

[New York Evening Post.]

**IMPERIALISM AND PROTECTION.**

The reports from Quebec concerning the influences that are brought to bear on the high commissioners from the United States are full of portent. The representatives of great protected interests have been there in force, insisting that no matter what concessions the Canadians may offer, the duties which foster American industries shall be retained. The American people, they argue, pronounced emphatically in favor of the policy of protection at the last election, and no wave of sentiment in favor of England must be allowed to affect our proceedings in matters of business. The old arguments in favor of protective tariffs are as valid as ever. It is as true now as it ever was that the "foreigner pays the tax," that the high standard of living attained by the American laborer is due to the duties which he pays on imported goods, and that unless these duties are retained the English will flood our markets with their products. It would be difficult for a republican administration to disregard these arguments, even if it were so disposed. It is especially difficult for President McKinley to disregard them, for he has dwelt on them with such passionate vehemence as to make it evident that he was sincere. Circumstances have changed, but they cannot have changed to such an extent within two years as to convert a bigoted protectionist into a free-trader. That involves not only a change of mind, but a change of heart also.

It is, of course, nothing unusual for a protectionist to become convinced that certain protective duties are unwise and unnecessary. Manufacturers generally are quite ready to contend that the raw materials which they use are not properly subject to tariff taxes, and it is quite probable that some of them are now satisfied that the duties on their products for which they formerly clamored are not indispensable. But when it comes to the point, even these manufacturers will be likely to shrink from the plan of the "open door." What shall it profit us, they will say, if, after all our sacrifices in the cause of humanity, we are not to monopolize the trade of Cuba and Porto Rico? We have spent a great deal of money in driving the Spaniards out of these islands, and as they are unfortunately too poor to be able to pay us an indemnity for having been expelled, we ought to reward ourselves with the exclusive trade of their former possessions. Our manufacturers are patriotically paying their war taxes, and it will seem to them Quixotic liberality to permit English and German manufacturers, who are not handicapped by these taxes, to sell their wares to the Cubans on equal terms. Gratitude, they will think, should impel the Cubans to grant a preferential tariff to this country. As to Porto Rico, it would

seem that our constitution requires our system of duties and imposts to be extended to that island, and that only vessels flying our flag should carry on our commerce with it. On the whole, it is certainly probable that our manufacturers, as a class, will demand some protection for their exports in the West Indian market.

While it is conceivable that this view is mistaken, there is no doubt whatever

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concerning the attitude of our farmers. They are, to a great extent, protectionists, and they change their convictions very slowly. They have been taught the doctrine of protection so thoroughly by the republican politicians as to identify it in their minds with the republican party. They have sometimes been perplexed to find out where their gain from tariff taxes came in, but their faith has been robust, and the production of certain articles has no doubt been stimulated by the exclusion of foreign competition. Our tariff has kept out some Canadian products, such as eggs and potatoes, and hay, and grain, and it has made it possible to raise cane and even beets for making sugar. There is plenty of evidence that any attempt to take off the duties on sugar and tobacco will arouse the most violent opposition. The American Agriculturist has a large circulation among farmers, and in their interest it contended vigorously against the annexation of new territory. If the territory is to be annexed, it serves notice that the farmers of this country do not intend to submit to the competition of the planters of the tropics. Our farmers have heard all about the cheap labor employed by these planters, and how our tariff has been the only thing that has kept us from being ruined by their cheap products, and they will uplift their voices in protest just so soon as the first movement is made to lower the duties on the staples of agriculture. As The Agriculturist says, if free trade in the "money crops" of the American farmer is to be fostered, "then he will batter down every custom house in order that there may also be free trade in the money crops of manufacturers."

The demolition of custom houses may not seem to our readers a very alarming

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contingency, but it is otherwise with the protected manufacturers. While a few of them are ready to meet foreign competitors on equal terms, not only in the West Indies, but in our own country, the great mass are quite unprepared to go to such lengths. Provided the farmers have the power to carry out their threat, the manufacturers will yield to them. There can be no question that the farmers have this power, or at least that they can veto any measure for reducing protective duties. With the loss of their old leaders, the democrats

of the southern states lost their old principles and became at once populists and protectionists. The free trade sentiment appears to be practically extinct in those regions, and the farmers have plainly shown that they expect to have the tariff adjusted so as to protect their interests. The indications are certainly very strong that any party that proposes to admit the products of our new possessions free of duty will be defeated by the votes of the farmers.

Under these circumstances it is extremely probable that an attempt will be made to placate the farmers by offering them bounties. The rich men that are planning the exploitation of Cuba and Porto Rico must secure the admission of their products to this country free of duty if they are to succeed in their schemes, and they will be quite ready to give countervailing bounties to the producers of beet sugar and tobacco if they can bring them to terms in this way. This compromise was adopted in the McKinley tariff in order to pacify the sugar planters of Louisiana, and there are many signs that the same thing will be done in the case of beet sugar. To determine what this means for our country, it is only necessary to look at the European states that have undertaken to develop the beet sugar industry. They have, indeed, succeeded, but their people cannot afford to consume the sugar which they are taxed to produce. A Frenchman is able to consume, on an average, scarcely a third as much sugar as an Englishman. Is we follow the French example, and there is little reason to hope that we shall not, we shall produce beet sugar abundantly, it will be apparently cheap, and we shall also have cheap cane sugar. But the cheapness will be delusive, for the money paid out in bounties must come out of the pockets of the people. We shall not only be taxed to support a larger army and a larger navy and large colonial establishments, but we shall be taxed also to support the protective system in its most outrageous form. Such will be the price of empire, and while certain interests will prosper, it will be through the suffering of the common people. Should these anticipations seem too gloomy to anyone, he needs only to ask himself what other policy than that outlined above can the republican party pursue. It cannot exploit our conquests successfully by abandoning protection, because the farmers will not permit it, and if protection is to continue after we enter on our new estates, it must be under the form of bounties on home products.

The two Cincinnati youths who are arranging for a battle-ship to be presented to the nation by its collective school-boys, having raised \$35,000 have proceeded to name their boat. As they have only \$3,465,000 yet to secure, they should at once select a young person to do the christening, and decide upon the liquid to be used in that ceremony. We would suggest buck-wheat cake batter.