raised their voices against any proposed change in the policy of Free Trade. One is driven to wonder whether the cotton operatives in particular have ever calmly reviewed the relative position of the trade by which they obtain their livelihood. Even if the facts did not exactly convince them that a national system of free imports is not necessarily the most profitable policy for us to pursue, they would at any rate justify an enquiry into the wisdom or folly of our present fiscal methods. For the past twenty years our great cotton industry has been practically at a standstill, while important advances have been made in the same trade by our foreign rivals. A brief survey of the cotton-spinning business of the world may enable us to see, to some extent, why that of Great Britain has not been able to record any progress worth speaking of.

Perhaps there never was a time when it was more necessary that we should take a wide survey of the position of this valuable industry. In the first place, it is many years since those who spin our cops and weave our cloth were threatened, to such an extent as at present, with hard times. For another thing, everybody connected with this important branch of England's industry must be anxious to know how Mr. Chamberlain's contemplated fiscal changes are likely to affect its supremacy. The leaders in Lancashire, both masters and men, have already concluded, with singular emphasis, that any scheme of protection, especially if involving the taxation of raw material, would speedily bring about their ruin. Putting aside, however, any question of free trade or protection, it is clear from speeches that have been recently made in cotton circles, that fears for the future of the British textile industry were never so rife, never so emphatic, never so pessimistic; and it will be found that these fears are strongly supported by statistics in relation to the cotton-spinning industry. It has of late become an open secret that our supremacy as makers of yarn has come to be seriously

menaced. How to avert the probability of a gradual sinking is now, or ought to be, occupying the minds of the responsible leaders of the industry. Years ago Lancashire—the greatest industrial area of its size in the world—turned out more cotton goods than all other countries combined. But this can be said no longer; for, as a matter of fact, we have lost ground, and are gradually losing yet more; in proportion to our former progress we have been getting behind for the past twenty years.

Reading between the lines of semi-official statements, it appears clear that the industry is not regarded as being in a safe or happy condition—many employers of labor are very doubtful about its future. A few weeks ago a Blackburn cotton spinner lamented that, apart from the Imperial Mill, there had not been a spinning factory erected in that metropolis of mill-workers during the past twenty-five years. It is quite true that new mills have been built in other places, notably at Bolton and Oldham; and from this fact the inference is too readily drawn that our cotton trade still shows signs of healthy development. But this is hardly correct. It must be remembered that, while new factories have been put up, old ones have been stopped and the profits of others reduced, and that the business captured by the newer and better-equipped mills has been lost by the oldest at the other end of the scale, which have found themselves without funds for the renewal of their machinery.

Now Mr. C. W. Macara estimates that over 3,000,000 persons are dependent on our textile industry; that £100,000,000 is invested in it; that we pay £35,000,000 a year for raw material; that we produce annually over £90,000,000 worth of yarn; that we pay in wages and for other things necessary and allied to the manufacture of cops, £40,000,000; that of our annual output of £90,000,000, about £70,000,000 is exported. It should be remembered, moreover, that our cotton trade involves the biggest yearly item in our gigantic import and export dealings. We have, therefore, much at stake, and the slightest reflection concerning these figures should make it unnecessary to emphasize the importance of any endeavor to realize our position in the world's race for markets—to ascertain whether we are losing or gaining. For the past fifteen years, again and again have warnings as to the future of Lancashire's enormous cotton trade been sounded in this journal; yet both masters and men still show a disinclination even to consider the present fiscal system.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, we were fifty years ahead of all competitors in cotton spinning, which was due, not to free trade (which did not exist at that time), but to the fundamental inventions of Kay, Hargreaves, Arkwright and Crompton. At the present time the world's competitors are in front of us; and a very serious point to be considered is that, while we are making little or no progress, they are forging ahead, in some instances alarmingly. If it can be shown that foreigners are making such advances in the manufacture of cotton goods that they may soon be able to supply their own wants, and afterwards will seek markets outside for their surplus stocks—then very plainly it will become more and more difficult for us to find a place for our exports, valued at £70,000,000, which is more than three-quarters of our production. This is a serious matter, not only for those directly concerned, but for the country at large. It means that for the maintenance of our great textile industry we depend on the markets of other countries. But of what value will those markets be, when the foreigner, who is devoting himself with zeal to the art of spinning cotton, is able to supply his own wants? This is the shadow that