THE REVISION OF THE TARIFF.

The public, as regards the tariff question, may be divided into several classes. The first are prohibitionists pure and simple, who would, if they could, put an end to all trade with foreigners and employ the whole capital and whole labor of the country in producing every article the people require; but then they are so few in number, and so deficient in intellect and education, that their opinions hardly repay discussion. Then there are protectionists of the Carey school, who believe diversity of industry to be necessary to sound progress, but are not disposed to trust the creation of this diversity to the spontaneous exertions of individuals, and therefore advocate the stimulation of it by taxation. These may be called the scientific protectionists, and they have a large body of undisciplined followers, who may be called spread-eagle protectionists, and want everything to be made at home for the honor of the flag. After these come the selfish protectionists, who advocate the exclusion of foreign products, ready to provide a good market for their own goods, but nominally either on scientific or spread-eagle grounds, or on a mixture of both. Lastly come the moderate protectionists, who comprise by far the greater portion of the sect, who think it necessary and desirable in a new country to tempt men into the foundation of new branches of industry by legislative aid, but would not foster anything that would wholly flourish without fostering; nor foster anything whatever longer than was necessary to give it a fair start.

Turning to the free-traders, we find two divisions, and two only. One may be called absolute free-traders, of the French type, trained by Bastiat, armed with principles and logic, and full of scorn for people who shrink in politics from clean-cut conclusions. They apply, the laws of mechanics to the work of government, and having found their rule, refuse to admit that its action may be modified by circumstances. They proclaim the absolute right of men in society to sell the products of their industry where they please, and treat all restrictions on this right as forms of robbery, implying moral obliquity in the person or persons who create them. This division is small in number, but it does most of the work of agitation. The other, while admitting the abstract truth of the great doctrine of free trade, is content to submit to such modifications in the application of it as the state of public sentiment or of the national finances may seem to require; and while maintaining that duties should only be levied on foreign imports for revenue, are willing to have the duties so distributed as to favor branches of industry which protection seems likely to make self-supporting within a reasonable time, and, in fact, generally to give the American manufacturer, wherever possible, whatever advantage over the foreigner may be capable of being extracted from a moderate tariff.

Now, the tendency of opinion the world over is towards the recognition of the free-trade doctrine as the natural law of human intercourse, and towards the reduction to the lowest possible point of all interference with its action. This is due in part to the growth everywhere of individualism, the increasing respect for individual intelligence and freedom, and the increasing confidence of statesmen in this freedom and Intelligence as agents in the production of wealth. It is due also to the prodigious success which has attended the application of the pure free-trade principle in the United States to the relations of a great number of separate political communities. The absence of custom-houses from the interior of this continent has afforded the first practical refutation of the old delusion on which most government interferences with trade have in past ages been based, that in the exchange of commodities between two separate political communities one is sure to lose, and both cannot profit. The absurdity of this has for the first time been demonstrated by the United States. The result is that though absolute free trade is nowhere else found, the tendency in all civilized countries, except in the British colonies, is towards a lowering of tariffs, and the leading political economists of the world have abandoned the principle of protection as worthless, and the influence of nearly all colleges and places of education is thrown against it.

In the United States sentiment is so divided that the triumph of either principle is not possible, and, if we are to believe Burke's maxim, what is not possible in politics is never desirable. The tide at present, owing to the shocking abuses of their power perpetrated during the last seven years by the selfish protectionists, is running against protection; but, even if it ran twice as strongly as it does, free-traders are not in a position to take advantage of it, nor are likely to be in our time, to secure the absolute triumph of their idea—for the simple reason that in a country like this a very large proportion of the revenue must, perforce, be drawn from duties on imports from abroad. The middle ground, on which both parties may and probably will meet, is such an arrangement of the tariff as will give an advantage over foreigners to the interests which are likely to gain strength by being temporarily fostered, and which are now too weak to stand alone, and by whose existence the country seems likely eventually to profit. The free-traders need not hope for the abolition of the custom-house, and the protectionists must give up the hope both of complete or indiscriminate protection, and of all protection for branches of industry the forcing of which is injurious to other and larger branches, or which are never likely to be able to stand alone, no matter how much they are forced.

Indiscriminate protection is an absurdity on its face, because it gives no advantage to anybody. If the Government gives an iron manufacturer the power of raising his prices forty per cent., he profits by it so long as the farmer, butcher, baker, tailor, shoemaker, landlord, and weaver do not raise their prices too; but if, by protecting them also, the Government enables them to raise their prices, its protection to the ironmaster becomes a farce. Nor is it necessary to protect all branches of industry to produce the farce; the leading ones are sufficient: because a rise in a few leading products diffuses itself through all. Yet this is what Congress, for the last seven years, has been trying to do. Having no policy, and apparently no principles of its own, its plan has been to sit and wait for the manufacturers to come and ask for what they want. First comes the ironmaster and gets his forty per cent.; as long as nobody else gets a similar favor, it is clear gain to him. But he has hardly got house when the wool-grower and cotton-spinner and lumber-dealer and coal-miner arrive and claim the same thing, and get it. The result is that all prices are raised forty per cent., and the ironmaster finds at the end of a year he is just where he was before. He accordingly goes back the next year and claims more protection, and gets it; the others, hearing of this, do the same. Members of Congress take each interest's own story as to what it wants as conclusive, and the result is the monstrous called the tariff. The whole process has been somewhat like an attempt to fill a bucket with a hole in it.

What is wanted to produce any change for the better in the tariff is the adoption, either by bill or resolution, of some principle or rule of policy as to the kinds of industry which shall be protected, and the rigid restriction of the duty to the point, consistent with due regard to the revenue, at which foreign competition, though not felt, may be feared by the lazy or unenterprising, and the absolute exclusion from all protection of raw materials and products which can never hope to stand alone. The facts on which such a principle should be based should be furnished by a long and careful examination, such as Mr. Wells has made, and not on the application of manufacturers. The fact that a manufacturer cannot make money at present prices no more constitutes a claim to protection, or increased protection, than to an appropriation from the Treasury, because it may be the result of his own bad management or the over-protection of some other branch of industry on which he is dependent, or simply the rise of prices to their old level under the influence of the general diffusion of the tax. In one most important branch Mr. Wells found that the effect of a rise of duty was exhausted in about six months. At the close of that time the manufacturers had to go to Washington and begin their lamentations once more.

"PROTECTORATES."

There was a discussion in the House of Representatives last week on the proposition of Mr. Banks to send a ship-of-war to "protect" St. Domingo, which, though it reads like a scene in Molière, is worth the attention of everybody who wants to appreciate at their just
value the efforts which we are now witnessing in some quarters not only to extend "the area of freedom" and the area of American influence, but to convert the United States into a kind of "standing coun-

sel" for all distressed peoples. There is a civil war raging in St. Domin-
go; it has lasted now for several months, and bids fair to last as long as the combatants can find food or ammunition. There is no great principle or great interest at stake, or at least none which the outside world can discover. The conflict, as far as can be seen, is one born of personal ambition, of ill-regulated desires, of, in fact, a low state of moral and political training. Fighting about nothing, or fighting as the best mode of deciding political differences, or as anything but a last resort in a great crisis, is one of the characteristics of a people who are not yet fit for self-government; and the sole remedy is either long and wholesome experience of the misery of civil war or the rise of a despotic strong enough and fortunate enough to hold the contending factions in check, and to provide security and justice until the people have learnt the virtue of self-control. That all peoples have this virtue in a sufficient degree to enable them to govern themselves politically is a theory which derives no support from either reason or experience.

The Haitians have a revolution every three or four years for the same reason that a New York rough spends his evenings in drinking and fighting instead of attending lyceum lectures or reading history, and spends his money as fast as he earns it instead of putting it in the savings-bank. But Mr. Banks, who has now for a long while occupied the position of Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, thinks that the Haitians are fighting simply for want of good advice, and therefore gravely proposed on Wednesday week to send a man-of-war to the island, with an officer on board whose duty it would be to counsel the belligerents, as a friend, to desist from hostilities and wait till the next election to decide their differences. On being asked the very natural question, What was the officer to do in case his counsels were rejected? Mr. Banks's answer was that he was to report the result to the Government, and, if it were deemed desirable, a "treaty" was to be concluded with Hayti, in which, we suppose, the Haitians were to bind themselves not to fight without a license from our President, or, in other words, the United States were to become responsible to the world for their good behavior.

The proposition was perhaps the most ludicrous yet made in the House, except the one to recognize "the Irish Republic" on the strength of the Fenian operations in 1867, and it is only worthy of notice, even though it emanates from a functionary of Mr. Banks's standing, because it is one of the many expressions one meets with now every day, of the desire with which a great many politicians of a certain school are burning to extend the sphere of Government control and multiply its functions, and to increase the number of duties of the nature and value and performance of which the people cannot readily judge. Of course we cannot "protect" or annex Hayti or the Sandwich Islands or Mexico or Cuba without adding a large number of functionaries to the present list, and entrusting them with a large amount of discretionary power and with the expenditure of a good deal of money, and sending them beyond the reach of public opinion; or, in other words, without allowing a "ring" to be formed at Washington for each protectorate. If, for in-

stance, we undertake to "protect" Hayti—that is, restore peace and order—what this really means is, that we undertake to act as arbitrator between the two factions, and enforce our decisions at the point of the bayonet. It cannot mean simply the proffer of advice, for this Mr. Seward can offer any day through the mails without the authority of an act of Congress or a joint resolution. Now, if we enforce our deci-

sions amongst our various proteges, we must stay on the ground and keep them enforced, and this means the creation of a proconsulate in each protectorate, with a military and naval force, a treasury which somebody else has to fill, and divers privileges and pickings by which somebody is sure to profit.

How the thing would work may be seen in the case of Alaska. Nothing could at first sight seem simpler or less likely to afford an opportunity for fraud or peculation or corruption than the purchase of a strip of wild and almost unpeopled territory, in a remote corner of the continent, and from a thoroughly friendly power. The scheme was

concocted by the Secretary of State; the Senate cordially approved of it. The chairman of the Senate Committee of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Sumner, wrote a bulky pamphlet on the country, treating it from every known point of view and lauding it to the skies. What was there to do but pay the money? Nevertheless, the money was not paid. The appropriation "hung fire" in the House. The motives of the hesitation were among the loftiest, but in the delay "foreign gold" began to circu-

late. The Head Patriot, the Honorable Robert J. Walker, who was loudest in his advocacy of the acquisition, was sent for by the Russian ambassador and by him offered money as a bribe to induce him to be so uproarious as he could in advocating this extension of the area of freedom, and Mr. Walker pocketed the money. A similar offer was made to the Secretary of the Senate and he refused it, for his business partner, when it was made to him, declined it. From the report on Alaska of the House Committee of Foreign Affairs, presented by the illustrious chairmain, was at least in part paid for. That portion of it which de-
scribed the resources and appearance of this picturesque region, or, in other words, furnished the people of the United States with reasons for paying their hard-earned, or rather borrowed, money for it—which the people doubtless supposed was the result of a protracted examination of the subject either by the chairman himself or the chairman in connection with his colleagues, or had at least been evoked by them from the depths of their moral consciousness—was written bodily by a roving newspaper reporter, and from him borrowed and incorporated in the report by the committee. Even this was paid for. Baron Steckel was so charmed with the composition that he gave the reporter one thou-
sand dollars. How many more of the Alaska worthies were fed by the Russian Government nobody knows. In fact, the question people now ask themselves is, Who was not paid that ever opened his mouth on the subject—an ill-natured question, doubtless, but not wholly unnatural. Since the purchase an attempt has been made by some of the disappointed to make a little more out of the transaction by hav-

ing it crested into a regular United States Territory, with all the machinery of civil government, the white population being hardly large enough to furnish juries in criminal cases.

Now, we can neither purchase nor annex nor "protect" territory, either uninhabited or inhabited by people differing from ourselves in manners, laws, or language, without increasing the number of our functionaries or furnishing somebody with strong reasons for buying somebody at Washington—in other words, without increasing the corrup-
tion both in the legislative and administrative branches of the Government—without, in fact, putting our favor and our arms up at auction as Rome did in the latter days of the Republic, and wringing from suppliants and clients of inferior or dependent races, or from shrewd European friends, something very like Jugurtha's very uncom-

plimentary comment on the morals of the Roman Republic.

How subtle the poison is few can perceive. The proposed reciprocity treaty with the Sandwich Islands, for instance, is a noble-looking thing on paper. It would, it is true, reduce the revenue by about half a million in gold from the first, and very soon by two millions in gold; but then it would strengthen the bonds of friendship with the Sand-

wich Islanders and spread our influence over the vast bosom of the Pacific. Unhappily, the treaty is promoted mainly by gentlemen who have bought sugar-plantations and set up sugar-refineries in the Islands and in San Francisco. Cases of this kind might be multiplied by the dozen. There is hardly a scheme before Congress, however innocent in appearance, which involves the outlay of money by the Government, at the bottom of which a speculator is not lying hid.

The public functionaries in the civil service have increased in fifty years from about five thousand to fifty thousand, and simply through the growth of the Republic. There is nothing unnatural or unhealthy about this multiplication; they are all needed to do the work of government. But owing to the cluse of the system, they steal or waste, or, it is calculated, one hundred million dollars a year, or, in other words, a fourth of the entire revenue. They are growing every day more knavish and incompetent. The influence of their example on the community is every year becoming more demoralizing. Their mode of getting and keeping their places has converted politics into a disgraceful and paltry game in which it is very difficult for an honest man to engage. Now, all attempts
to increase their number, or, in other words, to increase the number of duties the Government has to discharge, all attempts tonnex or "protect" or purchase territory, or to send out propagandist missions for the spread of "seminal ideas," or to spread American influence in any way, except through the force of American example, the public may set down unhesitatingly as attempts on the part of a "ring" to make money. The work of our Government will not bear expansion without a proportionate increase of corruption, unless the civil service be thoroughly reformed. To multiply its care under present circumstances is simply to multiply the number of successful American rogues. This question of the reform of the civil service really includes all the other questions of the day—even the financial question; for, as Mr. Jenckes pointed out in this city last week, if you add $100,000,000 a year to the revenue, you solve the whole financial problem. You pay the debt and return to specie payments without increasing the tax-payer's burdens.

THE REFORM MOVEMENT.

The indications that we are nearing a period of thorough reform are tolerably apparent to everybody except that exceedingly small number who believe that society is constantly and everywhere retrograding, and are very numerous and striking. In the first place, corruption in every branch of the Government has reached a point beyond which it cannot go far without putting the very existence of the Government in danger. This can hardly be called an exaggeration when competent authorities announce that the stealings amount to a fourth of the revenue, and when repudiation or perpetual paper-money is talked of as the best means of getting rid of the public burdens. Now, we feel quite confident that the people, as soon as their attention has been fairly called to the matter, will not allow the existence of the Government to be imperilled by corruption. In the next place, the whole of the machinery of justice—on the efficiency of which, perhaps, more than any other agency, the maintenance of order and morality depends—has got dangerously out of order. It is acknowledged by all competent observers that the election of judges and prosecuting officers for short terms, introduced twenty years ago, has lowered the character of the judiciary in every State in which it has been tried. In others, such as Massachusetts, in which it has not been tried, the perniciousness of the farmers in paring low wages to judicial officers is slowly but surely driving first-class men off the bench. Massachusetts has lost one of her best judges from this cause within the last year; others will doubtless follow. A Radical writer in Harper's Weekly, early last year, when advocating the passage of the act making two-thirds of the Supreme Court necessary to declare an act of Congress unconstitutional, dwelt strongly on what he evidently considered a well-known fact, that the character of the legal profession had been so lowered all over the country by the system of election that it was no longer possible to fill the Supreme Court with first-class men; therefore it was no longer safe to repose that confidence in the wisdom and discretion of the court which had, in the early days of the Republic, been the boast and glory of the country. Moreover, there are few States in which complaints of the inefficiency of the administration of criminal justice are not now heard. In States as old and orderly as Ohio and Indiana supplementary lynching of robbers and murderers on a great scale has had to be resorted to within the last year. We have had the same phenomenon in Western New York. In this city, although the police is perhaps as good as any in the world, their vigilance and faithfulness are rendered well-nigh worthless by the low character of the police justices, the abuses of the district-attorney's office, and the maladministration of the prisons all over the State. The facility with which escapes are effected from Sing Sing shows that the official supervision of the prisons is little short of a farce; and it could hardly be expected to be otherwise when we consider that the wardens are hack politicians, changed every time a new party comes into power, even if the reports of the Prison Association did not tell on this subject one of the most sorrowful and disheartening tales of the day.

In fact, look which way we will, we find abundant evidence of two things: one is, that the absorption of the mental and moral energies of the country in the anti-slavery struggle, the habits of discussion and of thought bred by the controversy with the South, the love of general ideas, the dislike of detail, the tendency to judge all State questions by reference to Federal standards of expediency, the lofty indifference to all possible consequences or bearings, except one, of every measure which comes up, have exercised a most disastrous influence on the work of what may be with propriety called internal reform. And the other is, that the peculiar adaptation of the democratic principle so generally resorted to since 1846, which consists in the election of nearly all officials by universal suffrage for short terms, on low salaries, has proved a signal failure. This phenomenon is nothing new. Every country which has gone through a great struggle in pursuit of a great object has had much the same experience. But it is of experiences of all sorts, good, bad, and indifferent, that political education is made up. Nations do not prepare themselves either for the work of self-government or work of reform by the study of ethics or jurisprudence or political economy, but by a series of costly experiments and severe trials. The reaction which followed 1848 all over the continent of Europe seemed at the time a tremendous misfortune. The history of the last seven years has shown clearly that it was just what was needed to give Germans and Italians another step, and a most important one, in political education; and we have no doubt that it will be admitted ten years hence that Louis Napoleon has done far more—unconsciously, in spite of himself, it is true—for the cause of free government in France than the constitutional monarchy could ever have done. We shall hit in this country yet on the proper arrangement of the democratic machinery, but it will be through failures and crises such as we are now witnessing.

One of the first conditions of successful and speedy reform is, however, the withdrawal of some of the reforming force of the country from "advanced thinking," as it is called. The discipline of the army of reformers has never been in any country or any age very good, but in this country, at this moment, it is peculiarly bad. As we have pointed out more than a year ago, the proportion borne by the bummers, who are looking up the fords, the bridges, the granaries, and the concealed treasure, and ambushed enemy, to the regular battalions, who are guarding the baggage, keeping the communications open, and garrisoning the captured strongholds, and making the march an advance instead of a mere raid, is ludicrously large. A man who keeps his place in line on the day of battle, takes his turn of outpost duty, and is ready for all the obscure and inglorious duties of the service, is getting to be looked on as a contemptible drudge. Most reformers prefer mounting a little nude, amusing themselves with some not generally accepted weapon, called a "new idea," and starting off on their own hook, spying out the land, exchanging shots and epithets with the enemy, and shouting out from every rising ground glorious accounts of what they see ahead.

This tendency is fostered by the extraordinary and invaluable amount of hope and enthusiasm with which nearly everybody looks into the future. It is, of course, the standard and chief means by which all the hopes of the people are realized, and it is the golden rule by which their minds are kept in order. The men whose hands the public should now strengthen are the hands of the working practical reformers, like the Jenckes and Garfield and Welles, whose aim it is to bring the real products of "advanced thinking" to the poor man's home, and to give the weak some better protection for their rights than platform oratory. The bummers need no support. They are sure to take care of themselves in all regions and all climates.
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