

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF A
FREE TRADE TO THE EAST,
AND THE COLONIZATION OF INDIA, AS REGARDS THE WELFARE
OF GREAT BRITAIN, AND THE EMPLOYMENT OF ITS UN-
EMPLOYED ARTIFICERS AND ARTIZANS.
(For the Leeds Mercury.)

WOOLLEN AND STUFF GOODS.

The free traders have increased this trade to India, in the space of thirteen years, from £20,213, the amount sent out by them in the year ending 5th January, 1815, being the first year of the partial opening of the trade, to £263,255 sent out in the year ending 5th January, 1829, being an increase of about 1272 per cent.

During the same period the Woollen Exports of the East India Company have considerably decreased; their principal export of Woollens is to China; but a very small proportion, that for the clothing of the army excepted, is sent to India; therefore the whole, or nearly so, of the private trade export, is a new one, which had no existence prior to 1814, the article of flannel excepted, which is in extensive use in India, notwithstanding the extravagantly high prices paid for it previously.

This part of the trade, notwithstanding its great increase, has laboured under peculiar disadvantages, when compared to that in cotton cloth, the consumers of the latter residing in, and about the places of import, whilst those of woollens are chiefly in the interior, where British subjects, free traders, are not allowed access; in the northern parts only are woollens at present much worn; in the South, cotton is used as clothing by all the native inhabitants, men and women; but there is little doubt, that if a thin, firm fabric of woollen cloth, of a low quality, but of a sound fast colour, should be introduced, it would gradually come into general use. Such is the opinion of experienced, well informed merchants, who have resided many years in Hindoostan. The natives are partial to every thing English; and the superior durability of woollen cloth, and its being more conducive to health, will add to its recommendations. It is well known that in some parts of India, thousands are swept away every year, by epidemic diseases, which the physicians ascribe in some measure to their clothing, or rather want of clothing, and are of opinion, that the use of woollens would often prevent the malady, or arrest its progress.

If but partially used by the inhabitants of the British possessions, a great demand from England would be the consequence.

From the increase which has already taken place in the articles of woollens and stuffs, it is but reasonable to suppose, that if the present restrictions were removed, an immense further increase would take place in the trade, not only to British India, but in the neighbouring countries, particularly so when the success of the Americans in China is taken into consideration, and the over land trade carried on by Russia.

This last is deserving of particular attention. It appears that a trade of barter had for many years been carried on between some merchants of Moscow, and a few individuals of Chinese Tartary: in 1800, the two governments turned their attention to this traffic, and made it a subject of a kind of commercial treaty.

Since 1811, a variety of British manufactures have found their way to Kiachta, which is the seat of this rising traffic, and a very considerable quantity of British and other woollen cloths, camlets, handkerchiefs, muslins, and Manchester goods, in company with foreign European produce, are bartered at Kiachta for teas and other products of China.

It appears, however, that the difficulty of introducing British woollens into China through Russia is increasing. The Russians admitting the woollens of Prussia upon more favourable terms than English, has lately excluded the woollens of the latter from the Russian China trade. This circumstance, with the situation of the Americans in regard to that trade, added to the evidence which the partial success of that circuitous traffic affords of the value of the provincial market of China for British goods, but more particularly woollens, ought to stimulate this country, particularly this town and neighbourhood, to every measure by which a more ready and direct intercourse with that great empire may be accomplished.

If the Russians, then, can carry on an advantageous trade in English or Prussian woollen cloths and stuffs, after transporting them by a land carriage of upwards of five thousand miles by

Kiachta, and the United States can fetch them from their distant ports, how much more profitable would the trade be, if carried on directly from England to the ports of China!

In alluding to this part of the trade, it is necessary to draw public attention promptly towards it; delay may be fatal. Furs, which for many years have constituted the chief article of clothing for the northern Chinese, are becoming scarce, from the destruction of the animal which furnishes them, consequently warm woollen clothing will be wanted in greater quantities as a substitute.

The Chairman of the Court of Directors of the East-India Company stated in evidence before the Select Committees of the Houses of Lords and Commons, in 1820-21, that the Chinese are so much a people of habit, that, notwithstanding all the reasons assigned to them by the Company, for raising the price of woollens, in consequence of the then increased price in Europe, they would not submit to it—that the demand is fully supplied by the East India Company, and that, unless there is a material fall in price in this country, the sale cannot be increased. This statement deserves most particular attention. Since 1820-21, the time it was made, a very great reduction has taken place in the price of woollens and stuffs, and yet the East India Company, instead of increasing, have continued their exports much about the same as before.

The merchants of other countries are now obtaining a footing in China, and why should not British merchants be allowed the same privilege, and have the same means of employment for their shipping and manufactures? That further injury may be done to the merchants and manufacturers of this country very soon, if the Legislature does not enable private merchants to prevent it, may be inferred from the circumstance of a Consul having lately been appointed to reside in Canton, by the merchants of Hamburg and other cities on the continent of Europe, the object of which is, to introduce the manufactures of the Continent into China.

The trade of the East India Company is carried on in that country by their own servants, who are paid a fixed salary, twelve only of them being in the annual receipt of more than £80,000. Whether much or little is done it is all the same to them, they have not that motive for exertion, or for extending the trade, which a private merchant has; if what the Company sends out is sold, they have nothing more to care for. In addition to this, although the Company generally purchase their woollens in the first instance at very low prices; yet, their old-fashioned mode of dyeing, finishing, and packing them in London, with the great expense of warehouses, servants, &c. adds enormously to the cost, and gives the private merchant a great advantage over them.

The price at which the Company purchase their Cloth is in truth too low, scarcely ever leaving a remunerating price to the manufacturer; indeed, often a loss, in consequence of the severe terms annexed of late years to their contracts, which are invariably most rigidly enforced, without much regard to circumstances; but this is as much the fault of the contractor as the Company, in submitting to such terms, and it is to be regretted that they should be submitted to. The system of the Company, in regard to the getting up of their cloths for the India market, is penny wise and pound foolish, screwing down one description of individuals whom they employ to the uttermost, and those the most industrious part, whilst in other departments the greatest profusion and extravagance, at least what would be called so in a private merchant's or manufacturer's mode of doing such things, is used. In proof of this, only look to the manufacturing village of Chalford, in Gloucestershire, and its neighbourhood, from whence, for many years, the Company were almost exclusively supplied with their cloth for the India and China markets. What is the present situation of these manufacturers? They have been nearly all ruined; very few have been able of late years to make any profit by the trade, which formerly was a very beneficial one. Very few of these manufacturers now exist. In consequence of the contracts before mentioned, fees at the India House, and commission for agency, as established by the Company, for delivery of the cloth in London, the manufacturers gradually declined, and others discontinued the business.

This branch of the Company's trade has lately, partly in consequence of what has been stated above, and of a letter presented to the Court of Directors in 1813, upon the subject of their expensive mode of finishing their cloth in London, found its way into Yorkshire, where, with an unrestricted opening for trade in the East, it would no doubt rapidly increase, and soon rival in value that of any other in the kingdom.

In the year 1812 an improved mode of manufacturing, dyeing, and finishing superfine cloth, was introduced into Leeds and the neighbourhood, since which time the trade has been greatly ex-

tended, and the cloth now produced equals the best, and surpasses most of what is produced in any other part of the world; indeed, it would appear from the increased demand for Yorkshire fine cloth at the Lepsie and Frankfort fairs, and in other towns in different parts of Germany, and even still in the United States of North America, notwithstanding the heavy duties laid upon them, which at one period were considered as prohibitory, that they excel those of Prussia, Flanders, and France, both in lowness of price, and the beauty of their fabric.

The East India Company suffer great disadvantage from their fine cloth being dyed and finished in London, and the woollen trade of the country sustains great injury from the Company not availing themselves of the Yorkshire improvements, as other traders have done, and are still doing.

It is, as before mentioned, the opinion of experienced merchants who have resided in India many years, that woollen cloths, of a light fabric, will gradually come into use amongst the natives of Hindoostan, and that the probable demand for them in that and the neighbouring countries, is incalculable: they are already partially in use, and will, no doubt, for the reasons already mentioned, increase.

A considerable quantity of fine woollen cloth is annually consumed in India, for the decoration of elephants, in which no expense is spared: when it is considered that this animal, in that country, answers all the purposes of a carriage in this, and that the ladies take their daily rides, not always in a carriage, but more frequently on the back of an elephant, seated aloft under a kind of awning, on seats made to accommodate several persons, it may readily be imagined what care and cost will be bestowed in their decoration. The cloth used generally for this purpose is of a peculiarly gay and uncommon description.

It appears by documents laid before the House of Commons, and ordered to be printed last year, that the export of woollen cloth by the Free Traders to India alone, to the four ports only to which they have access, exceeds in quantity exactly 50 per cent. that of the East India Company to both India and China—even including the cloth for the army! that of the former having been 30,555 pieces, including 1414 pieces of foreign manufacture, and of the latter only 20,370 pieces; the former amounted in value to £174,040, and the latter, being finer goods, to £243,270.

When that exported for China, by the Americans, from England, is taken into consideration, and that sold in the United States for the same market the export, over and above those of the East India Company, being a new trade created within a few years, are really astonishing, and show, added to great increase of the consumption of cotton manufactures, what may be expected to result from an unrestricted trade with the countries in the East.

On the Eastern coast of Africa, the coast of the Red Sea, Arabia, and Persia, there are no less than 63 ports for foreign trade, including many of considerable importance, from which, as well as the islands of the Indian archipelago, the Malay coast, and many other places, by the acts of their own government, British subjects are excluded, though the natives of every other country are admitted; notwithstanding that in these places immense consumption would be found for our woollen, stuff, and other manufactures.

The total population of the Indian archipelago is stated at ten millions, a considerable portion of which is still in a rude, uncultivated state; yet, judging from what has been effected amongst them in a few years of licensed intercourse at Singapore, by the enterprise of our country-men, during which, in their unequivocal character of peaceful traders, they have in some degree restored the confidence of the natives, and extended the consumption of our manufactures from one million to four millions annually, some idea may be formed, although but a faint one, of what might be expected from an unrestricted intercourse with all the countries of the East.

In a shorter time, perhaps, than has sufficed to effect this improvement, India might afford a field for the employment of a great portion of the unemployed capital of the country, for all our manufactures, and for numerous well educated youths at present a burthen to their families; and with such means and such talents applied to the indestructible powers of the fertile soils of our Indian dominions, what wealth might not be extracted from them?

Lord Grenville in his speech on the renewal of the last charter in 1813, stated, in his place in the House of Lords—"To what extent this trade may then be carried, presumptuous indeed would be the man who shall now venture to pronounce; on what evidence, what conjecture, would he found his judgment? By new facilities, new wants and new desires will be produced; and neither climate, nor religion, nor long established habits, no, not even poverty itself, the greatest of all present obstacles, will ultimately

refuse the benefits of such an intercourse to the native population of that empire. They will derive from the extension of commerce, as every other people have uniformly derived from it, new comforts and new conveniences of life, new incentives to industry, and new enjoyments, in just reward of increased activity and enterprise."

If then such was the opinion of Lord Grenville in 1813, than whom no man had more experience, or could more correctly appreciate the value of India in regard to this country, what may we not fairly presume to result from it, after the evidence we have before us, of the beneficial effects resulting from the partial opening which has taken place, and its great and surprising increase!

May we not confidently conclude, that the anticipated benefits here pointed out, and even more, will be realized; and that in justice to the nation, these markets ought to be opened without any restrictions to the merchants, manufacturers, and shipping of the country?

Woollens are an article of increasing and considerable demand among the Indian islanders.

There cannot be a greater error than to imagine that this description of fabric is unsuitable to the climate and habits of the people.

In countries upon the equator it is an object of comfort throughout the year, from the frequency of rains, on account of the land and sea breezes, and the prevalence of elevated tracts of land.

Let us only thus put it in the power of the natives of our own dominions to acquire the means of purchasing our manufactures, and they will soon find employment for all the manufacturers of the country. It is, therefore, the interest of the manufacturer, the farmer, and in short every class and every profession, to join the mercantile community, in earnest entreaty to the legislature, to admit British subjects to an unrestricted intercourse with, and settlement in, all parts of our Indian dominions, and to a free trade with all the countries of the East.

Lest it should be supposed that the manufacturers of Yorkshire are trumpeting forth their own fame in praising their manufactures, may be well to be understood that the writer of this article is not manufacturer, nor has he been concerned in the cloth trade for many years past, nor till the article was written was it ever mentioned in any way whatever to any individual, with one exception, whom a part of it was casually shown for a particular purpose.