

compromise thus effected with the Daira will have the further merit of supplying both a precedent and a basis for a modification of the Goschen-Joubert scheme, without affecting the administrative guarantees which constitute the chief value of that measure.

CHAPTER VIII.

COMMERCE.

Steady Growth of Egyptian Trade—Great Increase during Present Reign—Review of Ten Years ending 1875—Exports—Their Chief Details—Ninety per cent. of the whole shipped from Alexandria—Principal Foreign Markets—Diminution of the Transit Traffic compensated by Growth of General Trade—Imports—Whence chiefly received—Their Increase an Evidence of Augmented National Wealth—Probable Re-adjustment of the Customs Tariff.

HOWEVER the problem of Egyptian finance may ultimately solve itself, its difficulties have at least been in no way caused by any decline in the national trade. Not only has this, till within the last eighteen or twenty months, more than kept pace with the rapid growth of the revenue, but in most of its branches the improvement continues, and—barring only the recent depression, during which the commercial movement in Egypt has shared in the general stagnation of trade everywhere—the condition and prospects of the whole are perhaps as solidly satisfactory as at any time since the death of Mehemet Ali. There have been spurts of much greater activity and larger profits; but until weakened by this temporary disturbance, the general tone of both the inland and foreign trade of the country has seldom been sounder than during the past year. If revenue, therefore, has recently expanded faster than trade, the fact has signified no serious decline in the latter; but has simply meant that, under pressure of debt-burdens incurred at ruinous rates, and in any case more rapidly than the country could bear them, taxation has out-

stripped the commercial development on which it should mainly feed, and in the rear of which good government should keep it. That the trade of Egypt has in fact, till latterly, grown faster than its budget-estimates, is shown by the chief figures of the national account any time during the past fifteen years; and equally so if the retrospect be carried farther back. In 1862, when the revenue was under 5,000,000*l.*, the total value of exports and imports—exclusive of goods in transit—only slightly exceeded 6,445,000*l.*, while ten years later, in 1872, they had risen respectively to 7,593,645*l.* and 18,323,800*l.*, with the balance of trade increasing largely in favour of Egypt. In 1873 and 1874, the trade totals, though showing further marked advance on the previous years, were nearly stationary; but in 1875, exports fell off about 2,000,000*l.*, reducing the double total to 18,500,000*l.*, while the revenue further increased from 10,689,070*l.* to 10,772,611*l.* last year.

The commercial expansion thus evidenced began with the present reign, and for such a review of its progress and chief incidents as can be here offered, it will suffice to trace the movement through an average decade of that period, with occasional reference to some features of preceding years. As no complete returns have been available for later than 1875, the decade ending with that year will most fairly serve as an average of the whole, since it excludes both the undue inflation caused by the American war and the temporary depression of last year. Tabulated statements covering a longer period will be found in the Appendix.

No returns whatever have been published—nor till quite lately were even prepared—of the inland trade of Egypt; but this is so inter-dependent on its foreign commerce, that a sketch of the latter practically tells the

economic history of both. Even for the foreign trade, too, only complete details are published of that portion of it which passes through Alexandria; but that, again, comprises about ninety per cent. of the whole, and what remains can be estimated with sufficient approximate accuracy *en bloc*.*

The three staple *Exports* from Egypt are cotton, cereals, and sugar; and after these come, at a long distance, a host of minor commodities of which it will suffice to notice only the more important. Turning to the Customs returns of Alexandria, we find *Cotton* heading the list of the whole with 2,615,120 quintals shipped in 1875. The crop of last year was much larger, but as no official return of it has been available, neither its gross yield nor the quantity exported can be stated. With one or two annual exceptions, the production and export of this staple have been steadily on the increase since the abnormal spurt of 1864–5. The exact rate of this will be seen from the following note of the shipments from Alexandria during the ten years ending 1874–5:

		Quintals.			Quintals.
1866	...	1,288,797	1871	...	1,966,154
1867	...	1,260,946	1872	...	2,108,509
1868	...	1,253,593	1873	...	2,418,484
1869	...	1,391,493	1874	...	2,599,685
1870	...	1,351,853	1875	...	2,615,120

* The main difficulty of tabulating the movements of Egyptian trade lies in the confused and unsystematic way in which the Customs accounts have hitherto been kept—sometimes according to weight, and sometimes according to number, or even the size of the parcels, without reference to their value; while the periods referred to are often without notice as to which is meant, according to the Coptic or to the Gregorian calendar, even before the adoption, last year, of the latter for all administrative purposes had removed this element of confusion. Care has, however, been taken to render the figures given in the text as accurate as a collation of the official returns with independent private estimates can make them.

The great fall, however, in the price of cotton within this period not only deprives the increase thus indicated of all fiscal value, but occasioned an actual loss of revenue as between the first and last years of the decade. In 1866 the Liverpool quotation for Egyptian *Fair* was 21½*d.*, which fell in rapid annual succession to 16½*d.*, 10¾*d.*, 12¾*d.*, 12½*d.*, 8¾*d.*, 10¾*d.*, 9½*d.*, 8½*d.*, and 8½*d.* in 1875. But the increase in the *quantities* exported none the less evidences great agricultural (and so commercial) progress during the period. About four-fifths of the cotton thus shipped was sent to England, the balance going to France, Italy, Austria, and Russia. But in addition to the raw staple, cotton seed forms also a large article of exportation. In the same decennial period the following quantities of this were shipped:

	Ardebs.		Ardebs.
1866	860,090	1871	1,203,756
1867	826,637	1872	1,274,765
1868	753,406	1873	1,058,111
1869	823,707	1874	1,528,693
1870	917,688	1875	1,474,968

Unlike that of cotton itself, the price of this rose largely during the decade—from 60, piastres per ardeb in 1866 to 81½ piastres in 1869, and closing at 80½ piastres in 1875. For the seed, as for the staple, Great Britain was again the chief customer, followed at a long distance by France. To these figures have to be added nearly 70,000 quintals of oil-cake, chiefly made up of the refuse seed of this crop, and shipped mainly to the same destinations.*

* These figures of the cotton crop, however, supply no measure of the great increase in the growth and export of the staple during the present reign as compared with the previous thirteen years. The details of the two periods showing, as mentioned in another chapter, a comparative increment of 257 per cent. during the latter over the former.

Cereals rank next, but the produce and consequent exportation of these has been much less constant than those of cotton. In 1862 the total yield was 2,300,000 ardebs, which, during the cotton mania of the next couple of years, fell off so largely that the quantity grown was actually insufficient for home consumption, and the government had not only to forbid exportation, but to encourage imports by suspending the Customs duty. This continued till 1866, when exportation was resumed, reaching its highest total in 1872, when 1,800,000 ardebs of all varieties were shipped from Alexandria, but thence gradually falling to 800,000; and in 1875 *Beans* topped the list with the following yearly quantities during the term:—

	Ardebs.		Ardebs.
1866	42,527	1871	711,841
1867	614,664	1872	664,348
1868	745,058	1873	268,527
1869	505,146	1874	334,330
1870	335,268	1875	490,257

The highest mean price of the decade was 211 piastres per ardeb in 1874, and the lowest 152 piastres in 1872, the closing price of 1875 being 195 piastres. Of the whole quantity exported Great Britain took more than eleven-twelfths, and France about two-thirds of the small remainder. *Wheat* followed with:

	Ardebs.		Ardebs.
1866	12,555	1871	464,669
1867	798,202	1872	879,345
1868	1,147,147	1873	612,723
1869	421,933	1874	186,723
1870	137,815	1875	836,997

The difference between these annual totals is mainly explained by the relative "ups and downs" of the Nile

during the period, a "good" or "bad" river for the year about equally affecting the crop and the consequent export of the twelvemonth. Differently from those of cotton, the prices of this article rose, with some fluctuations, from an average of 180 piastres per ardeb in 1866 to 242 piastres in 1874, but receded in the following year to 192 piastres. Here again more than nine-tenths of the whole quantity shipped went to Great Britain, and about three-fourths of the balance to France. *Maize* fell far below these other crops, only 512,972 ardebs having left Alexandria during the ten years, of which 431,094 ardebs found a market in England, 35,604 ardebs in France, and the rest elsewhere. The highest price was 211 piastres in 1874, and the lowest 152 piastres in 1872. *Barley* figured for still less, with a total of 414,327 ardebs, of which Great Britain took nearly three-fourths, and France most of the remainder. *Rice* contributed 34,085 ardebs, nearly the whole of which went to the Greek islands, Constantinople, and other parts of the Levant. But this forms only a part of the export of this article, which is also sent largely to the same markets from Damietta; but no complete return of the quantity shipped from that port has been available. Lentils, chick-peas, peas, and helba, which complete the list of the edible grains, added altogether only 197,799 ardebs to the tale, and need not therefore be particularised. For them, as for the larger crops, Great Britain was also the chief customer, taking nearly nine-tenths of the whole, while France absorbed most of what remained.

The returns of the export of *Flax* show how largely cotton has encroached on the culture of this once important crop, for which much of the soil of Egypt is admirably adapted, and which might still, in point of profit,

compete favourably with the more popular staple. A total of only 20,272 bales was shipped from Alexandria during the ten years, of which 16,000 went to England, and most of the remainder to Italy. The highest and lowest prices during the term were 192 piastres per cantar in 1869, and 141 piastres in 1871. The produce of the crop was, however, increased by 30,120 ardebs of linseed, nearly all sent to Great Britain, of an average mean value of 264 piastres per ardeb.

The production and export of *Sugar* on any large scale date only from 1867, when the erection of the first of the great Daira factories raised the manufacture of this article to the first rank of native industries, and since then the culture of the cane and its mercantile development have made rapid annual progress. Within eight years the quantity exported rose from 8,194 sacks (about 55,000 quintals) to 159,185 sacks (equal to 986,000 quintals) in 1875, after having attained 433,853 sacks in 1874, and 269,378 in 1872. The crop of last year showed a large recovery, but no exact return of its yield has been obtained. So prodigious an extension in this particular element of trade has few precedents in commercial history, and shows how readily Egypt might be advanced to the very first rank among sugar-producing countries. As it is, the moderate average of the quantity exported in 1875 places her nearly abreast of Brazil, which supplies about one-twelfth of the whole sugar consumption of the world. The mean auction-price in Alexandria varied during the seven years from 87½ piastres per cantar for the first quality, in 1869, to 118½ piastres in 1875, with wide fluctuations between these rates in the interval, according to the rise and fall of the English and French markets, to which most of this produce was shipped. Of the molasses made only 2,384 cases were exported in the latter half of the decade, 1,085 of