

Great-Britain.

AMERICAN COMMERCE.

FROM BELL'S WEEKLY MESSENGER OF
August 31.*Of the means of retaliating the prohibitory Commercial System of the United States of America.*

Since by the late weather with which Providence has blessed the country in all parts, we may be said to have escaped the evils which lately menaced us of a harvest deficient almost to famine; it becomes us now to turn our attention to the state of our trading districts, in which, by the expected operation of the American tariff, almost as much mischief was apprehended to our commerce and manufactures, as from the wet summer to our harvest; for wherever we turn our eye, every thing seems active and thriving; the wheel of circulation turns with a velocity and steadiness which nothing seems to abate or tire. How is this? Is, then, the American tariff, from which so much was apprehended, a spent thunderbolt? Is it hurled in vain against the proud and solid structure of English Commerce and trade? Is it likely to recoil only upon those who fabricated the means of annoyance?

What its effect will be in America, we cannot yet tell; but assuredly, this tariff is not hitherto producing in England, any thing which ought to excite alarm.—Nothing, indeed, need be apprehended from America, provided we are resolved to adopt no rash measures of retaliation, but to take that course only which prudence suggests, and which may be made sufficiently penal and vindicatory towards the United States.

It manifests much ignorance in the people of this country to censure America for her tariff—there is nothing in it unexpected, or contrary to the law of nations—that it is conceived in the spirit of commercial hostility is true; but it is in the spirit of hostility, which is natural in all communities, and of which this country has set so frequent examples in all periods of its history.

The policy of all countries is to render themselves independent of other States in the prime articles of necessity—food and clothing; and when the former abounds, as it does in all agricultural countries, like America in their first civil condition, it is a maxim of political science to direct attention to manufactures.

When a country supplies itself with its principal manufactures from abroad, it depends for payment upon the sale and exchange of its own raw produce—now this commerce is always to the disadvantage of the producing country; first, by invariably turning the balance of trade against it—inasmuch as raw produce goes but a little way (except in those immense quantities in which it is seldom required) in payment for manufactured articles; and secondly, because the revenue of a State which buys its manufactures from abroad, must be nearly stationary. Revenue, in such a case, can come through one toll-gate only—its customs, which war must interrupt or entirely destroy; whilst it scarcely need be observed, that if manufactures are once well established in a country which has a large raw produce, articles are not only manufactured cheaply, but production and consumption, the sure sources of national wealth, keep pace together, and may be pushed to any extent. The secret of the American Tariff is therefore this; America wishes to create, by means of Local Manufactures, that market at home for her produce, which depends upon the caprice of other countries abroad. She wishes to rest her wealth upon a more durable basis than her customs; she desires to raise her revenue as much as possible, within herself, and to produce from her own industry, skill, and machinery, those beautiful fabrics of elegance and art by which England has enriched herself, and engrossed nearly the market of the whole world.

This is the reasonable defence of America. She has done no more than she had a right to do. Whether she has taken this step of prohibiting commerce too early is a matter purely to herself. The only concern of England is, how to stem this new policy, and what retaliatory resources to adopt. This system of a rival is not to be disregarded; but at the same time, a financial revenge, or a retort by high prohibitory duties on raw produce, except within certain bounds, would be absurd and insane.

When Mr. Huskisson talked of the liberality of our system, as opposed to that of America, in the warmth of his indignation, he made too free with

facts. The truth is, we tax already certain articles of American produce (even raw produce) as highly as America proposes to tax our own manufactures. American rice pays 100 per cent; timber 85 per cent; 50 per cent, at least, is levied on wheat and flour; and 1000 per cent on tobacco! With this example, before their eyes, America cannot justly be blamed, if she lays a duty of 80 per cent on our woollens, cottons, and hardware. But rice, tobacco, timber, and turpentine, are minor considerations. The great article of value which America exports to England, is cotton; the export of this alone occupies nine-tenths of her shipping to England, and upon cotton our principal manufacture depends. Now, no man, we think, will be absurd enough to propose that this article—the raw staple and element of our manufactures, should be taxed. In our opinion, it ought to be suffered to flow in upon us with as much freedom, and in as much abundance, as possible. But though we cannot, and might not, tax the article itself, we can tax the vehicle which brings it, and this we ought assuredly do.

The carrying trade of America, engrossed as it is with her raw produce, is the nurse of her marine, and the cradle of her future maritime power. A foreign tonnage duty may, undoubtedly, and with undeniable justice, be imposed upon all American vessels which shall enter our ports, *whatever be their cargoes*. The consequence will be, that America will lose the carrying trade of this staple article, and it will be conveyed in British bottoms to British ports. How can America object to this foreign shipping tax? She lays a duty upon our articles, and we retaliate it by an impost on hers. Ships are as much the means of wealth to the builders in America, as cotton and woolen fabrics are to the manufacturers and spinners in Great Britain. The consequence of such a system would undoubtedly lead to such new retaliation; but what then? In the result, the raw article would find its way to their country, and in our own bottoms. But America must not be humored to such a prodigious sacrifice, as to have the free and unrestricted supply of the raw commodity, and also in her own shipping. It is easy to see where the commercial conflict between the two nations will settle. The ships of both countries will make their outward voyages in ballast; America, will put a yet higher tax upon English manufactures when imported in English ships, with a diminished duty upon them when brought by her own ships. On the other hand, we shall do the same with American cotton, the present duty of 4 per cent in a British vessel, and 30 or 40 per cent when brought in American. But the result must inevitably be, that we shall thus greatly abridge the marine of the United States, and indemnify ourselves by these means for their commercial hostility.

SEPTEMBER 3.

In our last paper we stated the grounds upon which we considered that the Government of the United States had adopted the measures of a high prohibitory duty in too early a stage of their Commercial system. In examining the question of retaliation, we stated our opinions as to the impolicy of any measures which should induce us to impose a tax upon the elements of our commerce.

The great staple of the American export trade, and of our leading English manufactures, unfortunately happens to be the same article, namely—cotton. This fabric, which is at once capable of being manufactured into articles of the highest elegance as well as into substances of the most common and ordinary and domestic uses, of being wrought into one of the lightest and most fashionable of our textures, and of being rendered, by its weight, tenacity, and thickness, impervious almost to cold, is undoubtedly destined to become the clothing of the southern, western, and eastern continents. A raw commodity of this sort, which after undergoing the process of English art, circulates through innumerable channels of commerce, and forms the principal article of our export trade,—with which we supply the continent of Europe in the first and primitive stage of its preparation, as cotton twist—and in its last and more perfect form of a finished manufacture, must not be rejected from any national spleen, or thirst of retaliation. And yet policy requires us not to depend entirely upon America for any element of industry of this vital importance to our domestic trade; and we have not the slightest doubt that we shall be able to emancipate ourselves from a dependence upon the American market for this article, in a much

shorter time than the Americans will be able to supply themselves with the leading manufactures of England.

The details of Commerce, though curious, are often dull, but they are interesting to this country beyond measure, in that state of affairs which the American tariff has recently produced. The raw cotton of America is not indigenous to those soils in which it is grown, and it is only within the last thirty years that it has been cultivated in the Southern States of America to such a prodigious extent. Our own extensive and unconfined possessions in India furnish a natural and proper soil for the cultivation of cotton, and encouragement is alone required, together with the breaking up of the prohibitory system, to enable India to supply Great Britain with raw cotton, to ten times the amount which she now consumes. It will be by a perfect freedom of our Eastern Commerce, by the destruction of monopolists, and a cautious and well-regulated system of bounties in the beginning, to encourage the investment of capital, that we shall be enabled to raise up a rival to the American Market, and to render ourselves independent of her raw produce. But it is said, How can the cotton of Bengal and British India contend for a moment with the cultivated produce of Carolina, Georgia, and the Southern Provinces of the United States? Have they not been often tried, and as often failed? Look at the prices in the markets between cotton, the growth of India, and the growth of America. The answer is, Give them the same advantages of European skill and superintendance, and see what will be the improvement of the raw article, both in quality and quantity.

The deterioration of Indian cotton has kept pace with the restrictions on the Indian market; and the cotton wool of America and the West Indies, has rivalled and thrust out the cotton of India from this cause alone, viz—that the rude produce of unassisted native industry is wholly incapable of competing with an article which receives the aid and fostering care of European skill and art. Break down the enclosure which confines India from the rest of the world, demolish the fortress of prohibition, and liberate her from the clutches of that duenna, which has stunted her growth and confined her charms within her own withering embrace, and India will yield to British capital and industry more than enough to render us independent of the United States.

There have always existed three great and obvious impediments to the extension of the export trade of India, and to the cultivation and improvement of its natural commerce. First, the impolitic monopoly of the East India Company, and Government of the country, which is administered upon the principle of a factory for the benefit of exclusive merchants, rather than upon the policy of a large and profitable member of a wealthy empire; secondly, the prohibitory, or protecting duties imposed under the pretext of encouraging the colonial industry of other portions of the empire; and lastly, the absurd and fatal exclusion of the European capital and skill from cultivating and improving the natural produce of the soil. Such have been the great impediments to the improvement of India, and nothing has suffered more under the neglect of care and culture than the main staple and growth of the soil of the country,—cotton. We do not speak of the mere twist, and the primitive mode of preparing their yarn by the spindle and distaff, but of the growth of cotton-wool itself.

The best East Indian Cotton, which is that brought to this Country, is inferior in value to the worst which is imported from any other part of the world. It is, in short, nearly in the condition in which Indian Indigo was, before it was manufactured by Europeans. Every man acquainted with trade knows that indigo is one of our principal exports to the Continent of Europe, and has become a main article in our general commerce. But how has this been effected? Simply, because it has not been burthened by protecting duties, or imposts,—and, above all, because it has received the benefit, although by no means a full and legitimate one, of European skill and capital. Some British Capitalists first began the culture and manufacture of indigo about forty years ago in Bengal. What was manufactured by the natives of India before that time was trash unfit for the European market; and this valuable dye was principally supplied by Spanish America. At the present period indigo is not to be found in the list of American exports to this country. The Indian commodity has almost alone