
FLAX, HEMP, AND JUTE MANUFACTURES.

The cultivation and preparation of flax, hemp and jute, and the manufacture of these fibres into yarns, twines, threads and woven fabrics, necessitates a large expenditure of skilled labor.

The wages paid in other countries where flax, hemp, and jute goods are manufactured, are upon a very low scale as compared with the wages paid in our mills for the same kind of work.

There can be no reasonable doubt concerning the real meaning of President Cleveland's recent message to Congress. It has received the condemnation of no free foreign trader either in Europe or America. It has met with the approval of no real protectionist. It is, therefore, in fact a revenue reform or a free foreign trade message. Its recommendations and its logic, if carried into practical operation, would produce a complete revolution in the linen industry of the United States.

As will be seen from the following facts and figures, a tariff for revenue only will as effectually destroy the American linen industry as would absolute free foreign trade. For several years the cultivation of flax and hemp in the United States has steadily decreased, and the placing of these so-called raw materials on the free list will only hasten the time when the cultivation of these fibres will be numbered with the lost arts of our American industry.

In the manufacture of these fibres the real work is done by machinery, and Great Britain makes this machinery for all the world. The same spindle is capable of running as many revolutions per minute and turning off as much yarn per day in India, Russia or Germany as in the United States. A mere glance at the wages paid in different parts of the world will convince the most skeptical that our wages must go down if the tax upon foreign goods is reduced. Without this unhappy result the American mills cannot be operated in competition with foreign mills.

It must be remembered that ocean freights are no barrier to the foreign mills, since the raw material has to be brought over the same ocean route. The unavoidable shrinkage of the raw material in the process of manufacture is, in fact, a large item of protection to the foreign mill, freight upon the dead waste being avoided. From this ugly item the American mill can find no escape.

The following were the average weekly wages paid in the flax, hemp and jute spinning trade in different countries in 1886, as compiled by the Flax and Hemp Spinners' and Growers' Association of America, from the most reliable sources of information :

	Spinners.	Carders.
United States (60 hours per week).....	\$7.00	\$8.00
Great Britain (56 hours per week).	2.82	2.19
France (72 hours per week).....	2.02	2.20
Germany (72 hours per week).....	1.98	1.85
Eastern Russia (81 hours per week).....	1.10
Western Russia (72 hours per week).....	1.12	1.12
India.....	.62	.60

It is impossible to reduce the tax upon the product of foreign goods without reducing American wages. The importation of yarns under the present tariff is forcing American mills into an unprofitable existence. Only a mere pittance of the woven fabrics consumed in this country is made at home, and many of these never will be made here under President Cleveland's proposed industrial policy until American working people are content to live on rice at a cent and a half a day, and clothe themselves with only a cloth about the loins. In a large area of our country this mode of life is impossible. If by law we attempt to starve the working people into such an existence, our climate would make it impossible, and the attempt should never be made.

E. A. HARTSHORN.

TROY, N. Y.
