

them only \$33,000,000. The five Central American states, with a population of 3,500,000, take foreign goods to the amount of \$23,000,000 annually, of which we sell them only \$5,320,000. Mexico, our near neighbor, with rail connections at several places on our border, with a population of 13,000,000, buys abroad to the extent of \$42,000,000, but we sell its people only \$21,000,000.

The West Indies, not including Cuba or Porto Rico, buy \$45,000,000 worth of goods in foreign countries, of which we provide \$15,000,000.

The startling fact is that we buy yearly from the South American countries \$67,000,000 more than they buy from us; in other words, they sell us their products and with our money make purchases in Europe. This is not flattering to our commercial ability, particularly as it has been demonstrated and loudly proclaimed that we sell our goods as cheaply as does any other country.

There may be no sentiment in business, but it evidently takes more than an equalization of prices to divert commerce from its long established course. We must manufacture goods to meet the needs and suit the tastes of the people, establish agencies or sample houses where the goods can be seen, and extend credits such as the South American merchant has been accustomed to receive from the European dealer, before we can make much headway in that field.

The rapidly-changing conditions in Cuba and Porto Rico offer a field for an increased trade of no small proportions. The abolition of the discriminating and prohibitive Spanish tariff will, no doubt, enable our people to sell their wares freely in those countries. The vantage-ground of New Orleans, in connection with the commerce of those islands, should enable it to control a full share of their trade. They consume largely of breadstuffs, provisions and manufactured articles, which New Orleans should supply. No other port in the United States excels her in facility of dispatch to vessels, or in the readiness and cheapness with which she can draw such articles from the field or factory which supplies them. On the other hand, her proximity to those countries, particularly Cuba, gives her a decided advantage. All that remains wanting is the establishment of regular lines of steamers suited to the trade, and energetic and aggressive merchants, capable of reaping its profits.

Let us see what that trade amounts to. Previous to the late insurrection, Cuba imported, annually, \$78,000,000 of goods, and exported \$66,000,000 worth. Of the goods imported, the United States sold about \$12,000,000 worth, while we purchased the greater part of her exports. Not taking account of any increase in the growth of her resources under the new regime, we here have a difference between what we have sold in the past

and what we may sell in the future to that country, of \$66,000,000 a year.

Porto Rico buys yearly, from foreign countries, \$17,000,000 worth of goods, and exports a like amount. The United States sold to that country last year, goods to the value of \$1,505,000, and bought from it \$2,414,000 worth. From this it will be seen there are great possibilities for the development of further trade with that island.

In the past, the duties levied by Spain on goods coming from other countries into Cuba or Porto Rico, were much in excess of those charged on like goods from Spain. Hence the latter country controlled the trade. Now that this discrimination will cease, our merchants will be better enabled to extend their trade into these countries. In this lies the present opportunity of New Orleans.

The recent trip of the Oregon from California, round Cape Horn to Cuban waters, and the anxiety of the nation for its safety, have awakened a new interest in the Nicaragua canal. From the many expressions of opinion, it would seem that, aside from the commercial advantages to be derived from such a waterway, the construction of the canal has become a national necessity. The opening of this waterway would no doubt give a great impetus to our commerce with the west coast of South America, as well as to China, British India and Japan—countries which offer untold possibilities for the future of our manufactures. Japan is already taking largely of our raw cotton. It will also facilitate the carriage to and from the various countries comprising Oceanica, which are no small consumers of our goods. We sold them \$22,000,000 worth last year, and purchased from them nearly \$27,000,000. The Hawaiian and Philippine islands furnished their quota of this interchange.

China, with its 4,000,000 square miles of territory, and over 400,000,000 of people, is about to be opened to the commerce of the world. New treaty ports were recently opened by royal decree, and foreign steamers admitted to all inland waters, which are the high roads of China. The era of railroad building has at last reached that country. Contracts have already been made for steel rails and other railway supplies for use therein. It is not too much to say that either our raw cotton, or the manufactured cloth, will be taken by that country in vast quantities in the near future. We sell China only \$10,000,000 worth of goods, though other countries sell her \$140,000,000 worth. She exports \$120,000,000 of merchandise, of which our share is \$20,000,000.

British India also affords possibilities with her 250,000,000 people whose chief clothing is cotton goods. In 1897 there was imported into that country 1,976,000,000 yards of unbleached cotton goods, which our southern mills are well adapted to make. This is cloth

enough to girdle the earth forty-five times, but our country did not provide one-quarter of 1 per cent of it.

We are all aware how Japan is developing, and what a promise she holds out for increase in our trade.

Our commerce with the Philippine islands, while not very large in the past, is no doubt destined to increase greatly. Heretofore Spain sold her 70 per cent of the goods bought from foreign countries.

The Mississippi basin is capable of producing all the articles that these foreign countries require or will take from the United States.

The Illinois Central system of railroads runs through the heart of this great agricultural and manufacturing region. It stretches from the sugar, cotton and lumber regions of Louisiana and Mississippi to the grain and coal fields of Illinois and Iowa, and makes the necessary exchange of commodities between the states and towns traversed. It binds the commercial centers of the "Middle West" with those of the south, and transfers the varying products of each to the other. It collects, in the vast territory reached by its lines, the wares and merchandise trafficked in by the merchants of New Orleans, and lays them at her door. In like manner it distributes throughout the country the stores of merchandise shipped by the New Orleans merchants into the interior.

In the year just closed, the Illinois Central system hauled to New Orleans 2,313,332 tons of freight, which is four times as much as it brought in ten years ago. It hauled out of New Orleans 366,016 tons, or 13,358 less than ten years ago. This shows the necessity of building up and increasing the imports of New Orleans, if, by its growth, it is to justify its name of "The Crescent City." Of the 42,000,000 bushels of grain exported from New Orleans in the past year, the Illinois Central brought in 25,000,000, or 60 per cent. Of the 2,319,838 bales of cotton exported from New Orleans in the past year, the Illinois Central brought in 1,061,140 bales, or 50 per cent more than ten years ago. Among the other receipts were over 180,000 tons of lumber.

The company has expanded her railroad system from 2550 miles ten years ago to 4615 at present. From 4,000,000 tons of freight carried then, she now carries over 14,000,000. In the same time the number of passengers carried yearly has grown from 6,000,000 to 14,700,000. The locomotive engines have increased some 500 in number, and by over 1,500,000 tons in hauling capacity. Her freight cars have increased over 20,000, and their capacity by fully 380 per cent. The roadbed and train service are of the very best, affording the desired opportunities for such expansion of traffic as the bright prospects presage for the future. The railroad is fully equipped to do its duty in the era of commercial