

THE ADVANTAGE OF DIVERSIFYING MANUFACTURES IN THE SOUTH

Mr. E. W. Thomas, One of the Leading Cotton Mill Men of the Piedmont Section, Talks of the Spinning Industry in the South and its Bright Future

I wish to call your attention to a few facts for consideration and thoughtful investigation:

First. As to the future possibility of the South becoming the leading cotton manufacturing centre of the world, and reasons why such a position is attainable.

Second. The comparative advantages of the South over any other section of the world as a manufacturing centre.

Third. Our responsibilities and duties in this development.

Taking the first suggestion for consideration, and we find we have been for the past few years rapidly increasing the number of spindles and looms in the South to a degree commending the admiration of our friends and creating consternation and fear among our competitors, and this has resulted in making us stronger in our courage to still push forward, and naturally has brought within our borders larger financial security.

Our anticipations in this respect are shared, in a measure, by our Northern neighbors, who are manufacturers. England as well is becoming exceedingly alarmed at the rapidly increasing number of spindles being put in operation in this country, basing her alarm upon the fact that, in such increase here, more of our cotton crop must be used by us, and presenting to her, more vividly than ever before, the fact that the raw material of the world is most surely in the hands of the South, and that we are gradually and more firmly becoming a strong competitor in the sale of manufactured cotton to foreign countries.

To what extent this alarm has grown may be illustrated by the fact that meetings throughout England have recently been held by those who are deeply interested in manufacturing problems, and at one of these meetings, at Manchester, which was attended by a large and influential gathering, the following was the substance of the remarks. The address of the Lord Mayor at this meeting is given in part in the following brief extracts:

"He stated it to be of supreme importance that every possible effort should be put forward, not alone by this association, but also by the governing, with a view to the growing of cotton in Africa. No readers of the daily press could be ignorant of the great efforts which were being made by our competitors in the United States by continental countries and by Japan, not only to equal our efficiency in the cotton industry, but even—and particularly was this the case in regard to the United States—to wrest from us the great industry upon which the very existence of Lancashire depended. The almost unlimited capacity for the production of every commodity in the States on a gigantic scale was shown nowhere more forcibly than in the growth of cotton. One State alone—that of Texas—had an area more than double that of Great Britain. The States were the most powerful competitors, and the States were likely to be more powerful in the future. The fixed aim of those engaged in the cotton industry was ultimately to consume on the spot all the cotton grown on the plantations. In 1896 the cotton crop was 7,311,392 bales, of which the States used 32 per cent, Great Britain using 33 per cent. Last year the crop was 10,650,580 bales. The States used 37 per cent, and Great Britain 25 per cent, an increase of 5 per cent. in the States and a decrease of 10 per cent. in Great Britain. The tendency of consumption in the near neighborhood of the cotton field was shown by the fact that while in 1890 the North took 76.7 per cent, of that consumed in the States and the South took 23.3 per cent., last year the North took only 51.4 per cent, and the South took 48.55 per cent. Without being unduly alarmed they might say that there was surely sufficient evidence to warrant the special visits of masters and trade union leaders to the States to take stock of the position and prepare for the struggle."

At this same meeting the Hon. Alfred Emmott, M. P., moved the following resolutions, which were carried:

"That, in view of the frequent disorganization and consequent loss to the

country may have.

In answer to the first point raised—that relative to the capability of our Southern native help to manufacture a finer and more diversified product than our present output—I will only say that I have yet to learn of their failure to keep pace with the fine and varied work already inaugurated and still being increased in our midst. It is also a matter of congratulation that the average number of yarn being spun in the South is increasing in point of fineness continually. It is also a fact that the majority of the mills recently built and those projected are being placed upon a basis of fine numbers.

In my opinion, and I speak from personal observation, the adaptability, considering all the surrounding circumstances, of the Southern operative, is fully equal to the Northern.

Now in regard to an insufficient supply of native born help. This may be true in localities, but it has been the experience of all manufacturing centres that the building of the mills has eventually drawn, in close proximity, people from the country and outlying districts, and this is not worth while to consider this question of spindleage here, as even when our native country help is exhausted; then if it be true that cotton manufacturing may decline in our sister countries, there will be opportunities for skilled employees from those countries to be obtained. We should not cross this bridge until we come to it.

Regarding the climatic conditions being against the practical manufacturing of finer yarns than are now spun in the South. The extremes of temperature are greater in the North than in the Southern States, and the changes are more erratic. If then our temperature is more uniform,

why can we not spin as fine numbers as in the North?

Again, the art of creating artificial moisture effectually and economically within our mills has reached that degree of perfection that any required amount of humidity may be obtained. The last proposition, or objection raised—that we are further away from the market centres of New York and Philadelphia—may be met by asserting that better facilities will naturally be provided for transportation and undoubtedly lower competitive rates be made as the bulk of cotton manufacturing business increases in the South. Again, the distance from those centres will be less vital to us as later we create our own plants for knitting the yarns spun by us and in erecting our own plants for converting our own cloths.

We come now to the consideration of the second proposition, which is upon the comparative advantages the South has over any other section of the country as destined to be the largest cotton manufacturing centre of the world.

History of the industrial art has already proven that all such industries centralize and concentrate within the borders of the localities where the raw material exists. This has no better illustration than in the history of the iron and steel industry. Not so many years ago this whole Northern, Eastern and Southern country was dotted over with the small and isolated forges and furnaces. Today these have disappeared and concentration of the business is localized where the ore beds and the coal fields abound.

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So, logically may we conceive, without any possible fear of contradiction, that the great trend of cotton manufacturing is toward the cotton fields. This of itself is one indication that the future centre of cotton manufacturing is bound to come within our borders. Facts show that with the large increase in number of spindles in the South proportionately many times the percentage of the increase in the North; that we are also reaching, if we have not quite reached, a point where we are using as many bales of cotton as are being used in the North. This fact is also in our favor, for as time goes on the smaller Northern mills place their output on finer yarns and displace the medium and lower counts, as seems to be inevitable, they will require less raw material, and to that extent will our increase of spindles be supplied in a measure by the reduction in the amount of raw material consumed by those Northern mills.

I believe very strongly that cotton manufacturing in New England is not to be obliterated; that they are fully able to care for themselves in the future and that they have already recognized the fact that they must make changes, just as we at the South must make changes, in systems, methods, and in the increased diversification of our products.

We come now to the third and last proposition to be considered. That is, what ought to be done on our part to make this section the great manufacturing centre of the world. There are many things that should receive our attention.

Our prompt, persistent and energetic efforts to open up avenues for our trade with other countries, a subject which I know will be fully presented to you later in the session.

Establishment of centres in foreign countries where samples of our products of this country may be exhibited.

Having our consular service partake more of a commercial nature.

There is also much for us to do, however, in the sanitary, educational and religious measures, which must be given our work people, and it is a pleasure for me to testify as to the willingness as a whole of the Southern people generally to furnish all these advantages.

And while undertaking the betterment of our work people we must not be blind to the fact, that we also as managers, owners and superintendents, must not cling to old traditional methods of management, that no great industry like ours in these progressive days can be carried on in the same manner and way as years ago. Every day brings us in contact with changes in the wishes and desires of our customers, to which requirements we must conform, also that competition brings us to the facts, that margins of profit existing in the past have been reduced to a point, where our best efforts are required, in maintaining our machinery plant in the very best condition, and the proper balancing of our mill, so that each and every machine will run its full day's capacity and in the economical purchase of raw material and supplies, etc.

Too many of our mills, are not today obtaining the maximum amount of yarn and cloth, through the machinery not being properly balanced throughout the mill in point of production, or not running at a speed the most economical for the cost of its output.

It does not follow always the increase of speed which gives increased production, or beyond a certain point it will always increase labor cost and repairs. Hence the whole plant must always be carefully considered, each department by itself, regulating its speed according to the condition of the machinery in that department and if the other departments of the mill after being fitted up as they ought to do not provide for or use the output of the first, add to or reduce the number of machines until you have a well balanced mill.

IMPROVEMENT IN QUALITY OF GOODS. Since my residence in this section of the country I have been very much impressed with the quotations of selling prices of yarn and cloths as shown in the trade papers, wherein all Southern farms and cloths are generally quoted at lower prices than those of Northern

Wakeful Children. For a long time the two year old child of Mr. P. L. McPherson, 59 N. Tenth St., Harrisburg, Pa., would sleep but two or three hours in the night, which made it very hard for her parents. Her mother concluded that the child had stomach trouble, and gave her half of one Chamberlain's Stomach and Liver Tablets, which quieted her stomach and she slept the whole night through. Two boxes of these Tablets have effected a permanent cure and she is now well and strong. For sale by R. H. Jordan & Co.

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UNINTELLIGENT COMPETITION. Upon this point I wish to take a few moments of your time. One of the existing handicaps we have among ourselves and one which exists in other quarters, is that of un-intelligent competition. Ignorant competition has been in many cases the cause of many mills not making money. Many manufacturers who are weaving more than one class and weight of goods have never known the exact cost of each of the kinds they produce. Well established mills, many of them thoroughly organized, well equipped, and well managed, are singularly deficient in this line, and more particularly is it pronounced where there are a large variety of yarns or cloth made.



THE WASTE PROBLEM. Much of the waste from our mills we do not work, a greater share finds its way to foreign countries to be reworked into merchantable products, some of which find their way back to this country. Is there any reason why we, as manufacturers, should not work up our own waste or at least establish plants for making a specialty of these classes of waste that are now exported, and thus increase the amount of money

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